

The Formalism of the tāmra-śāsanas and  
their Beginning in Ancient India

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This article is an introductory part of the present writer's studies on the tāmra-śāsanas (Copper Plate Grants) in Ancient India. Following Dr. B. Ch. Chhabra's article in the Indian Archives, Vol. 5, he examines the content and making of the tāmra-śāsanas and points out their formalism as seen throughout India for a thousand years from 300 to 1300 A. D.

In Gupta times the grants of land and village to the brāhmaṇas were remarkably increased and numerous tāmra-śāsanas were issued by kings, queens and crown princes. But there is not extant tāmra-śāsanana made in Pre-Gupta times, although it was mentioned in the Yājñavalkya-smṛti, which was composed between first century B. C. and third century A. D. according to Dr. P. V. Kane. It is noted that the formalism of the tāmra-śāsanas are found in the inscriptions of Gautamīputra Śātakarṇi (c. 88-112 A. D.) on the walls of Buddhist caves at Karle and Nasik. These suggest the existence of the tāmra-śāsanana at that time.