

INDIAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY MANDI

PROPOSAL FOR A NEW COURSE

Course Name: South Indian Epigraphy

Course Number: HS632

Credits: 3-0-0-3

Prerequisites: Consent of the course instructor

Intended for: PG

Distribution: Elective for HSS

Semester: Odd/Even

Course Preamble: Students of premodern Indian history engage with a wide range of written sources in the form of inscriptions engraved on stones, rock-surfaces, copperplates, temple-walls, pillars and so on, and manuscripts on palm-leaves, cloth, paper and other material. Most of these are written in scripts that are forgotten or not under active circulation anymore. A large number of these sources are in a poor state of preservation, and oftentimes fragile. Handling them calls for great care, while reading and interpreting them warrant special skills that need to be imparted through meticulous training. The proposed course seeks to introduce students of history in the progress of epigraphical studies and train them in reading and interpreting five specific early scripts known from south India, *Brāhmī*, *Tamiḷ Brāhmī*, *Kadamba*, *Vaṭṭeḷuttū* and *Grantha*.

Course Outline: The course will acquaint students with the modern study of epigraphy since the late eighteenth century. It will enable them to understand the historical and methodological processes behind great epigraphic projects like *South Indian Inscriptions*, *Epigraphia Indica*, *Epigraphia Carnatica*, *Travancore Archaeological Series*, and so on. This will be followed by the study of five specific scripts used in premodern south India, viz., *Brāhmī*, *Tamiḷ Brāhmī*, *Kadamba*, *Vaṭṭeḷuttū* and *Grantha*, which will help students to decipher inscriptions written in these scripts.

Course Modules:

1. The Modern Study of Epigraphy [7 Lectures]

- a) Epigraphy and precolonial intellectuals
 - i. The Mackenzie Project
 - ii. The Kāvali brothers
 - iii. Narrain Row Brahmin and other Niyogi brāhmaṇas

- b) James Prinsep
 - i. The *Brāhmī* script deciphered
 - ii. The *Kharoṣṭhī* script deciphered

c) European Epigraphists

- | | | | |
|------|-----------------|-------|---------------|
| i. | Hermann Gundert | v. | B. Lewis Rice |
| ii. | A.C. Burnell | vi. | John F. Fleet |
| iii. | E. Hultzsch | vii. | F. Kielhorn |
| iv. | James Burgess | viii. | Fred Fawcett |

d) South Indian Epigraphists

- i. R. Narasimhachar
- ii. T.A. Gopinatha Rao
- iii. Rao Bahadur V. Venkayya
- iv. C.R. Krishnamacharlu
- v. R. Shamasastri
- vi. K.V. Subrahmanya Iyer
- vii. H. Krishna Shastri
- viii. M.H.Krishna

e) The state and epigraphy publication projects

- i. *Epigraphia Indica*
- ii. *Epigraphia Carnatica*
- iii. *Epigraphia Andhrica*
- iv. *South Indian Inscriptions*
- v. *Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum*
- vi. *Travancore Archaeological Series*
- vii. *Bulletin of the Rama Varma Research Institute*
- viii. *Annual Report of the Mysore Archaeological Department*

2. The *Brāhmī* Script [7 Lectures]

Part – 1

- a) Debates on the origin of *Brāhmī*
- b) Script and the Mauryan political praxis
- c) The *weltanschauung* of early *Brāhmī* inscriptions

Part – 2

- a) Learning the *Brāhmī* script
- b) Deciphering select edicts of Aśoka

3. The *Tamiḷ Brāhmī* Script [7 Lectures]

Part – 1

- a) Trade, religion and the introduction of script in the Tamil country
- b) Script and chieftain-polities
- c) Agglutinative language-structure and the adaptation of *Brāhmī*

Part – 2

- a) Learning the *Tamiḷ Brāhmī* script
- b) Deciphering early Tamil cave labels

4. The *Kadaṃba* Script [7 Lectures]

Part – 1

- a) Statecraft and land-grants
- b) The context of agrarian expansion
- c) Script-monopoly and the authority of eleemosynary establishments

Part – 2

- a) Learning the *Kadaṃba* script
- b) Deciphering select inscriptions of the *Kadaṃbas*

5. The *Vatṭeluttū* Script [7 Lectures]

Part – 1

- a) The transition from *Tamiḷ Brāhmī* to *Vatṭeluttū*
- b) The division of labour between the *Vatṭeluttū* and the *Grantha* scripts

Part – 2

- a) Learning the *Vatṭeluttū* script
- b) Deciphering select *Vatṭeluttū* copperplates

6. The *Grantha* Script [7 Lectures]

Part – 1

- a) Inflective language-use and the genesis of the *Grantha* script
- b) *Praśastis* and the *Grantha* evolution

Part – 2

- a) Learning the *Grantha* script
- b) Deciphering select *Grantha* inscription

Bibliography

(Selections from the following)

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2. Asher, Frederick M., and G. S. Gai (eds). 1985. *Indian Epigraphy: Its Bearing on the History of Art*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press and IBM/ American Institute of Indian Studies.
3. *Bulletin of the Rama Varma Research Institute*, all volumes.
4. Burnell, A.C. 1870. *A Few Suggestions as to the Best Way of Making and Utilizing Copies of Indian Inscriptions*. Madras: Higginbotham and Co.
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6. Chakraborti, Haripada. 1974. *Early Brahmi Records in India (c. 300 B.C.-C. 300 A.D.). An Analytical Study: Social, Economic, Religious, and Administrative*. Calcutta: Sanskrit Pustak Bhandar.
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