

Indus Crocodile Religion as seen in the Iron Age Tamil Nadu

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Abstract: This article is about some aspects of Indian religion in the Post-Harappan period providing a link to the Indus Valley Civilization seen in its Bronze Age seals. The meaning of the anthropomorphic axes found in the Indo-Gangetic doab plains of the Second Millennium BC as a ritual symbol of a Makara (crocodile) god will be presented. The characteristic fish sign pointing to the Dravidian language spoken by the elite Harappans has long been explored from the days of Fr. H. Heras, SJ. However, the importance of crocodiles in IVC culture is recently coming to light (A. Parpola, 2011). When this Crocodile cult disappears and gets forgotten in North India, it appears as large monolithic sculptures in the megalithic South. An interpretation of the Tamil Brahmi inscription at Tirupparankunram, near the ancient Pandyan capital Madurai, discovered by History department, Pondicherry University will be offered as mentioning the crocodile god and his spouse. The Aśvamedha sacrifice on the banks of a Water Tank was performed for a crocodile as evidenced in Pāndyan Peruvaluti and Chera coins. Graffiti symbols from Sāñūr and Sūlūr as linguistic sign for the crocodile deity, and the crocodile couple in Adichanallur burial urn (500 BCE) along with the battle-axe bearing great god in Sangam poetry will be used to illustrate the prevalence of the crocodile based religion until the Early Sangam period. The first stone sculpture made in south India at such places as Mottur, Udaiyarnatham, - monumental in size, over ten feet tall -, in the Iron Age will be linked to the earlier metallic Anthropomorphic Axes in the Yamuna-Gangetic doab, found in many Post-Harappan Ochre Colored Pottery sites of North India. This article will include etymology of Dravidian names such as Viṭaṅkar, Nakar, Ghaṛiāl, Makara, Karā for the three species of Indian crocodiles. Finally, an interpretation of Gudimallam Viṭaṅkar (Liṅgam) as Varuṇa, rather than as Śiva assumed by earlier scholars like A. K. Coomaraswamy, is offered. In the subsequent Pallava period, development of Tantric Śaivism includes the *tantric* term Viṭaṅkar applied more broadly for the forms of Śiva like naked Bhikṣāṭana and Somāskanda.

1.0 Crocodile as Viṭaṅkar yogi in the Indus Valley Civilization

In Mohenjo-daro seals (M-304, M-1181), a deity wearing buffalo horns and sitting in a yogic posture is depicted. It has been called as Proto-Śiva or Paśupati because of the surrounding animals: a tiger, an elephant, a water buffalo, and a rhinoceros (Figure 1). Among the inscribed signs, the appearance of fish has been taken to indicate as star/god due to Dravidian homophonic principle (Chapter 10, [1]). *Gharial* (*gavialis gangeticus*), the long-snouted crocodile living in the Indus waters, and fish have been considered divine by the Indus agricultural society. Both fish and gharial are shown as divinities in the sky in Indus valley seals. Being equivalent of Gharial crocodile, it has been shown in Ref. [2] that it will be more appropriate to call the deity in Figure 1 as “Proto-Varuṇa”. The four wild animals surrounding the gharial god represent the four cardinal directions (A. Hiltebeitel, Anthropos, 1978). There are tablets from Harappan civilization showing these wild animals in a row representing the four directions, and the gharial above them overseeing them from the sky. The etymology for the digit four, *nālu* in Dravidian is discussed using these tablets in Section 3.0.

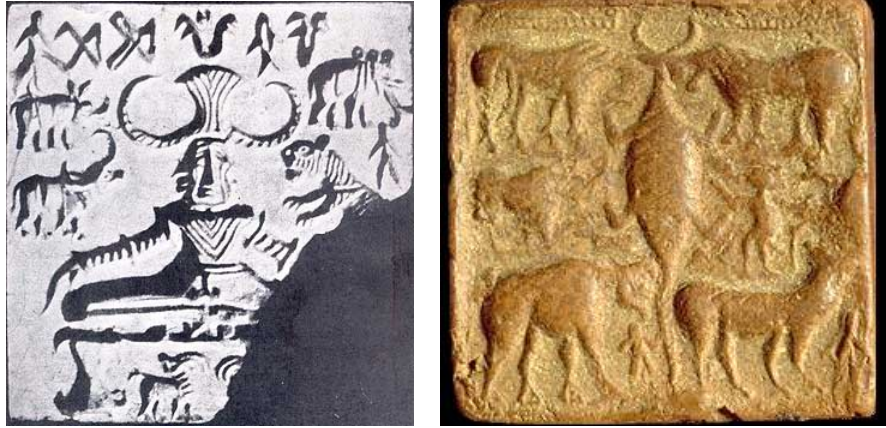


Figure 1. Horned Gharial 'Proto-Varuṇa' as Master of Animals ~ "Mṛgapati"

In the Indus valley civilization, the gharial crocodile was considered an aspect "avatāra" of the horned deity (Figure 1) and it is often portrayed as a "Master of Animals" in a variety of mass-produced moulds and seals (M-439, M-440, M-441, M-1393, M-1394, M-1395) A note is published [3]. "Terracotta sealing from Mohenjo-daro depicting a collection of animals and some script symbols. This sealing may have been used in specific rituals as a narrative token that tells the story of an important myth." The pan-Indus myth about the crocodile deity in Figure 1 becomes clear when all the imagery in Indus seals with the tiger-goddess are analyzed together with the gharial deity depictions [2]. For example, in the seal H-180, the tiger-goddess is seen mating with the long snout of the male gharial. In the Gharial as "Master of Animals" seal (Figure 1), there is a "priest of the tiger-goddess" with a double-bun hairstyle looking at the gharial sitting on a branch of the tree and directly below him is a tiger turning its head backwards. This famous IVC motif of an acacia tree with the shaman priest and the tiger below (M-309, H-163, K-49, H-176, also in Figure 1) provides the crucial coupling link for the gharial deity in Figure 1 with the tiger-goddess seals where the shaman-tree motif is portrayed as well. All later developments of Phallic liṅgam worship in Indian religion is traceable to this crocodile "viṭaṅkar" yogi of the Indus religion in Bronze Age. The god Śiva in Tamil bhakti texts of the first millennium, is extolled as either *nakkar* or *viṭaṅkar* indicating Śiva's nudity and his virile *liṅgam* in particular. These epithets for Śiva and his liṅgam have origin in the names for gharial crocodile (Section 5.0). When *viṭaṅku* is used, it indicates the naked *bhikṣāṭana* youth going rounds in the streets and attracting women: *maṇaikaḷ tōrum talai kai ēnti viṭaṅkarākit tirivatu eṇṇē?* (Tēvāram 7.6.1).

Prof. Asko Parpola has derived both *gharīyāl* and *kumbhīra*, the names of Gharial crocodile in Sanskrit and Hindi, from Dravidian [4]. In Eastern Indian languages such as Bengali, Bihari, and Nepali, the name, *nakar* (Cf. Tamil *nakkar*) is used for the gharial (pg. 417-418, [5]). Representations of *makara* in early Indian art matches with the crocodiles very closely. The marsh crocodile (*crocodylus palustris*) lives throughout the Indian subcontinent. The makara (> *magara* in Hindi) crocodile does 'high-walk' for short distances when it comes to the banks of rivers and lakes. This *makara/magara* marsh crocodile has four strong feet, and these are explicitly shown in the following IVC sign he connects the sign with Proto-Varuṇa: "In Taittirīya Āraṇyaka 2,19, the heavenly crocodile is called "the lord of all beings (*bhūtānām adhipatir*)", an appellation which further supports identification of this **kaṇ-kāṇi* 'overseer' with the Harappan predecessor of Varuṇa." Compare the Indus crocodile sign with the pictogrammatic Chinese reptile radical sign, 虺 and in Japanese, the "reptile radical" *ashinakimushi hen*. In English, the marsh crocodiles are called as "mugger" and dictionaries trace "mugger" ultimately to be of Dravidian origin. The most important words for 'crocodile' in South Asian languages have a Dravidian etymology. Austro-Asiatic, on the other hand, does not seem to have any relation to the terms for 'crocodile' used more widely in South Asia.

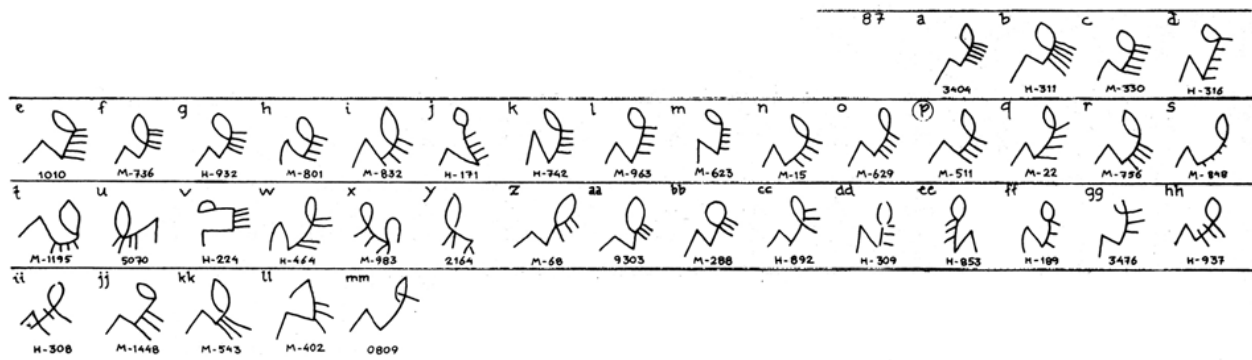


Figure 2. Indus sign number 87 (Crocodile – identification by Parpola, [4])



Figure 3. Dholavira Tablet with Indus Crocodile Cult (showing possibly child sacrifice)

"The Jaiminīya- (JB 3,193–4) and Pañcaviṃśa-Brāhmaṇas (PB 14,5,14–15) tell of a śiśumāra ṛṣi, who attained heaven, being the constellation called Śarkara. Literally śiśumāra means 'baby-killer'. In the Taittirīya-Āraṇyaka (2,19,3) it is a heavenly mighty crocodile (divyaḥ śākvaraḥ śiśumāraḥ), which has a tail of four sections. It is worshipped with a prayer at dusk, addressed to the Pole Star, dhruva. Later Purāṇa texts (cf. Viṣṇu-Purāṇa 2,9,1) tell that God appears in the sky in the shape of a starry crocodile, with the Pole Star in its tail." (A. Parpola, [6]). In these texts, the tail of the starry crocodile uses a Dravidian noun, *puccha* (cf. DEDR 4476).

2.0 Late and Post Harappan Anthropomorphic Axe as Representation of Indus Crocodile

The Ochre Colored Pottery culture (OCP) in the Gangetic plains is a 2nd millennium BC Bronze Age culture of the Indo-Gangetic Plain (Ganges-Yamuna plain). It succeeds the Harappan Civilization. Bronze metal weapons and an Anthropomorphic Axe (AA) has been discovered in scores of sites from Haryana to Bihar. It has been a mystery to determine the identity of Anthropomorphic Axe. Whether it is the Vedic Vajra weapon has been tested and that hypothesis rejected (P. Yule, [7]). A chance find from Haryana Post-Harappan mound and the developments in the Early Iron Age succeeding OCP and the Tamil Sangam texts throw new light on the crucial AA identity. Some of the Anthropomorphic Axe sculptures have the Fish sign, numerous in Indus script, engraved in their chest. Both Fish and Crocodile signs occurring in astronomy (Figure 3) and in Indus script mark the Dravidian linguistic connection with the Indus civilization.

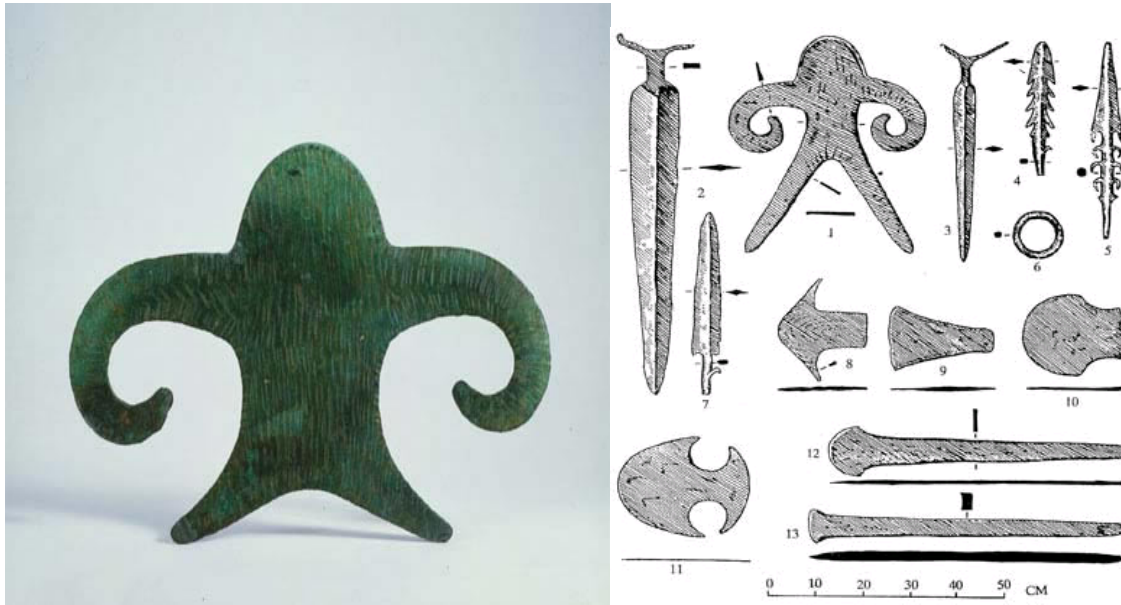


Figure 4. Anthropomorphic Axe (AA) and Weapons of the Copper Hoard Culture
(Yamuna-Gangetic Plains)



Pl. 6. Copper Anthropomorphic figure, District Sonapat, Haryana (Manju).

Figure 5. Harappan Crocodile deity in Copper Hoard Culture, Sonapat, Haryana

An important anthropomorphic figure and a copper sword have been acquired by Archaeological Survey of India from Sabdar Ali, Sonapat district, Haryana. The village contains a large mound from Late Harappan and Post-Harappan period [8]. It is a unique AA figure from Copper Hoard Culture period, perhaps ~1600 BCE, with a crocodile head on a human male torso and is kept in the ASI Office, CAC section, Purana Qila, New Delhi. The AA contains a composite animal in its chest which has similarities with the Unicorn figures of the Harappan seals. Above the “unicorn” are letter-like signs which resemble vaguely some Indus signs. It is suggested here for the first time that the Copper Hoard anthropomorphic axe is actually a Makara “mugger”. Usually, due to lack of knowledge of the AA megalithic sculptures and Sangam texts of Tamil

country and also the earlier Crocodile-Korravai couple in Harappan art, the Sonepat anthropomorphic axe figure is mistaken as a boar (Naman Ahuja, 2014, *The body in Indian art and thought*, Brussels). The continuity of religion of the Indus Civilization and its crocodile god is most likely shown in the Anthropomorphic Axe cult bronzes. It has been argued earlier that the Crocodile deity of the Indus civilization and Korravai (proto-Durgā) as she is seen fighting with buffalo demon in IVC seals form a divine couple [2]. D. V. Sharma, ASI, has excavated copper hoard sites at Sanauli, U.P. where an AA made of gold foil was found. Anthropomorphic Axe figures in copper are religious cult objects and not weapons of war like Vajra. S. C. Saran, ASI (Technical Analysis of an Anthropomorphic Copper Figure in the Central Antiquity Collection at the Purana Qila, New Delhi) suggested that "the head portion had the shape of an animal possibly a wild boar or a chameleon/iguana". Given the evidence from archaeology, art history and philology about crocodile god in both Harappan in earlier times and Early Iron Age Tamil Nadu later, the crocodile identification for the Gangetic OCP Anthropometric Axe is the best possible solution among available choices. The warrior-like appearance of the AA figures with strong shoulders is noticeable. Metallurgical analysis of the AA with the face of a crocodile by two teams of ASI have shown the properties to match with those of Copper Hoard culture. The Gangetic AA figures found over a wide area number now more than 130, and the identification with crocodile deity shows the predominance of the Indian indigenous religious cult. No such figures are found anywhere outside India including Bactria–Margiana. Slowly over time, the production of Post-Harappan AA figures in bronze ceases in North India. Perhaps this is due to the dominance of Ṛgvedic Aryans over the earlier wave, and their Indra replaces the Anthropomorphic Axe (Makara Viṭaṅkar) in the North.

3.0 Anthropomorphic Axes in Monumental Sculptures and its Viṭaṅkar (Crocodile) identity

In the last three decades, huge monolithic sculptures, made with iron tool technology, have been discovered in Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh. They may date to 800 – 500 BCE. When the knowledge on Harappan crocodile deity morphing into Anthropomorphic Axe in the Copper Hoard and OCP cultures in North India gets forgotten, it is interesting that the tradition is kept alive in South India from the Early Iron Age. These huge Anthropomorphic Axe stone sculptures are the earliest monumental art from South India. Figure 6 shows two AA examples from Tamil Nadu megaliths. These monolithic AA sculptures face South, the direction of the dead, like later Dakshinamurti. Maturaikkāñci calls the all powerful deity as “Maḷuvāl Neṭiyōṇ” (the Great one in Axe Weapon form) who created all the five elements in the world. This Sangam text advises the king about the impermanence of human life and narrates scenes in Madurai starting in the east, circumambulating in counter-clockwise direction and in ending in the south. The megalithic dolmens and chamber tombs are the places where south-facing Anthropomorphic Axe sculptures are found.



Figure 6. Anthropomorphic Axe Sculptures (Early Iron Age) at Mottur and Udayarnattam

Labyrinth designs, covering a large area, are found near these megaliths showing the interest of the ancients querying about Life and Death. Both Yama and Varuṇa hold a noose in their hands. Indeed Varuṇa is Death [*mṛtyur vai varuṇah*, KS 13.2]. *Neytal parai* is the funeral drum in classical Tamil. Neytal is the littoral landscape whose deity is Varuṇa. In the funerary rituals of Early Iron Age, the crocodile deity and his spouse, Korravai were worshiped. This is seen in the broken pots deposited in burial urns where the divine couple are shown as Crocodile and Korravai. Paddy crop and its grains, egrets associated with paddy fields, and blackbuck antelope, the vehicle of Korravai- Durgā are all depicted in the funeral pottery from Adichanallur (Figure 7). The contemporary monumental Anthropomorphic Axe sculptures in megaliths, and the presence of crocodile deity with his spouse in the burial urns make their identification possible.



Figure 7. Adichanallur Burial Urn showing Crocodile god and Korravai couple (Photo: Prof. K. Rajan)

Aerial roots are hanging down invisibly in all the directions from cosmic banyan fig tree which Varuṇa holds up in the sky, according to Vedic texts. They declare this as the reason why things do not fall apart in the World. Such a Vedic concept is possible because of the homophony between *vaṭam* ‘rope’ and *vaṭa-mīṇ* ‘Pole star’. Many such extensions of the homophony principle from Dravidian languages can be shown in Indian culture. Examples: (i) The Fish sign indicating astronomical entities in the Indus script. (ii) The homophony between *annam* ‘food’ from Indo-European with *annam* ‘bar headed goose’ from Dravidian gives birth to the epic myth of annam/hamsa birds separating out milk from water. This may be due to the observation that yoghurt rice absorbs the milk while leaving out the water. (iii) The root, *kāl-* ‘to move’ gives rise to words in Dravidian as legs and also Time. The Mahābhārata myth of the Dharma cow standing on 4, 3, 2 and 1 leg in four different yugas is obviously coming from *kāl* ‘legs’ and *kāla* ‘Time’. It is likely that the four wild animals in Figure 1 surrounding the Gharial (= *viṭaṅkar* in Tamil) represent the four cardinal directions. Figure 8 shows the four wild animals, an elephant, a rhino, a wild buffalo and a tiger in a row in IVC tablets. And the crocodile, Makara Viṭaṅkar acts as their overseer from the sky above. The Tamil verb, *nālu-tal* refers to “hanging down” (DEDR 2912) and the Crocodile god supporting Life in all four directions from the Pole Star above via invisible ropes is the possible reason why the digit four is named as *nālu/nāṅku* (< *nālu-*) in Dravidian. On another side of the tablet, the overseer Crocodile in the sky is above another set of 4 animals and possibly they represent the four dependent directions. Together the entire Universe in all eight directions are under the control of the Crocodile deity. On the tablet’s third side along with some plants and animals, there is a copulating human couple indicating the role of the tablet in fertility rituals. It is possibly the reason Varuṇastava is used in coronation rituals for a King, and also in Hindu marriage ceremonies. It is important to note that among the names of 12 months, only “*tai*” which means “Father, King” in Tamil is a pure Tamil word. Even now, “*tai*” or “*makara*” representing the heavenly crocodile exists as the only native month name in Indian calendars while all the other eleven month names in Indian calendars ultimately come from Hellenistic astronomy from Babylon.



Figure 8. Mohenjadarо tablets (M489, M1431) – Crocodile in the sky above the four cardinal directions

4.0 Early Pandya Kings of Madurai and Varuṇa Worship in Tamil Brahmi Inscription

In January 2013, a remarkable Tamil Brahmi inscription on a step leading to a pond on top of the Tirupparankunram hill, near Madurai was discovered. Prof. K. Rajan, Pondicherry University, assigns a date of 3rd or 2nd century BCE. There is a symbol of a banyan tree in between two names, beautifully carved in early Tamil Brahmi script: The first name is “*mū nākrā*” meaning “ancient gharial” while his spouse is called “*mū cakti*” meaning “ancient goddess” cakti is tamilized form of Śakti. Nakar “to creep, to move slowly” is the name of the gharial in East India, and seems to come from *nekaḷ (DEDR 3732). Dravidian *nakar* links Sanskrit *nakra*-/*nākra*- and Middle Indo-Aryan *nakka*-. Word for plough such as Tamil *nāñcil*, *nāñcil*, Kan. *nēgal*, Gadba *nāngal* etc., (DEDR 2907) is likely from *nekaḷ also because the plough crawls slowly in the field. Like the long snouted gharial mating with the tiger-goddess in IVC art, the plough too has a long association with phallic symbolism. In Sangam literature, *nakar* means a temporary camp, a wedding pandal and so on. *Nagara*, as a word for towns, may be due to traders’ camps developing into towns along major trade routes. Earlier, I have suggested **mokaray* as the source for *mokara*/*makara* “mugger” crocodile name [9]. Additionally, to take into account the south Indian names also for crocodile such as *mosaḷe* (Kannada), *mutalai* (Tamil), **mokaḷay* is suggested from **mok*-/**moṅku*- ‘to eat greedily in large mouthfuls, eat voraciously, devour, gobble, swallow’ (DEDR 5127 + ‘aḷay’ DEDR 296, Cf. “*moku-moku*” ideophone).



Figure 9. Tirupparankunram Tamil Brahmi Inscription near the pond

The symbol in the top line of Tirupparankunram inscription, marked within a red circle in Figure 9, is not a Brahmi letter and it can be understood by comparing the central symbol in the IVC Mohenjadarо seals such as M-414 and in Iron Age ceramic graffiti found in Sanur, Tamil Nadu (Figure 10). It is a representation of the Banyan fig tree that Proto-Varuṇa holds up in the sky. A. Parpola explained the significance [10]: “In the first place, the Sanskrit texts mention the banyan fig as the tree of the northern direction. Homonymy connects the banyan fig with the north in Dravidian, but there is no such linguistic association in Indo-Aryan languages. Secondly, in reply to the question, why do the stars and planets not fall down from the sky, the

texts say that the heavenly bodies are bound to the pole star with invisible ‘ropes of wind.’ In Dravidian *vaṭa-mīṇ* as the name of the pole star also means ‘rope-star’ and ‘banyan-star.’ Around 1000 BCE, a hymn of the Ṛig-Veda (1, 24, 7) speaks of the roots of a cosmic banyan tree being held up in the sky by God Varuṇa.” The foremost Ālvār of Tamil Srivaishnavism is Nammālvār. In a verse in akaval meter with which he won a scholarly competition at the Pandya court of poets, Nammalvar uses the term “*peru-maram*” that seems to signify this Vedic Banyan fig tree. The ancient name of Madurai is “*ālavāy*” meaning the place of the Banyan tree, possibly that of the King Varuṇa.

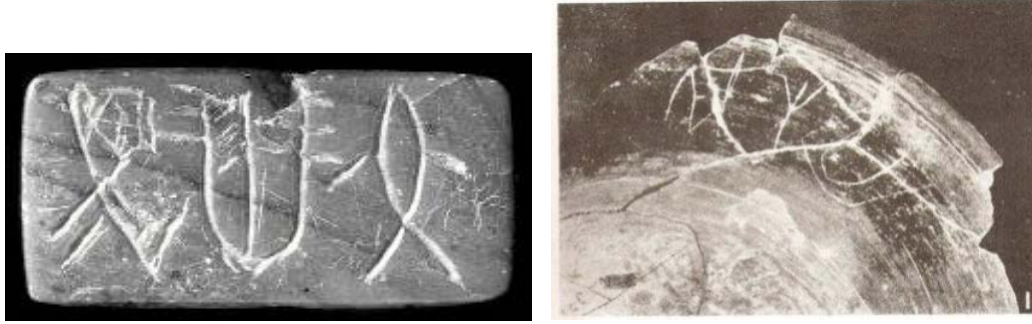


Figure 10. Crocodile Sign and Banyan tree (Mohenjodaro M-414, Sanur Pottery from Tamil Nadu)

Dr. R. Krishnamurti, Dinamalar (Chennai) has published a number of important Sangam era coins from Pandya, Chera and Chola dynasties. Figure 11 shows the *aśvamedha* coin of Pāndyan Peruvaḷuti from third century BCE. All these coins depict crocodiles representing Varuṇa, and seem to represent the coronation issue of royal mint. “*Alcor is shown to the bride in a marriage ceremony as a model to be emulated. Originally vaṭa-mīn probably denoted the nearby pole star, also shown to the bride. In 4000–1900 BCE, the pole star was Thuban, close to Ursa Major and Vasiṣṭha’s star Mizar. As the immobile center of the rotating heavens, the pole star is called in Sanskrit dhruva (immobile, firm). The bridegroom addresses the pole star with a long mantra originally belonging to the royal consecration, varuṇasava (Varuṇa’s sacrifice), saying among other things: “I know thee as the nave of the universe; may I become the nave of this country” (nabhyam tvā sarvasya veda, nabhyam aham asya janapadasya bhūyāsam; HirGS. 1.23.1). Varuṇa is the divine king, and the pole star is a symbol of royalty like the mighty banyan tree, the tree belonging to Varuṇa (nyagrodho vāruṇo vṛkṣaḥ; GobhGS. 4.7.24; Parpola, 1994, 245–246).” [11] Sangam era coins issued by royal dynasties of Pāndyas, Cheras, Malayamāns and Atiyamāns involve turtles, crocodiles in water tanks. These two are the vāhanas symbolizing the rivers Yamunā and Gangā respectively. The name, Yamunā itself derives from Dravidian yāmai ‘turtle’.*

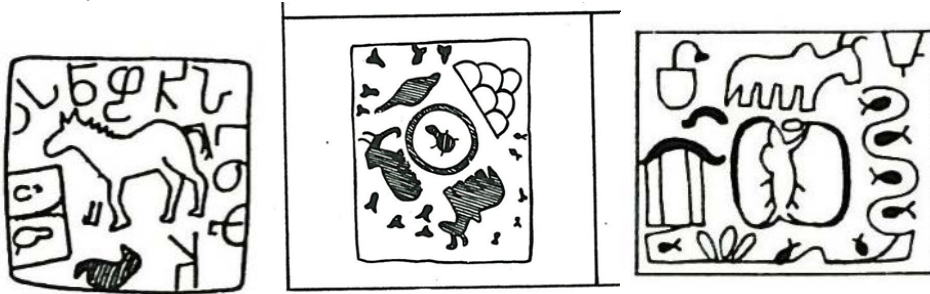


Figure 11. Early Sangam Pandya Coinage with Makara crocodile.

5.0 Gudimallam Viṭaṅkar (Liṅga) and Later Development of Tantric Saivism in Pallava Era

The earliest phallic worship in India is the Paśupati seal (Figure 1) where the seated deity with a buffalo horn headdress has a visibly erect penis (*ūrdhvaliṅga*). Ṛgveda mentions the Phallic worship of their enemies as *śiśnadeva* in verses x.27.19, x.99.3, and vii.21.5. There appears to be basically two waves of major Aryan migrations, the earlier “Atharvavedic” Dasyus and few centuries later Ṛgvedic folks, both moving in Post-Harappan times. Co-opting with Dravidian elites, there was worship of Phallic god, the Makara Viṭaṅkar by the earlier “Atharvavedic” wave and successive generations of bilinguals, and this is possibly the *śiśnadeva* referred to in RV. In the Ṛig Veda (VII, 21, 5) Indra is prayed to not allow those, whose God is Śisna (phallus), to disturb the rites of the singers. A second reference to these followers of the phallic God, is when they, the singers, recount how they conquered the riches of a city after killing those whose God was Śisna. Both these references point out to the definite existence of a phallic cult in the Vedic times. This Phallic deity represented as long snouted crocodile in Indus Valley Civilization turns into Varuṇa represented as Anthropomorphic Axe cult object (Figure 4) which later appears as huge stone abstract sculpture in Early Iron Age in Tamil country. The phallic god which art history and archaeology show as crocodile in Harappan era and in the form of crocodile axe in the Post-Harappan phase as all powerful deity of the non-Vedic Indians is criticized in the Ṛgveda. Another term is Mūradeva, possibly referring to the god Murukan (Skanda) in the Veda. Rudra in the Veda becomes Śiva in later Hinduism. Rudra-Kumara signifies the younger form and “son” of the elder *Śiśnadeva*, the Harappan gharial god merging with Varuṇa from 1700 BC up to early Sangam era (cf. Gudimallam).

Tolkāppiyam grammar does not allot any poetic landscape (tinai) to god Śiva, but assigns Neytal tinai to Varuṇa. The gods assigned for the other four landscapes are Murukan, Krishna-Vishnu, Indra and Durgā. This choice is made by the ancient Tamil grammarian because Varuṇa originally played the role later taken over by Śiva. For example, Vishnudharmottaram, III, 52 identifies Manmatha and Rati with Varuṇa and Gauri. The association of Durgā-Gauri with Varuṇa can be traced back to Indus civilization (seal H-180). Mughal Indian paintings and modern calendar prints show Śiva as blue-hued which also seems to be a remnant of the Varuṇa connection with Śiva: "Varuṇa, the lord of waters should be made on a chariot with seven swans, in colour resembling the glossy lapis-lazuli and wearing a white cloth [...] Towards the left, one should place the emblem of makara, and over the head (should be spread) a very white umbrella. Oh king, on the left lap should be shown the two-handed Gauri his wife, beautiful in all the limbs. On her left hand is the blue lotus and her right one rests on the back of the god" (Vishnudharmottaram, pt. III, ch. 52, translation by S. Kramrisch, 1928). In Ṛgveda, *gauri* refers to the wild cow “bos gaurus”. It is an Indus heritage to show the face of this animal, bos gaurus, in punch-marked coins, Sangam dynasty coins and as a representation of the Buddha. In literature this is called as Nandipāda, which actually is the front view of the face of the Gaur cattle. In IVC times, Gauri (durgā) wore gaur horns as headdress and hence her name.

In the study of all the Liṅga sculptures available from 3rd century BCE, Gudimallam *viṭaṅkar* occupies a unique place. I. Kartikeya Sarma has done archaeological excavation of this *Viṭaṅkar* that has revealed its early age and also this phallic god standing on Makara yakṣa in the sea waters (I. K. Sarma, 1994). The tail of the Makara crocodile-fish can be noted in Figure 12. During this period, we see a transitional phase of Makara sculptures changing from crocodile form to shark fish of the ocean. Since Varuṇa is the god of the ocean and sea shore lands in Sangam literature and Śiva is never mentioned as a god of any of the five landscapes of the Tamil sangam literature, this phallic *viṭaṅkar* is really a representation of Varuṇa, and not that of Śiva. As the god of the sea and seashore, his headdress is made of bracts of pandanus flowers (I. K. Sharma). This Gudimallam *Viṭaṅkar* has a large axe in his hand. Varuṇa is the deity, in Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa, who gets all the agricultural produce hewn by axe, and also all things churned and cooked. The display of the large axe in the *Viṭaṅkar*'s hand may be an indication of cutting down forests to make room for cultivation in the Early Sangam Age. Varuṇa, the god of the littoral region, is worshipped by fisherfolk by installing the bone of shark in the beaches. On the full moon day, the fishermen and their wives worshipped Varuṇa by installing the jaw bone of a pregnant shark or swordfish. They decorated the upper jawbone of the shark with

pandanus flowers and offered toddy as oblations (Paṭṭiṇappālai). Interestingly, Gudimallam liṅga is decorated with pandanus flowers and it stands on the makara yakṣa too (Figure 12). Later, purāṇic myths are written when the viṭaṅkar (liṅga) gets exclusively assigned to Śiva, pandanus flowers are removed from Śiva iconology in Tēvāram hymns and Sanskrit purāṇas. This marks the shift of Viṭaṅkar icon representing Varuṇa to Śiva total and complete. In Tamil, Viṭaṅkar is liṅga as well as crocodile (Cf. iṭaṅkar). The association of liṅga phallic worship with Varuṇa and crocodile gets forgotten from around 4th century CE or later. Liṅga and Śiva purāṇas, Tamil Tēvāram hymns and Pallava art of Śiva shrines all belong to this period. Then, Gauri becomes a wife of Śiva whereas earlier in Vishnudharmottara, she was the spouse of Varuṇa. The widespread buffalo sacrifice to Gauri is avoided in Vedic and Purana texts, just like pandanus flowers of Varuṇa are banned for Śiva.



Figure 12. Gudimallam Viṭaṅkar (Liṅga) wearing Pandanus flowers and his Aquatic yakṣa (Makara)

In spite of the Veda's negative remarks, the phallic worship in the form of Liṅga, which is called Viṭaṅkar in Tamil, survived and reasserts as Mahādeva "Great God" Śiva worship in Purāṇic Hinduism (~5th century CE). Thousands upon thousands of Śaivite temples across the Indian subcontinent hold a phallic *liṅga* in their central-most sanctum. Phallic imagery is gradually downplayed and abstracted over time as in Liṅgodbhava myth as distant, formless, and transcendent. By contrast, the *Dāruvana* myth explicitly presents the *liṅga* as the phallus of the god. It points to the time in which the older phallic iconography representing Proto-Varuṇa in IVC as gharial, Post-Harappan crocodile-axe in bronze and Southern monumental sculpture, and Varuṇa Viṭaṅkar in Gudimallam changes to Śiva liṅga in the Gupta and Pallava periods. First Indian texts describing liṅga origins start to be written in the medieval period. This Viṭaṅkar (liṅga) myth was widespread is suggested by the integration of versions into a number of different Purāṇas. In my view, considering the background of Gudimallam *Viṭaṅkar* as Varuṇa, the earlier Pre-Kuṣāṇa *ekamukha* liṅgas from Mathura reliefs or Aghapura, Rajasthan or the famous *panchamukha* 5-faced liṅga made of terracotta from Bhita (1st century AD) may all in fact represent Varuṇa instead of Śiva. The Lingam tree (*Crataeva religiosa*) is so named because while in full bloom, the entire tree is full of flowers resembling male *liṅga*. This sacred tree is grown in temple gardens and cities were named after this tree, *māvilīṅkai* in ancient times. In Indo-Aryan languages, the Lingam tree goes by the name, Varuṇa tree indicating again that originally Linga worship was connected with Varuṇa. Śrī Rudram is recited from Taittiriya Samhita (TS 4.5, 4.7) which is a recension of the Krishna Yajurveda. This early hymn on Śiva does not mention Linga at all.

Stella Kramrisch, *The Presence of Śiva* (1981), summarizes the Bhikṣāṭana episode: "In this retreat (i.e., the Himalayan devadāru forest), sages, with their families lived the life of recluses, observing the established rites. The peace of the hermitage was interrupted when a young stranger appeared on the

scene, a naked yogi smeared with ashes, holding out his begging bowl for alms. Irresistibly fascinated, the wives and daughters of the ṛṣis rushed to bring him fruits and other food. (Kūrma Purāṇa 2.37.1-13) He excited them so much that they were beside themselves. His attraction was such that he seemed extraordinarily handsome. (Liṅga Purāṇa. 29.10), or, on the contrary he looked horrible with terrific painted teeth. (Brahma Purāṇa 1.2.27.11). His penis and testicles were like red chalk, the tip ornamented with black and white chalk (Brahma Purāṇa 2.27.12). The wives and daughters of the sages were driven mad with passion. They took hold of his hands, embraced him and lost all self-control. (Śiva Purāṇa 4.12.12-13) They had always been exemplary in their way of life, but now they knew no restraint. Their hair disheveled, shedding their ornaments and clothes (Kūrma Purāṇa.2.37.14-15), they could not tear themselves from the intruder. Sometimes he laughed, sang, and danced beautifully; sometimes he roared repeatedly (Brahma Purāṇa 1.2.27.13); he was naked, his hair was horripilating, his penis was large (Mahābhārata 13.1.4. 66-67). In this manner he sported with the wives and daughters of the sages. The ṛṣis bewildered, pained and infuriated asked the strange mendicant his name. He remained silent. Outraged and stupefied, the sages did not recognize him. (Śiva Purāṇa, JS.42.13-15). Some say the sages pulled out his phallus (VmPurāṇa, SM 22.68), others that they made it fall by their curse (Śiva Purāṇa 4.12.17), still others that they ordered him to castrate himself (Skanda Purāṇa 6.1.20). But it is also said that only he could do so (Brahma Purāṇa 1.2.2.30-33)."

Appar, in Tēvāram 4.81.9, sings about the naked form of Śiva in the Bhikṣāṭana story as "*miṇ ottu ilaṅkap pali tērntu ulalum viṭaṅka vēṭac cinnattiṅāl*". Here, viṭaṅka vēṭam refers to the naked liṅga form exhibited by Śiva. Often in Indian temple sculpture, Bhikṣāṭana is shown with an ithyphallic liṅga form (G. Bhattacharya, "Once more Tamilnadu and Bengal? Iconographic affiliation: Bhikṣāṭanamūrti Śiva," in: Sahṛdaya. Studies in Indian and South East Asian Art in Honour of Dr. R. Nagaswamy, 2006). In Eleventh Tirumurai 4:53 "*kiri pala pēcic catirāl natantu viṭaṅku paṭa*", dictionaries quote this verse and explain "*viṭaṅku = kāmakaṅku*" i.e., *viṭaṅku* means erotic signal/message. Piṅkalantai nighaṅṭu has a sūtra: "*vīṭik koṭiyum ... āṇmaiṅṅ viṭaṅkam āṅum*" (Piṅkalantai 10:1026). In this early nighaṅṭu of the first millennium CE, viṭaṅkam = āṅmai 'Manliness, manhood, virility, courage, fortitude, intrepidity'. Hence, Tamil word viṭaṅkar stands for both crocodile and male liṅga organ. And, this *tantric* term is applied to Śiva and his liṅga in Tamil temples and texts. "*viṭaṅkar ākit tirivatu eṅṅē?*" (Tēvāram hymn on Tiruveṅkāṭu). Its traditional commentary: "*viṭaṅkar – aḷakiya nakka uruvam. tāmā kavē mēṅkoṅṅatu eṅṅatum kuṅṅippu.*" i.e., viṭaṅkar – naked form in Bhikṣāṭana episode voluntarily taken by Śiva to exhibit his virility (liṅga). Periyapurāṇam commentator, C. K. Subramaniya Mutaliyar wrote: "*viṭaṅkar – uḷi paṭāta tirumēṅṅi uṭaiyavar. ... mēḷē vēṅṅu aṅṅintu maṅṅaikkappaṭāta nakka vaṭivam eṅṅatum kuṅṅippu.*" An entire decade of songs is in Tēvāram by Sundarar on the naked mendicant enticing women. The commentators explain that this chapter in Tēvāram refers to the episode vividly portrayed in Liṅgapurāṇa. V. M. Subramania Aiyar wrote: "This decade was composed as the words of those ladies who fell in love with the fascinating beauty of Civaṅ when he went begging and were afraid of coming into contact with his form; this idea is mentioned by Cuntarar himself in the last verse." It is important to note that in each of the verse, Śiva is called Viṭaṅkar. Obviously, the Tamil term viṭaṅkar (cf. iṭaṅkar) cannot be split as vi+ṭaṅka 'one made without the use of the chisel', which is just a folk etymology to assign a pure Tamil word's origin to Sanskrit. Like nīra 'water', nīla 'blue color' in all Indian languages from Dravidian, we have alternation of -l/-r- in vār- "to pour, to flow down, a long belt" etc., as vāl/vālam 'tail of birds, animals'. From the same root, with the loss of word-initial v-, āli- (< vāli-) is hailstones, rain drops. Some examples: iṭi/viṭuku 'thunder', āli/vāli 'rain drops', aḷai/vaḷai 'hole', iḷutu/viḷutu 'fat, ghee'. Similarly, viṭaṅkar 'gharial' loses the v- and is attested as iṭaṅkar 'gharial' in Sangam texts. Note that iṭi, āli-, aḷai, iṭaṅkar are in Sangam but their root words viṭi (= viṭuku, Pallava royal title), vāli-, vaḷai, viṭaṅkar respectively are attested in post-Sangam period. Without considering these root words beginning with v-, it is impossible to explain the origin of these words in Sangam which is a rather a small corpus. In old Tamil texts, *viṭai* refers to the virile male of animals - bovinds, caprids, antelopes, elephants. It is a verbal noun from *viṭai-* 'to enlarge, to thicken, to stiffen up, to stand with

pride' (also *viṭai-/viṭai-*, cf. DEDR 5439). In the Marutam landscape, the rich landlord enjoying prostitutes is called as *viṭalai, viṭaṇ*. In Tamil, *viṭai-* > *viṭaṅku-* "to be erect (as liṅgam), male beauty, masculinity, virility, fertile". Śiva is called in Tamil bhakti poems like Tēvāram as *viṭaṅkar*, and a liṅgam (usually emerald or some gemstone) is kept near Somaskanda in *viṭaṅkar* temples which is worshipped with reverence as *viṭaṅkar*. *viṭaṅkar*, standing for either male organ (liṅgam) or gharial snout, gives rise to Tamil names for gharial, *viṭaṅkar* > *iṭaṅkar*. This word is borrowed into Sanskrit as a loan from Dravidian: *viṭhaṅka* 'person of dissolute habits, voluptuary' (Cf. *viṭalai* in Sangam poems). In Tamil, *iṭakkar* 'indecent words; terms denoting things or actions too obscene to be uttered in good society'; *iṭakkar-aṭakkal* 'euphemism to use indirect expressions to avoid words relating to sex', *iṭakkar:iṭaṅkar* 'pot' obviously from the protuberance on the male gharial snout, *iṭaṅkar* 'narrow path' are derivable from *viṭaṅkar* with the loss of word-initial *v-*.

I tried to explain the etymology of the Dravidian name, *Viṭaṅkar* for liṅga in detail in Ref [9], and many of the earliest Śiva temples call the Liṅga in their central shrine as *Viṭaṅkar*. In the Dāruvana episode of the Liṅgapurāṇa, Bhikṣāṭana form where Śiva is naked displaying his virile beauty in front of the wives of the sages is central to assigning the Liṅga emblem to Śiva. The tantric meaning of the Tamil term, *viṭaṅkar* (as the male Liṅga) is kept alive in Saiva images. Several temples in Tamil Nadu have *viṭaṅkar* as the name of the Liṅga in their central shrine: Kāṇūr, Kaṭattūr (Uṭumalai), Tiruccūli (Ramana Maharishi's birthplace), Kuṇṭaṭam ... There is an important legend regarding the seven *Viṭaṅkar* temples in the Kāveri delta. Indra gave seven of the *viṭaṅkars* (= Liṅga) to Mucukunda cakravarti, the ancient Chola king for worship. The king installed these liṅgas (phallic symbol, called *viṭaṅkar*) in seven temples in his realm. In many temples, Somaskanda, and other Choḷa bronzes have a nearby *viṭaṅkar* liṅga stored in an ornamental casket. For example, in Vedaranyam, Tirukkalar, Nagapatinam, Tirukarayil, Tirunallaru, ... In these temples, childless couple make special pūjas to the *viṭaṅkar* liṅgams. Compare this with the devotional figures made of silver sheets in the form of the anthropomorphic axe offered to the shrine of the Muslim saint Hazrat Shah Daula (1581-1676) in the town of Gujrat (Punjab/Pakistan). Women dedicate these figures, thought to be representations of males, to the saint after the fulfilment of their wish for the birth of a son (J. Frembgen, East and West, vol. 46, 1996). At Tirunallaru, naka *viṭaṅkar* "crocodile-crocodile" liṅgam near Somaskanda family is worshiped. Like alapaḍma (alar + paḍma 'blossomed lotus'), a mudra in Natya dance, *nakar* + *viṭaṅkar* = *nakaviṭaṅkar*, both names are in use. In Chidambaram, Tillai *Viṭaṅkar* is made of crystal. Vellala farmers donated in inscriptions called *Citra mēli viṭaṅkar* which are Somaskanda bronzes. *Viṭaṅkar* liṅga made of precious gemstones, often from South East Asia (e.g., emerald *viṭaṅkar* liṅga) was likely included in the donation, but now in these temples in ruins the emerald *viṭaṅkars* are missing. At Tanjore, Rajaraja I, the Choḷa emperor gives an expanded version of Somaskanda image as Mahameru *Viṭaṅkar*, the family portrait of Śiva in the Himalayas. Like the Chola country's *Viṭaṅkar* shrines possibly a gold casket containing a gemstone *viṭaṅkar* also was donated, but due to the passage of time of a 1000 years, expensive ornaments, gemstone *viṭaṅkars* (liṅga) are lost, according to epigraphists who discovered these inscriptions.

In summary, the ancient worship of Crocodile *viṭaṅkar* and its phallic symbolism in three distinct phases of Indian religion has been described. (1) Proto-Varuṇa gharial in Indus valley civilization in the Bronze age, almost 45 centuries ago (2) Varuṇa crocodile as Anthropomorphic Axe in Post Harappan OCP sites in North India and monolithic monumental stone sculptures in South India of the Early Iron Age and (3) transitioning of crocodile *viṭaṅkar* phallic symbol and the Tamil word *viṭaṅkar* in to Śiva liṅga in temples and texts produced in the tantric Saivism in the Pallava period. Dravidian names for three species of Indian crocodiles are registered in Sanskrit literature. *Karai* is sea shore and *Karāvar* or *Karaiyar* are fishermen whose emblem is *Karā* (sea water crocodile). Because they creep and crawl on the river banks and with their legs being weak, they cannot stand up and do high-walk like "muggers", *Nakar* is the name of gharial and is modified as *nakra/nakkar* in later centuries. *Mogara* or *Makara*, related to Dravidian terms like *mosaḷe/mutalai* seem to come from **mokaḷay*. Splitting *viṭaṅkar* into *vi+taṅka* to give a Sanskrit explanation is folk etymology. *Viṭaṅkar*, meaning both crocodile (cf. *iṭaṅkar* in Sangam) and male liṅga is clearly Tamil in origin and it is a word used in tantric Śaivism for Liṅga icon in Tamil Nadu temples and Tēvāram texts from 6th century.

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