A. The Maurya Alphabet (c. 300 B.C. - 185 B.C.)

The earliest definitely datable records of ancient Indian writing are the inscriptions of Maurya King Asoka engraved on rocks and pillars and found all over India. The alphabet of these inscriptions has generally been given the name of Maurya alphabet. The upper limit of the use of this alphabet cannot be fixed with any certainty. The lower limit according to Bühler cannot be far distant from Asoka's reign and must fall about B.C. 200. Besides the inscriptions of Asoka, this alphabet is also represented by several other records discovered from different parts of India.

The detailed description of the Maurya alphabet will be out of place here and for our present purpose it will be sufficient to examine the peculiarities of the alphabet then current in the North-Western part of India.

The Maurya alphabet of this region is represented by:

1. the Kalsi rock-edicts,
2. the Delhi-Topra pillar-edicts, and
3. the Pathyar rock inscription.

1 Indian Palaeography (Eng. ed.), p.50
3 Ibid., pp.119 ff., and Plates facing pages 122, 123, 128, and 134.
1. The Kalsi Rock-edicts

The Kalsi edicts are engraved on a rock situated at Kalsi, a village in the Chakrata tehsil of the Dehra Dun district of Uttar Pradesh. The letters mostly show cursive forms. The following peculiarities deserve mention:

1. The left limb of initial ā is occasionally represented by a small vertical or a curved line attached to the right hand vertical by means of a small horizontal bar, e.g., ṃ (Ed. XIII, 1.38), ṃ (Ed. XIII, 1.39).

2. k has a dagger like form but also shows sometimes a highly cursive form, e.g., ṯ (Ed. XIII, 1.39).

3. The letter kh has a big round loop at the bottom, e.g., ḷ (Ed. XIV, 1.21).

4. ch has sometimes a peculiar shape. It consists of two circles with a small vertical line standing on the point of contract and bearing a serif at the upper end, e.g., ḷ (Ed. V, 1.14).

5. ā, which is mostly cursive, possesses a loop in the middle, e.g., ṅ (Ed. XIV, 1.22).

6. Amongst the As'okan inscriptions, only in these edicts do we find the forms of ā and ā, e.g., ḷ (Ed. XIII, 1.37) and ḷ (Ed. XII, 1.31).

7. No signs for r and ṅ can be traced in this version.

Medial Vowels

The following peculiarities of medial vowels leading to later forms may be noticed:

1. Medial ā is occasionally represented by a stroke slanting downwards, e.g., in āā (Ed. XIV, 1.21).

2. Medial ā is sometimes marked by a slanting stroke placed over the top of the letter, e.g., in gā (Ed. XIII, 1.39).

5 The line numbers refer to those indicated in the Hultzsch's plates.
2. The Delhi-Topra Pillar-edicts

These edicts are engraved on a monolithic pillar which originally stood in a village named Topra in the Ambala district of Haryana State.

The first six edicts display the following peculiarities:

1. Unlike kh of Kalsi these edicts show the letter with a dot instead of a loop at the foot of the vertical, e.g., \( \overline{\text{7}} \) (Ed. V, l.7).

2. \( \text{j} \) does not show a loop as in Kalsi, e.g., \( \overline{\text{8}} \) (Ed. VI, l.1).

3. The upper half of \( \text{m} \) is occasionally made cursive, e.g., \( \overline{\text{9}} \) (Ed. IV, l.3).

4. A rare \( \overline{\text{l}} \) consisting of \( \overline{\text{q}} \) with a dot below occurs in the Ed. V, line 8: \( \overline{\text{?}} \)

In the seventh edict, the letters mostly show cursive forms. The following features deserve notice:

1. The curves at the left end of \( \text{a} \) show sometimes greater bend, e.g., \( \overline{\text{d}} \) (1.15).

2. \( \text{kh} \) shows a dot at the bottom of a bent vertical, e.g., \( \overline{\text{?}} \) (1.24).

3. \( \text{dh} \) has a spiral form, e.g., \( \overline{\text{d}} \) (1.22).

4. The letter \( \text{t} \) shows only two strokes instead of the usual three, the longer one sloping downwards to the left and the shorter to the right, e.g., \( \overline{\text{A}} \) (1.23).

5. In \( \text{y} \) the two side verticals are sometimes unusually prolonged upwards, e.g., \( \overline{\text{u}} \) (1.29).
3. The Pathyar Rock Inscription

The Pathyar rock inscription was found by Dr. Vogel near the village of Pathyar in the Kangra district of Himachal Pradesh. The inscription consists of two lines. The characters of the inscription do not display any significant peculiarities except that the letters are of considerable size, the last one being not less than 1\(\frac{1}{4}\)" high.

B. The Post Maurya Alphabet (c. 184 B.C. to the beginning of the Christian era).

The post Maurya alphabet of North-Western India is represented among others by the following records:

(1) the coins of the Indo-Grecian kings Agathocles and Pantaleon,

(2) the inscriptions of the Kṣatrapa king Soḍāsa,

(3) the Kanhiara (Kangra) rock inscription, and

(4) the Bathastal (Jammu) cave inscription.

The alphabet of these records displays two remarkable tendencies: (1) the shortening and the equalisation of the upper vertical lines, (2) the development of top marks represented by serifs, nail heads or triangular


7 EI, II, p.199, Nos.2, 5, and Plates; Cunningham, ASR. III, p.30, No.1, Pl.XIII.

8 EI, VII, 116, No.16, and Plate. Dr. Vogel assigns this inscription to the 2nd and the 3rd centuries A.D. Ibid. But the forms of most of the letters, e.g., of đa, sa, sa agree more with those of the 1st century B.C. than of the 2nd and 3rd centuries A.D.

wedges.\textsuperscript{10}

Besides, we notice the following developments:

1. \textit{k} occurs in a developed form with bent bars in the Cunningham's inscription of Śoḍāsa, e.g., \( \bar{\text{i}} \) (l.1).

2. The letter \( \text{d} \) shows a cursive form with its direction changed from right to left in the inscriptions of Śoḍāsa, e.g., \( \text{\&} \) (No.2, l.1).

3. In the same inscriptions we find \( \text{r} \) with a curve at the foot of the vertical, e.g., \( \text{\&} \) (No.2, l.4, No.5, l.1).

4. \( \text{s} \) occurs in a cursive form in the coins of Agathocles and Pantaleon: \( \text{\&} \) In the inscriptions of Śoḍāsa and in the Kanhiara inscription it is angular in shape and may be regarded as the precursor of the \( \text{s} \) of the subsequent Kuṣāṇa inscriptions, e.g., \( \text{\&} \) (Śoḍāsa, No.2, l.3), \( \text{\&} \) (Kanhiara, l.1).

5. The advanced forms of medial \( \text{i} \) and \( \text{o} \) are noticed in the inscriptions of Śoḍāsa, e.g., in \( \text{\&} \) (No.2, l.2), in \( \text{\&} \) (Cunningham's, l.2,) and in \( \text{\&} \) (No.2, l.3).

6. The medial \( \text{r} \) consisting of a downstroke slanting towards the left is found for the first time in an inscription of this period discovered by Cunningham at Mora near Mathura,\textsuperscript{11} e.g., \( \text{\&} \) (l.1).

C. The Alphabet of the Kuṣāṇa Inscriptions

The inscriptions of the Kuṣāṇa Kings - Kaniṣka,

\textsuperscript{10} The wedges are noticed prominently in the Bathastal cave inscription.

\textsuperscript{11} ASR., Vol. XX, p.48, Pl. V, fig. 4.
Huviska and Vāsudeva, discovered from Mathura and its vicinity, illustrate the next step in the development of the Brāhmi of North-Western India. The alphabet of these records displays the following developments:

1. The left limb of $a$ is occasionally represented by a wavy line, e.g., $\tilde{a}$ (No.VII C, 1.1).

2. The bar expressing the length of the vowel in $a$ is attached slightly above the foot of the vertical, e.g., $\dot{a}$ (No.VIIIB, 1.1).

3. In $i$ the earlier three dots are replaced by three strokes one of which is sometimes placed vertically, e.g., $\bar{i}$ (No.XVII, 1.4).

4. $u$ shows a curve at the right end of the base stroke, e.g., $\bar{u}$ (No.XXXIV, 1.1).

5. The base of $e$ is mostly at the top, e.g., $\approx$ (No.10, 1.1).

6. The earlier straight bar in $k$ becomes sometimes a curved line, e.g., $\underline{k}$ (No.XII, 1.1).

7. $a$ shows several peculiar forms, e.g., $\overline{a}$ (No.XVII, 1.1), $\overline{a}$ (No.XII, 1.1), $\overline{a}$ (No.VII A, 1.1), $\overline{a}$ (No.XI, 1.2).

8. $a$ displays larger bulge on the right and its lower end is drawn further to the right, e.g., $\overline{a}$ (No.XX, 1.1).

9. In $a$ the base line is curved, e.g., $\overline{a}$ (No.XVII, 1.3), or looped, e.g., $\otimes$ (No.XIII, 1.3) or made angular, e.g., $\otimes$ (No.XXXIV, 1.4).

10. $y$ mostly shows a hook, in the left limb, e.g., $\setminus$ (No.XV, 1.1).

11. In $\text{£}$ the two side limbs come closer and the earlier slanting stroke becomes a horizontal bar connecting the interior of the two limbs, e.g., $\text{£}$ (No.XXXIV, 1.2).

12. In $\text{ª}$ the central bar is sometimes drawn further to the right and touches the right vertical, e.g., $\text{ª}$ (No.XVIII, 1.3).

13. $\text{ª}$ shows occasionally a loop in the left limb, e.g., $\text{ª}$ (No.VA, 1.1).

**Medial Vowels**

The following developments are noticeable in the treatment of the medial vowels:

1. Medial $\text{a}$ is sometimes expressed by a downstroke attached to the top of the letter on the right side, e.g., $\text{a}$ (No.XVIII, 1.6).

2. Medial $\text{i}$ is generally expressed by a long sickle shaped curve placed over the consonant, e.g., $\text{i}$ (No.IIIA, 1.1).

3. Medial $\text{u}$ is expressed occasionally by a curve drawn to the left and attached to the lower end of the consonant, e.g., $\text{u}$ (No.XVII, 1.1).

4. Medial $\text{r}$ is likewise expressed occasionally by a curve open to the right, e.g., $\text{r}$ (No.XIII, 1.1).

5. Medial $\text{o}$ sometimes consists of two strokes placed over the consonant and rising upwards to the right and left respectively, e.g., $\text{o}$ (No.XVIII, 1.3).

**D. The Gupta Alphabet (4th and 5th centuries A.D.).**

The further development of our alphabet is illustrated by the following records of the 4th and the 5th centuries A.D., which represent the western variety of the Northern Indian alphabet of the 4th and the 5th centuries A.D., generally called the Gupta-alphabet:

(1) the Abbottabad inscription of the time of
Kadambeśvaradāsa, (Gupta) Year 25 = A.D. 344,

(2) the Mathura inscription of Candragupta II, G.E. 61 = A.D. 380,

(3) the Mathura stone inscription of Candra Gupta II,

(4) the Shorkot inscription of the year 83,

(5) the Tusam rock inscription,

(6) the Lahore copper seal inscription of the Maharaja Mahēśvaranāga, and

(7) the Bower manuscript.

The Abbottabad inscription shows the advanced form of m with curved left limb, and occasionally provided with a loop at the left lower end, e.g., \( \text{\textcircled{M}} \) (1.2).

The Mathura inscription of G.E. 61 displays the following developments:

1. The length of the vowel in the initial \( a \) is marked by a curve open to the left and attached to the lower end of the right hand vertical, e.g., \( \text{\textcircled{a}} \) (1.8).

2. The letters g and \( s \) show flat tops and their right hand verticals are prolonged downwards, e.g., \( \text{\textcircled{g}} \) (1.5).

3. A horizontal line replaces the earlier central dot in th, e.g., \( \text{\textcircled{t}} \) (1.12).

13 EI., XXX, p.59, and Plate.
14 EI., XXI, pp. 1-9, and Plate.
15 Fleet, CII. III (Inscriptions of Early Gupta Kings) pp. 25-27, Pl. IIIA.
16 EI., XVI, p.15, and Plate.
17 Fleet, CII. III, pp.269-70, Pl.XLA.
18 Ibid., pp.282-83, Pl. XLIII A.
19 Hoernle, The Bower Manuscript, ASI (New Imperial Series) Vol. XXII.
4. The left arm of \( y \) is looped, e.g., \( \text{ jquery} \) (1.15).

5. \( s \) shows a hook instead of a circular loop at the lower end of the left limb, e.g., \( \text{ vertical} \) (1.3).

**Medial Vowels**

1. The curve of medial \( i \) is lengthened downwards and sometimes reaches the level of the bottom of the consonant, e.g., \( \text{ curve} \) (1.13).

2. Medial \( u \) is expressed as in some of the Kušāna inscriptions (see above p.7) by a curve attached to the lower end of the right hand vertical, e.g., \( \text{ curve} \) (1.10).

3. Medial \( o \) is also formed in the earlier fashion by two slanting strokes above the consonant, one turning to the right and the other to the left, e.g., \( \text{ slant} \) (1.15).

Fleet's Mathura inscription of Candragupta II displays similar developments in the treatment of medial vowels and shows two instances of medial \( au \), formed like the medial \( o \) of the Mathura inscription noted above, with the addition of a third stroke in the middle, e.g., \( \text{ third stroke} \) (1.6), \( \text{ third stroke} \) (1.7).

The inscription, besides, shows the form of \( s \) resembling that of the Mathura inscription, noticed above, e.g., \( \text{ notice} \) (11. 3, 7, 8).

It also shows \( m \) with curved left limb which agrees with the form of the Abbottabad inscription noted above, but does not show a loop at the left lower end, as is occasionally the case with the form of the latter inscription, e.g., \( \text{ loop} \) (11. 6, 7, 10).

The Shorkot inscription displays the following
peculiarities:
1. The top marks of the letters are represented by hollow triangles and in the letter with more than one vertical, the triangle is placed at the top end of each vertical, e.g., $\text{J}$

2. $k$ shows an angular cross bar in the middle and a loop at the lower end, e.g., $\text{k}$

3. $th$ in the ligature $tth$ is spiral in shape, e.g., $\text{J}$

4. $n$ has an uncommon angular form, e.g., $\text{N}$

5. $b$ shows a bend in the left limb, e.g., $\text{b}$

6. The form of $m$ resembles that of the Fleet's Mathura inscription noted above, e.g., $\text{M}$

Medial Vowels

The medial $u$ and $o$ are formed in the same fashion as in the Mathura inscriptions. Exceptions occur in $bu$, $pu$ and $ksu$ where medial $u$ has been denoted by a loop instead of a curve, e.g., $\text{H}$

The Tusarn rock inscription shows a developed form of initial $a$ with an open curve in the left limb, which agrees with the later form of the letter, e.g., $\text{A}$ (1.3).

The letters $m$ with curved left limb, e.g.,

$\text{M}$ (1.5), $x$ with looped left arm, e.g., $\text{X}$ (1.5) and $s$ with hooked left limb, e.g., $\text{S}$ (1.5) resemble the forms of the Mathura inscriptions.

The inscription shows the rare $\text{H}$ with two curves, e.g., $\text{H}$ (1.1).
The Lahore Seal of the Maharaja Mahesvaranaga shows developed horizontal top bars. Besides, we notice m with a straight (not curved) left hand vertical, e.g., \( m \) (1.1) and h with suppressed base stroke and with its right hand curve turning sharply towards the left, e.g., \( h \) (1.1).

The Bower Manuscript

The writing of the Bower manuscript is not uniform and appears to be the work of at least four scribes. According to Hoernle only the alphabet of the Parts I-III can be said with certainty to represent the western variety of the Gupta-alphabet.

The following forms leading to the later developments deserve notice:

Initial Vowels and Consonants (Table I)

1. The initial a shows at the lower end of the left limb a curve open to the left, similar to one found in the Tusam inscription, e.g., \( a \).

2. In the initial \( \dot{a} \), the length of the vowel is marked by a curve as in the Mathura inscription of G.E. 61, e.g., \( \dot{a} \).

3. In i the lower dot is furnished with a tail, e.g., \( i \).

4. In the initial \( \ddot{i} \) the upper and the lower dots of the

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20 Ibid., Introduction, p.xxx.

21 Ibid., p.xxxi. The writing of only these three parts is uniform and appears to be the work of a single person who according to Hoernle must have come from Kashmir or Udyana (Swat), ibid.

22 These have been taken from Hoernle's Tables I-III, facing pages xxvi-xxvii, xxxviii.
ancient sign\textsuperscript{23} which consisted of the four dots in the position of a square, have been converted into a vertical stroke with a wedge at each end, e.g., \textsuperscript{3}.

5. The initial \( \ddot{u} \) is formed like \( u \) with the addition of a small slanting stroke attached to the back of \( u \) near the top, e.g., \( \dddot{u} \).

6. The initial \( r \) shows a peculiar form\textsuperscript{24}, e.g., \( \mathcal{r} \).

7. The initial \( al \) is formed like \( a \) with the addition of cursive stroke at the apex on the right side, e.g., \( \mathcal{a} \).

8. The initial \( o \) shows a curved base, e.g., \( \mathcal{b} \).

9. The initial \( au \) is formed like \( o \) with the addition of a hook at the back, e.g., \( \mathcal{o} \).

10. \( k \) shows occasionally a loop on the left, e.g., \( \mathcal{k} \).

11. \( \dddot{u} \) shows a wedge or a button at the right top end, e.g., \( \mathcal{u} \).

12. The left hand vertical of \( j \) is slightly bent and the uppermost horizontal stroke merges with the top bar, e.g., \( \mathcal{j} \).

13. \( \dddot{j} \) shows a flat top, e.g., \( \mathcal{j} \).

14. The right and left hand curves of \( u \) are turned sharply round, e.g., \( \mathcal{u} \).

15. \( \ddot{n} \) is angular in shape and resembles the form of the Shorkot inscription, e.g., \( \mathcal{n} \).

\textsuperscript{23} This sign is noticed in the Bühler's Mathura Jain Inscription No.9, EI.-II, pp. 195 ff. A somewhat earlier form than that of the present form of the Bower manuscript is found in an inscription from Kulu, of uncertain date, where the vowel consists of a straight vertical, without the wedges, with a dot on its either side, vide ASI. An. Rep. 1902-3, p.14.

\textsuperscript{24} Bühler's description of the sign as consisting of \( \mathcal{ra} \) with a medial \( r \), does not seem to be quite true, Ind. Pal., p.68.
16. The loop or the curve of ph marking the aspirate is attached to the right of p instead of on the inside, e.g., यः यः

17. bh shows a triangular wedge on the left and a cursive downstroke on the right, e.g., भः

18. m with the curved left limb resembles the form of the Mathura and Tusam inscriptions, e.g., मः

19. यः shows a loop in the left limb and the form agrees with those of the Mathura and Tusam inscriptions. Occasionally it is bipartite in shape, e.g., यः यः

20. The vertical of लः is sometimes lengthened downwards and the left hand curve is turned round, e.g., लः

21. दः of Hoernle's Part VII occasionally shows a squarish form with a flat top which closely resembles the Saradā form of the letter, e.g., दः

22. दः shows in the left limb a wedge which is sometimes open or inverted, e.g., दः दः

Medial Vowels (Table II)

1. Medial आः is expressed by a curve, or a knob or a small downstroke attached to the right top end of the consonant, e.g., आः आः

2. The curve of medial ऐः is sometimes inordinately lengthened and drawn below the level of the bottom of the letter, e.g., ऐः

3. Medial ऋः is rendered either by a cursive horizontal line attached to the bottom of the consonant on the left side, or by the subscribed sign for initial ऋः, e.g., ऋः ऋः

4. Medial उः is expressed by a curve open to the left and attached to the lower end of the consonant: उः

5. Medial एः is sometimes formed by a cursive upward
stroke placed over the top of the letter. Usually it is expressed by a knob attached to the left top end of the consonant, e.g., अ ॐ

6. Medial ai is expressed either by two superscribed strokes or by a single stroke combined with a knob at the left top end, e.g., औ ओ

7. Medial o is expressed either by two buttons attached to both sides of the top of the letter, or by the two superscribed strokes, as in the Tusam inscription, e.g., ओ ओ

8. Medial au is formed by two superscribed strokes combined with the button at the right top end or by a single superscribed stroke combined with the sign for medial अ; e.g., ओ ओ

Ligatures (Table III)

The superscribed र in the ligature रव is expressed by a short vertical to which the curve of व is attached in one continuous stroke, e.g., र

E. The Post-Gupta Alphabet

(6th and the 7th Centuries A.D.)

In the following records of the 6th and the 7th centuries A.D., discovered from different parts of North-Western India, we find further development of the forms of the western Gupta-alphabet leading to those of the Sāradā in the 8th and the 9th centuries:

(1) the Kura inscription of Toramāṇa, 24
(2) the Nirmand plate of Mahāśāmanta Mahārāja Samudrasena; 25

24 EL., I, p.239
25 CII, III, pp. 286 ff., Pl.XLIV.
(3) the Sonepat seal of Harṣa-Vardhana,\(^{26}\)
(4) the Hatun rock inscription of Paṭoladeva,\(^{27}\) and
(5) the Gilgit manuscripts.\(^{28}\)

The developments and the peculiarities of forms displayed by these records are discussed in detail below.

I. VOWELS

1. \(ā\) shows a curve open to the left in the lower portion of the left limb similar to one found in the Tusam inscription and the Bower manuscript above.\(^{29}\) In the Gilgit manuscripts, the upper portion of the left limb is sometimes suppressed and the curve attached direct to the top bar. Besides, a triangular wedge at the foot of the right hand, vertical on the left side, often found in the Sāradā, constitutes an innovation, e.g., \(\text{ā}\) (1.2, 1.4). In the Hatun inscription the upper portion of the left half consists of a cursive than the usual vertical downstroke, e.g., \(\text{ā}\) (1.6). In the Kura inscription the letter has an uncommon form, e.g., \(\text{ā}\) (1.8).

2. The curve marking the length of the vowel in \(ā\) noticed above in the Mathura inscription of G.E. 61

26 Ibid., pp. 231-232, Pl.XXIII B. The facsimilie is not clear enough for a detailed paleographic study.

27 EI, XXX, pp. 226 ff., Pl. XLIV.

28 Facsimilies edited by Dr. Raghuvir and Dr. Lokesh Chandra.

The forms of letters below have been taken from the facsimilies of the Satapitaka, Vol.10, Parts I & II. The numerals in the Roman and the Arabic refer to the parts and folios respectively.

29 Supra pp. 11, 13.
and the Bower manuscript, is regularly found in the Kura inscription, e.g., (1.12), the Nirmand plate, e.g., (1.13), and the Gilgit manuscripts, e.g., (1.2, 1.1). The vowel shows a peculiar form in the Kura inscription, e.g., (1.12).

3. The initial occurs in the Nirmand plate both in the ancient triangular form and the later form of the Bower manuscript, with the third dot furnished with a tail, e.g., (ll. 4, 6). In the Gilgit manuscripts the later form alone is used, e.g., (1.10, 1.4).

4. In the initial and , the development is marked by the prolongation of the base curve which sometimes reaches up to the level of the top of the letter, e.g., (Nirmand Pl., 1.14), (Gilgit MSS., 1.2, 1.2; 3, 1.4).

5. The initial which amongst the records referred to above occurs only in the Gilgit manuscripts, shows a slight development from that of the Bower manuscript noted above. The development consists in the prolongation of the base curve and the use of a wedge at the left top end, e.g., (1.2, 1.3).

II. CONSONANTS

1. Always shows except in the Kura inscription a loop on the left and a downward prolongation of the earlier bent bar on the right, e.g., (Nirmand Pl., 1.16), (Hatun, 1.3), (Gilgit MSS., 1.10, 1.3).

30 Supra pp.9, 13.
2. *kh* displays significant change in the Gilgit manuscripts. It shows a flat top, a vertical (occasionally furnished with a tail at the lower end) on the left, and the ancient loop, flattened on one side, on the right, e.g., \( \text{ष} \) \( \otimes \) (I.17, 11.2, 4).

3. *g* is generally flat at the top. In the Hatun inscription, it shows an upward stroke and in the Gilgit manuscripts, a triangular wedge at the foot of the left vertical, e.g., \( \hat{\text{ג}} \) (Hatun., I.1), \( \hat{\text{ג}} \) (Gilgit., I.17, I.3). In the Kura inscription, the letter has a cursive top and the left downstroke shows a curve at the lower end, e.g., \( \text{ג} \) (1.2).

4. *q* displays marked development in the Gilgit manuscripts. It has no base horizontal line connecting the right and the left curves. The two curves are united and are supported on the right by a small upward stroke. The letter occurs in the same form in the Śāradā, e.g., \( \text{q} \) (1.17, 1.5).

5. In the Hatun inscription and the Gilgit manuscripts the left limb of \( \text{t} \) is suppressed and the right one converted into a curve, e.g., \( \text{ן} \) (Hatun. 1.7), \( \text{ן} \) (Gilgit., I.8, 1.3). The same form is frequently met with later in the Śāradā.

6. *th* is flattened at the top and on the right in the Nirmand plate and the Gilgit manuscripts, e.g., \( \text{ג} \) (Nirmand., II.5, II), \( \text{ג} \) (Gilgit., I.7, 1.4).

7. *n* occurs in a developed form in the Hatun inscription and the Gilgit manuscripts. Its right stout limb has been converted into a vertical and the letter thus closely agrees with that of the Śāradā, e.g., \( \text{ן} \) (Hatun., 1.2), \( \text{ן} \) (Gilgit., I.17, 1.2).

8. In the same records, *p* shows slight downward pro-
longation of the right hand vertical, e.g., \( \Omega \) (Hatun, 1.2), \( \Omega \) (Gilgit I.6, 1.2).

9. In bh, the right hand curve noticed above in the Bower manuscript (p.12), is drawn further to the right in the Hatun inscription and the Gilgit manuscripts. The left limb is represented by a wedge in the Gilgit manuscripts and by a small downstroke with a serif or fork at the lower end, in the Hatun inscription, e.g., \( \partial \) (Hatun, 11.1,3) \( \partial \) (Gilgit, I.5, 1.2).

10. m shows generally a straight left limb and a slightly slanting base stroke, e.g., \( \varphi \) (Nirmand., 1.5), \( \Omega \) (Hatun., 1.2), \( \Omega \) (Gilgit., I.7, 1.1). In the Kura inscription the letter retains its earlier form with a curved left limb, e.g., (1.1): \( \psi \) In the Nirmand plate, the letter shows occasionally a loop in the left limb, e.g., \( \psi \) (1.16).

11. y shows both the earlier tripartite form with curved or looped left limb and the later bipartite form, e.g., \( \zeta \) \( \zeta \) (Kura., 1.2), \( \zeta \) \( \zeta \) (Nirmand., 11.12, 16), \( \zeta \) (Hatun., 1.4), \( \zeta \) (Gilgit., I.6, 1.4). The transitional form leading to the bipartite one is noticed in the Gilgit manuscripts, e.g., \( \zeta \) (I.6, 1.4).

12. y shows a flat top and a vertical on the right in the Hatun inscription and the Gilgit manuscripts. Its left limb is angular in the Hatun inscription while in the Gilgit manuscripts it is generally cursive, e.g., \( \partial \) (Hatun., 1.2), \( \partial \) (Gilgit., I.17, 1.5).
13. The squarish form of £ occurring in the Bower manuscript Part VII and noted above, is also found sometimes in the Gilgit manuscripts, with the difference that in the latter we find a wedge in place of the loop at the lower end of the left vertical, e.g., $ (Gilgit., I.17, 1.2).

14. $ shows marked development in the Hatun inscription and the Gilgit manuscripts, e.g., $ (Hatun., I.4), $ (Gilgit., I.17, 1.2). It differs from the earlier form by the conversion of the hook on the left, into an open triangle in the Hatun inscription and into a wedge in the Gilgit manuscripts, and by the downward elongation of the right hand vertical. The letter shows a peculiar angular form in the Kura inscription, e.g., $ (1.11).

15. The jihvāmūliya has a rounded form in the Nirmand plate and a triangular one in the Gilgit manuscripts, e.g., $ (Nirmand., I.6), $ (Gilgit., I.17, 1.1).

16. The upadhāniya occurs in earlier circular form in the Nirmand plate, e.g., $ (1.2), but shows significant change in the Gilgit manuscripts. Its form resembles $ with a horizontal line below, e.g., $ (I.17, 1.2). The same form is met with later in the Sāradā.

III MEDIAL VOWELS

1. In the Hatun inscription, the medial ā in jā and ṭā has been expressed by a curve attached to

32 Supra p.13.
the top on the right side, e.g., \( \text{\textdegree} \) (1.2). The same peculiarity is noticed later in the Saradā.

2. In the same inscription, the medial \( r \) is generally made angular in shape, e.g., \( \text{\textdegree} \) (ll. 6, 7). There is nothing particularly remarkable about the other medial vowels which continue to be denoted in the same way as in the Bower manuscript above.

IV. LIGATURES

1. \( k \) in combination with the vowels \( u, u \) and \( r \) and as the first member of a ligature retains its earlier form with a cross bar, e.g., \( \text{\textdegree} \) (Nirmand., ll. 4, 8, 14), \( \text{\textdegree} \) (Hatun., ll. 3, 6), \( \text{\textdegree} \) (Gilgit., I. 18, ll. 2, 5, 7).

2. The subscribed \( r \) in the Gilgit manuscripts is marked by a thin upward stroke on the left, e.g., \( \text{\textdegree} \) (I.17, 1.2).

3. \( y \) as the final element in ligatures is always bipartite in form. Its right end is sometimes drawn as high as the top of the letter, e.g., \( \text{\textdegree} \) (Kura. 1.1), \( \text{\textdegree} \) (Nirmand., 1.13), \( \text{\textdegree} \) (Gilgit., II. 110, 1.6). In the Sonepat seal it has a characteristic appearance, e.g., \( \text{\textdegree} \) (1.6).

\( \text{Virāma} \) is represented in the Gilgit manuscripts by a long slanting stroke drawn to the right of the vowelless consonant which is sometimes reduced to half of its size, e.g., \( \text{\textdegree} \) (II. 114, 1.6). The same method of marking the end of a sentence is followed later in the Saradā.

F. THE POST GUPTA ALPHABET (continued)

In the post Gupta alphabet of the beginning of the 8th century A.D. represented by:
(1) the Baramaor and Chittrahi image inscriptions of Meruvarman,
(2) the Gum stone inscription of Sāmanta Āśādhadeva,
(3) the Tur rock inscription, and
(4) the Proli-ra-gala inscription of Mṛtyunjayavarman,
the letters mostly retain their earlier forms and do not display any marked development except that the letter a now occurs exclusively in the bipartite form.
The following peculiarities deserve notice.

1. The length of the vowel in ā has been expressed in the Śakti image inscription of Chittrahi in an unusual way by a downward vertical attached to the foot of the vertical on the right, e.g., \( \overset{\downarrow}{\hat{a}} \) (1.1). In the Laksana image inscription of Baramaor it is marked by a down stroke attached to the top of the vertical on the right side, as in the Nāgarī, e.g., \( \underline{b} \) (1.1).

2. The letter t occurs in its earlier form with two cursive limbs. The advanced form, found in the Gilgit manuscripts and the Hatun inscription above (p.17) and occurring regularly in the Sāradā, is not found in the records under consideration, e.g., \( \underline{b} \) (Baramaor, No.5, 1.2), \( \underline{j} \) (Chittrahi, No.9, 1.1), \( \underline{a} \) (Gum, 1.1).

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29 Vogel: *Antiquities of Chamba State* Part I, Nos.5-8, pp. 138 ff. Pls. VII-X.
30 *Ibid.* No.9, 145-47, pl. XI.
32 *Ibid.* No.11, 148-50, pl. XI.
33 *Ibid.* No. 8, p. 145, pl. X.
34 *Ibid.* No. 5, 141-42, pl. X.
3. द in the Baramaor inscriptions shows a short vertical at the right end of the base stroke leading to the characteristic tail of the modern Devanāgarī letter, e.g., द (No.5, l.1), द (No.6, l.1, 2).

4. The letter न shows a unique form in the Nandi inscription of Baramaor resembling the squarish न with a loop in the left limb, e.g., न (1.1).

5. In the Baramaor inscriptions म mostly shows a loop on the left, e.g., म (No.5, l.1, 2), म (No.6, l.6), म (No.7, l.3).

6. As pointed out above, य in our records is exclusively bipartite in shape, e.g., य (Baramaor, No.5, l.1), य (Gum, l.4), य (Proli-ra-gala, l.2).

7. The letter र occurs in a tailed form in the Baramaor inscriptions and in the Proli-ra-gala rock inscription, e.g., र (Baramaor, No.6, l.2); र (No.7, l.1, 3), र (Proli-ra-gala, l.1).

8. The squarish form of झ is found only in the Śakti image inscription of Chitrārāh and in the Tur inscription. In the other records it retains its earlier cursive form, e.g., झ (Śakti, l.1), झ (Tur, l.1).

9. In झ of the Gum inscription of Āśādhādeva the upper portion of the left half is missing, e.g., झ (l.1, 3).

10. The letter झ occurs in our records mostly with an open wedge in the left limb, e.g., झ (Baramaor, 36 Ibid., No.7, 143-44, pl. X.)
No.7, l.1; No.8, l.1.), \( \sqrt{ } \) (Gum, l.2),
(Froli-ra-gala, l.1). An uncommon form
with a big loop on the left occurs in the Gum
inscription of Āśādhadeva, e.g., \( \sqrt{ } \) (l.3).

**MEDIAL VOWELS**

Nothing is particularly remarkable about the medial
vowels except that (1) the superscribed strokes of the
medial e, ai, o and au in the Baramaor and the Chittrahi
inscriptions are highly ornamental and generally show a
loop in the middle, e.g., \( \sqrt{ } \) (Baramaor, No.5, l.1;
No.7, l.1); (2) the curves of medial \( \i \) and \( \i \) in the
Gum inscription and the Tur inscription are drawn down
below the level of the bottom of the consonants, e.g.,
\( \sqrt{ } \) (Gum, l.1), \( \sqrt{ } \) (Tur l.1). In the latter, the
curves show a characteristic curl at the upper end.

**LIGATURES**

Particularly remarkable among the ligatures is the
ligature nd in the Baramaor inscription No.7 where the
subscribed d consists of a mere loop, e.g., \( \sqrt{ } \) (l.3).

A link between the later script of North Western
India and the Śāradā script is furnished by the Svaim
(Chamba) inscription of Rājānaka Bhogatā\(^37\) which on paleo-
graphic grounds may be assigned to the second quarter of
the 8th century A.D. The characters of this inscription
are closely related to those of the Śāradā alphabet as is
shown by the forms of \( \bar{ } \), \( \bar{ } \), \( \bar{ } \), which occur with very slight
modifications in the Śāradā of the following period. We
may discuss the forms of these letters in detail below:

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\(^{37}\) Antiquities. I, No.12, pp.150-52, Pl. XIII.
1. The letter ꞌ occurs with a suppressed base stroke and is found in the same form in the Śāradā. Though this form of ꞌ has already been noted above in the Gilgit manuscripts\(^{38}\) yet our record provides the earliest illustration of its use in the inscription, e.g., ꞌ (1.2).

2. Ꞟ differs from its earlier bipartite form by the downward elongation of the right hand vertical and occurs in the same form in the Śāradā, e.g., Ꞟ (1.1).

3. The letter Ꞝ occurs regularly in a squarish form and shows a solid loop on the left. The loop and the square however are not (except in one case) so well defined as in the Śāradā, e.g., Ꞝ (11.1.2).

4. Ꞗ also exhibits a later stage of development and comes very close to the Śāradā ꞗ. Its right hand vertical is prolonged downwards and it regularly shows a wedge or a serif in the left limb, e.g., Ꞗ (11.1, 2).

5. The brief epigraph, however, shows an earlier form of ꞊ as found in the Baramaor and the Chitrarhi inscriptions above (p.22), e.g., ꞊ (1.1). The characteristic form of Śāradā, the earlier instances of which we noted above in the Gilgit manuscripts and the Hatun inscription (p.17) is not found in this record.

We have studied above in broad outline the development of the Brāhmī of North-Western India from the 3rd century B.C. to the middle of the 8th century A.D. The results of our study are illustrated in the

\(^{38}\) Supra p. 17.
accompanying table which illustrates the various stages of the development of this alphabet from its first appearance in the 3rd century B.C. up to the advent of the Śāradā alphabet, the detailed description of which we shall reserve for the next chapter.
# Table No. 1

**The Brahmi Alphabet of North-Western India**

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<th>C. 700 A.D. to 750 A.D.</th>
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This table illustrates the evolution of the Brahmi alphabet from its origins in the 3rd century BC to the 7th century AD, highlighting changes in script style and character form across different historical periods.
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<th>2nd-3rd Cent.</th>
<th>4th-5th Cent.</th>
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**Medial Vowels**

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