CHAPTER II

THE ŚARADĀ ALPHABET

A. The Earliest Phase

The Śaradā alphabet makes its appearance for the first time in the later half of the 8th century A.D. The earliest known document in Śaradā characters is the stone inscription from Hund (District Attock, West Pakistan) dated samvat 168-69 presumably of the Harṣa era and corresponding to A.D. 774-775.

Regarding the name Śaradā alphabet, Bühler observes, "The name Śaradā means either 'letters sacred to Śaradā,' i.e., Sarasvatī, or it may be taken as the 'letters which are Sarasvatī,' i.e., (visible) speech. Śaradā is considered one of the tutelary deities of the country (Kashmir) which is frequently named after her Śaradā-desa or Śaradā-mandala. In India, too, writing in general is called Sarasvatī or Sarasvatīmukha, "the face of the goddess of speech." Śaradā or Sarasvatī has been the tutelary deity of Kashmir from the earliest times and consequently Kashmir has been named after her as Śaradā-mandala or

1 EI, XXII, pp.97 ff. and Plate.
2 As suggested by D.R. Sahni, ibid. p.98
3 Bühler's statement (Ind. Pal., p.76) that the oldest known Śaradā inscriptions are the two Baijnath Praśastis from Kārigrāma (District Kānga) dated A.D. 804, has been refuted by Kielhorn, (Ind. Ant. Vol. XX, p.154) and Vogel (Antiquities I, pp. 43-44), and the generally accepted date of the second Praśasti is Saka 1126 = A.D. 1204.

3 Kashmir Report, p.31.
Sāradāpītha. This as pointed out by Grierson⁴, accounts for the name of the alphabet.⁵ However, the name itself does not seem to be of very early origin. It does not seem to have come into vogue even as late as the first half of the 11th century A.D. According to Alberuni⁶ the alphabet that was used in Kashmir in his time was known as Siddhamātrikā. It would thus appear that the present name had not yet become popular, for it is understandable that Alberuni who gives a very detailed and the accurate account of the valley of Kashmir would not have failed to mention it. Besides, neither Kalhana nor any other known early writer from Kashmir uses the word Sāradā as the name of a writing. It is only used as the name of a goddess and when conjoint with pītha, mandala etc. it denotes the land of Kashmir.⁷

Thus in the present state of our knowledge we are not in a position to say as to when exactly the name originated. This much is certain that it must have originated in Kashmir where the alphabet remains in use to this day.

⁵ Little credence need be placed in the tradition recounted by Elmslie in his Kashmir Vocabulary p.149 according to which the Sāradā alphabet was introduced into Kashmir by certain Sāradānandana. As pointed out by Bühler (Kashmir Report, p.31) it is nothing but a modern euphemistic invention.
⁷ Cf. Rajatarangini i, 37, iv, 325; Vikramāṅkadeva-carita, i, 21; Śrikantha-carita, iii, 10.
The Earliest Documents

The earliest known Sarada documents, the stone inscription from Hund, has been referred to above. Next in date are the coins of the rulers of the Utpala dynasty of Kashmir which belong to the second half of the 9th and the early 10th centuries A.D. The other early records are:

(1) The Sarahan (Chamba) Prasasti of a ruler called Satyaki, c. 9th century A.D.
(2) The Dewai (Upper Swat) stone inscription of the Sahi king Bhimadeva (c. A.D. 940-960),
(3) The Barikot (Codu territory) inscription of the reign of Jayapaladeva (c. A.D. 960-980),
(4) The S.P.S. Museum (Srinagar) bronze image inscription of the reign of Queen Didda, dated (Laukika) sanw, 65 = A.D. 989,
(5) The Srinagar fragmentary stone inscription of the reign of queen Didda dated (Laukika) sam. 68 = A.D. 992,
(6) The Brahmor (map Baramor, Chamba) copper plate inscription of Yugakaravarm (10th century),
(7) The Sungal (Chamba) copper plate inscription

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8 Coningham, Coins of Medieval India, Pls., 4, 5; Rodgers, JASE, XLVIII, p.18.
9 Antiquities., I, pp. 152 ff., Plate XV.
10 JI, XXI, p.298 and Plate.
11 Ibid., pp. 301 f. and Plate.
12 Archaeological section.
13 JI, XXVII, pp.163 ff.
14 Antiquities., I, pp.159 ff. Plate XVI.
of Vidagdha (10th century).\textsuperscript{15}

We shall now discuss in detail the forms of the early Śāradā characters as represented by the records noted above.

I. The Initial Vowels (see Table 2A).

1. The initial $a$ retains in early Śāradā the same form as it has in the North-Western alphabet of the 6th and the 7th centuries. It has an open top and a curve open towards the left in the lower portion of the left half of the letter. The earliest examples of exactly the same form occur in the Tusam inscription and the Bower manuscript.\textsuperscript{16} In the Hund inscription (col. I), the Sarahan Prāśasti (col. III) and the Sungal copper plate grant (col. IX) the letter shows a wedge or a small triangle at the foot of the right hand vertical towards its left. In the Brahmor copper plate grant (col. VIII) it has an unusual foot mark consisting of two small strokes forming a fork of an angle of about 45°. This fork is also seen at the top of almost all the letters in this inscription in place of the usual horizontal bar.

2. The initial ā in the Hund inscription (col. I), the Sarahan Prāśasti (col. III) and the Brahmor and Sungal copper plate grants (cols. VIII, IX) is formed like $a$ with the addition of a curve open towards the left and attached to the foot of the vertical on the right. This curve which marks the

\textsuperscript{15} Ibid. pp.164 ff., Plate XVII.
\textsuperscript{16} Supra p.10.
length of the vowel is already regularly found in the records of the 6th, 7th and the early 8th centuries A.D., e.g., in the Nirmand copper plate grant,supra 17 the Gilgit MSS 18 and the Brahmor inscription No.6 of Meruvarman. 19 It is also noticed in the Bower manuscript 20 and even earlier in the 4th century A.D. in the Mathura inscription of Candragupta II. 21

3. The initial i is found only in the Hund inscription (col. I) and the Sarahan Prašāti (col. III). It differs from the earlier forms of 5th, 6th and the 7th centuries as exemplified by the Bower manuscript, the Nirmand copper plate grant 22 and the Gilgit MSS 24 by the much developed curve which is now drawn further towards the left.

4. Amongst the early Sarada records, the initial i occurs only in the Sarahan Praśasti (col. III). It has exactly the same shape as in the Bower manuscript. 26 It consists of a vertical stroke, with a dot on its either side and a wedge at its upper and the lower ends.

5. The initial u preserves the shape of the Gupta period. In the Hund inscription (col. I), however, the curve is elongated even beyond the level of the top of the

17 Supra p.16.
18 Ibid.
19 Antiquities I, No.6, 1.1 in āditya.
20 Supra p.11
21 Ibid. p.8.
22 Ibid. p.11.
23 Ibid. p.16.
24 Ibid.
25 Ibid. p.11
# Table No. 2A

## The Sarada Alphabet

### 8th-10th Cent. A.D.

### Vowels

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<th>III</th>
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</table>
letter. The Barikot inscription (col. IV) shows an unusual angular form.

6. The initial ू occurs only in the Sarahan Prasasti (col I). It is formed like ू with the addition of a downward curve attached to the middle of the letter on the right side. 26

7. The initial ग retains the ancient triangular form but shows in addition a wedge at the left end of the top stroke. In the Brahmar copper plate grant (col. VIII) it has an uncommon quadrangular shape.

8. The initial अँ and अँ do not occur in the early Saradā records.

9. The initial ओ is found in the syllable ओम in the Brahmar copper plate grant (col. VIII) and has the shape of initial ू with a serif at the left end of the top fork.

II. Consonants (see Table 2B).

Gutterals

The letter क retains in our records, the form of the 6th and the 7th centuries as found in the Nirmand copper plate, 27 the Hatun inscription of Paṭoladeva 28 and the Gilgit MSS. 29 It consists of a loop on the left limb caused by the connection of the lower end of the left bent bar with the foot of the vertical. This loop is sometimes rounded and sometimes angular. Vogel's contention (Antiquities, p. 51) that the left hand loop is more rounded in

26 Cf. supra, p. 12.
27 Ibid, p. 16.
28 Ibid.
29 Ibid.
the older Sarada inscriptions and more angular in
the later ones, may be true in case of the Sarada
records from Chamba but in general we find both
the forms used side by side. It is interesting to
note that in the earliest known Sarada record, the
Hund inscription, (col. I) we find the letter
regularly with an angular loop.

2. kh with a flat top, differs very little from the
form of the Gilgit MS. In the Srinagar inscrip-
tion of Queen Didda (col. VII), the letter is more
cursive and has an archaic appearance. In the
Brahmgor copper plate grant (col. VIII) the right
limb looks more like v.

3. g shows a flat top and a wedge, a small triangle, a
serif or a small upward stroke at the lower end of
the left vertical. In the Sungal copper plate
grant (col. IX) the letter shows sometimes a round-
ed top, as, e.g. in bhogapati, 1.9, agraharatvena,
1.20, etc.

4. The aksara gh which amongst the early Sarada inscrip-
tions occurs only in the Sungal copper plate grant
(col. IX) preserves its ancient shape of the Kusana
inscriptions.

5. The letter ā which occurs in our records only in
combination with other gutters preserves its
earlier form as found in the Bower MS. It
regularly shows a wedge, a serif or a small down-

30 Supra p.17.
31 Ind. Pal., Plate III, Cols. III-IV, 10 and supra
Table No.1.
32 Supra p.12.
ward stroke at the right end of the top horizontal bar.

Palatals

6. The aksara ग occurs in the early Saradā records both in a rounded and a quadrangular form. The rounded form with a pointed projection to the left is found in the Sarahan Prasasti (col. III), the S.P.S. Museum bronze image inscription (col. VI) and in the Sungal copper plate grant (col. IX). The quadrangular form with a knob on the left occurs in the Hund inscription (col. I) and the Srinagar inscription of queen Diddā (col. VII). Vogel\textsuperscript{33} states that the quadrangular form of ग, regarded by Bühler as a characteristic peculiarity of the Saradā, is not found in the inscriptions from Chamba. This is, however, far from the truth as even in one of the earliest Saradā inscriptions from Chamba, the Brahmor copper plate grant, we find the quadrangular ग occurring very frequently, e.g., in lines 3 (campakā), 8 (candī), and 16 (carma). It does not, however, have a knob on the left as in the forms of the Hund and the Srinagar inscriptions.

7. The letter झ occurs only in the Brahmor and the Sungal copper plate inscriptions (cols. VIII-IX). It does not materially differ from its ancient shape as found in the Kalsi Edict V, 1.14.

8. The letter ज, the most conservative letter in the Saradā, differs from its earlier form as found in the Bower MS. (above p.12) by the development of a

\textsuperscript{33} Antiquities I, p.52.
wedge or a serif at the right end of the top bar. It is mostly angular in shape though cursive forms also occur sometimes. The central bar issues sometimes from the upper end of the left hand vertical, e.g., in the Hund inscription (col. I), and sometimes from the middle of the upper horizontal bar, e.g., in the Hund inscription (col. I) and the Sungal copper plate grant (col. IX).

9. Jh occurs only once in the Sarahan Prāśasti (col. III) in combination with j. Its form is similar to that of the Bower MS.

10. The palatal nasal also occurs only in the Sarahan Prāśasti (col. III) in combination with c and i. It shows a developed top bar with a wedge attached to it at the left end.

Cerebrals.

11. The aksara t shows generally a flat top as in the Bower MS. and a serif or a wedge attached to it at the right end. The archaic rounded form occurs occasionally as in the Dewai and Barikot inscriptions (cols. IV-V).

12. Th preserves its ancient shape most faithfully and does not present anything remarkable.

13. Bühler mentions d as one of the Saradā letters which exhibits a peculiar development. He describes it as showing a loop in the middle instead of an acute angle and a wedge at the lower end. However,

34 1.11, rasojihitena.
35 Bower Manuscript Plate 2, facing page XXVI.
36 1.20, ñ; 11.6, 7, 8, 20, ṇja.
37 Supra p.12.
38 Ind. Pal. p.76.
it may be pointed out here that the loop which occurs frequently in the later Śāradā especially in the manuscripts, is conspicuously absent in our two early Śāradā records, viz., the Brahmor and the Sungal copper plate inscriptions (cols. VIII, IX) in which alone, the letter occurs. Moreover, in place of the wedge at the lower end, we have a fork in the Brahmor copper plate and a small triangle in the Sungal copper plate grant.

14. The letter dh which is found only in the Hund inscription (col. I) agrees with the form of the bower manuscript with the difference that it has developed a knob in the left limb and the curve at the right end, only turns sharply inside but does not form a loop with the base stroke.

15. The cerebral nasal found in the Sarahan Praśasti, (col. III) the Srinagar stone inscription (col. VII) and the Sungal grant (col. IX) retains the form of the Gilgit manuscripts. Its base stroke is suppressed and the two curves thus united are sometimes supported by a small upward stroke on the right. The Sarahan Praśasti occasionally shows a transitional form of the letter with a small base stroke. In the Hund inscription (col. I) and the Brahmor copper plate grant (col. VIII), the letter exhibits further development. It is provided with a tail, attached to its left end and slanting towards the right. This form of the letter with a tail occurs regularly in the later

40 *Supra P.17.*
41 1.3, karisnu, visnu.
Sarada. Vogel's contention that the tailed \( n \) occurs only after the 12th century cannot be upheld in the face of our two earlier examples.

Dentals

16. The aksara \( t \) with its ancient left half missing and the right converted into a curve closely resembles the forms of Gilgit MSS. and the Hatun inscription of Paṭoladeva. Its form remains constant all through the Sarada. In the Sarahan Prasasti (col. III), the letter occasionally shows a loop in the middle, e.g., in satata 1.1.

17. According to Dr. Vogel, "th occurs in the Sarada inscriptions in two distinct forms. The older one which is very similar to that of the Gupta period has the shape of a crescent the convex side turned to the left. The later form which is lozenge-shaped occurs in inscriptions of the 12th century." However, it may be pointed out here that the lozenge shaped th caused by the employment of the top stroke occurs even earlier in the 10th century in the Srinagar inscription of queen Diddā (col. VII).

18. The letter \( d \) does not present anything remarkable. It preserves its shape of the Gupta and the post-Gupta periods. In the Brahmor copper plate (col. VIII), the letter is provided with a tail at the

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42 Antiquities, I, p.54.
43 Supra p.17.
44 Ibid.
45 Antiquities, I, p.54.
46 Supra, p.22.
right end of the base stroke as in the forms of the Baramaor and Chittarahi inscriptions of Meruvarman. In the Dewai inscription of Bhimadeva (col. IV), it has a triangular loop in the middle and this form of the letter is the precursor of the looped d found in the Sāradā of the later periods.

19. The aksara dh occurs in its ancient crescent form in the Sarahan Prāśasti (col. III) and the Brahmo and the Sungal copper plate inscriptions (cols. VIII, IX). In the Srinagar inscription of queen Diddā (col. VII) the letter has a quadrangular shape evidently caused by the flattening of the top and the bottom.

20. The dental nasal retains the form of the 6th and the 7th centuries. Its shape is similar to that of the Hatun inscription of Paṭoladeva and the Gilgit MSS.

Labials

21. The aksara p in the Hund inscription (col. I) the Sarahan Prāśasti (col. III), the Dewai and Barikot inscriptions (cols. IV, V) and in the Sungal grant (col. IX), occurs in the same form as in the Gupta alphabet of the 4th and the 5th centuries. In the Srinagar stone inscription (col. VII), the S.P.S. Museum bronze image inscription (col. VI), the Brahmo copper plate grant and (col. VIII) occasionally in the Sungal copper plate grant (col. IX) it is marked by the downward elongation of the right hand vertical and in this respect agrees closely with the form of the 6th and the 7th centuries as found in the Hatun

46 Supra, p.22
47 Supra, p.17
inscription of the Gilgit MSS. The letter shows a unique form with a closed top in the ligature pt in the coins of King Kṣema Gupta of Kashmir (col. II).

22. The letter ph occurs in a looped form in the Sarahan Prāṣasti (col. III) and the Sungal copper plate grant (col. IX). The loop which marks the aspirate is caused by the contact of the older open curve with the base stroke. The letter thus differs from the form of the Bower MS. where the loop is attached to the right of p instead of on the inside. In the Brahmar copper plate grant (col. VIII) the letter retains its older form with an open curved turned sharply inside. The letter in this form closely resembles the letter dh.

23. The letter b in the early Sarada records is mostly represented by v and will be described subsequently.

24. bh occurs in two forms, "either with an inverted wedge or with an open triangle." The wedged form closely agreeing with that found in the Bower MS. and the Gilgit MSS. occurs in the Sarahan Prāṣasti (col. III), the Srinagar stone inscription (col. VII) and occasionally in the Hund inscription (col. I) and the Dewai stone inscription (col. IV). The form with an open triangle is found in the Hund inscription (col. I), the Dewai and the Barikot inscriptions (cols. IV, V) and in the Sungal copper plate grant (col. IX). The triangle, sometimes, becomes more open and less defined, e.g., in the Dewai inscription (col. IV)

48 Ibid.
49 Supra P.30
50 Ibid., pp.12, 18.
and the letter looks like ꞌhꞌ. The uncommon forms of the letter are noticed in (1) the Brahmor copper plate (col. VIII) and the coins of Tribhuvangupta and Bhīmagupta of Kashmir (col. II) where the left limb is represented by a small upward stroke instead of the wedge or the open triangle (2) the S. P. S. Museum bronze image inscription (col. VI) where the left limb is totally missing.

25. The letter ꞌmꞌ generally retains its earlier shape as found in the Nirmand copper plate, the Hatun inscription of Paṭoladeva and the Gilgit MSS. Sometimes, however, the right hand vertical protrudes downwards and there appears a knob or a small triangle on the left, e.g., in the Hund inscription (col. I), the S.P.S. Museum bronze image inscription (col. VI), the Srinagar stone inscription (col. VII) and the Sungal copper plate grant (col. IX).

Semi Vowels.

26. The letter ꞌyꞌ is exclusively bipartite. It differs from the earlier bipartite form of the Nirmand copper plate, the Hatun inscription and the Gilgit MSS. by a greater bulge on the left and by the occasional downward prolongation of the right hand vertical. It, however, closely agrees with the form of the Svaim inscription of Rājānaka Bhogata.

27. ꞌrꞌ shows generally a wedge at the lower end of the vertical on the left side. Sometimes the wedge is replaced by a small upward stroke and occasionally by a

51 Supra p.18.
52 Ibid.
small triangle, as for example, in the Sungal copper plate grant (col. IX) and the Dewai inscription (col. IV). An unusual form with a big rounded loop on the left occurs once in the Brahmor copper plate grant (col. VIII) in the word narasimhasya (1.12). But Dr. Vogel takes the word to have been inserted in the plate at a much later date, as the forms of the letters of this word differ from those used in the inscription.

28. The letter न with the right hand vertical protruding beyond the body of the letter and the left hand curve attached to it by means of a small horizontal stroke retains the form of the 6th and the 7th centuries. In the coins of Gopāla-Warman of Kashmir (col. II), in the Dewai stone inscription (col. IV) and sometimes in the Srinagar stone inscription (col. VII), the horizontal stroke connecting the left hand curve and the right hand vertical is converted into another curve and this form of the letter with two curves is regularly found in the Sarada of the subsequent periods.

29. The letter व which also represents ब preserves its older shape of the Hatun inscription and the Gilgit MSS. In the coins of Avantivarman and Sānkaravarman of Kashmir (col. II) and sometimes in the Hund inscription (col. VII) it occurs in an angular form while in our other records the cursive form predominates.

54 Antiquities, I, p. 56.
55 Supra, p. 18
Sibilants

30. s. is squarish in shape and has generally a wedge on the left. The wedge is sometimes replaced by a triangular loop as, for example, in the Sungal copper plate grant (col. IX) and the Dewai stone inscription (col. IV) and sometimes by a triangle left open on one side as, for example, in the Brahmor copper plate grant (col. VIII) and in the coins of King Samkarvarman of Kashmir (col. II). An older form of the letter with rounded top occurs occasionally in the Sungal copper plate grant (col. IX), as, for example, in paramesvara I.I.

31. The letter s preserves faithfully the form of the western Gupta character and does not call for any special remark.

32. g is similar to s but open at the top. In the Sungal copper plate grant (col. IX) it has an open triangular wedge on the left similar to that of bh.

Spirants

33. The letter h does not present anything remarkable except that in the Dewai inscription (col. IV) the letter occurs in a much developed form with the lower curve turned round and drawn further towards the left.

34. The visarga and anusvara do not present anything worthy of note, except that in the Sungal grant they are represented by small circles instead of the usual dots.

35. The jihvāmulīya and upandhmāniya are frequently used in our inscriptions from Chamba. The former does not occur in any other of our early Saradā records. The latter, however, also occurs in the Srinagar stone inscription (col. VII). The shape of jihvāmulīya closely agrees with that of the letter v. The
### Table No. 2b

**The Sārda Alphabet**

**8th - 10th Centuries A.D.**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Consonants</th>
<th>1</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>S.P.S. Museum Inscription</strong></td>
<td>(L) 68 = A.D. 980</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Srinarar Inscription</strong> (L)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Bengur Converse</strong></td>
<td>10th Cent.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Surnat Copper Plate</strong></td>
<td>10th Cent.</td>
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<tr>
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<th>2</th>
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**Notes:**

- The table provides a comparison of different inscriptions and dates to illustrate the development of the Sārda alphabet.
- The symbols represent specific consonants from the 8th to 10th centuries A.D.
- Each column lists variations in the form of these consonants across different inscriptions and historical contexts.

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# TABLE No. 28

## THE SāRĀDĀ ALPHABET

8th.-10th Centuries A.D.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CONSONANTS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>𑀗</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jīva-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>upadhi-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>virana</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
upādhnāṇiya is described by Vogel as resembling the figure 8 laid sideways." The form of the Brahmor copper plate grant (col. VIII) with the horizontal line below agrees with that of the Gilgit MSS. noted above (p.19).

Virāma

The virāma occurs in the Hund inscription, the Sarahan Praśasti and the Brahmor and Sungal copper plate inscriptions. In the Hund inscription (col. I) it is characterised by a long slanting stroke drawn over the head of the letter on the right. It has been attached to the letter t (in samvat 11. 6, 7) which retains its fuller form. In the other three records (cols. III, VIII, IX) the stroke is very short and the letters to which it is attached appear in a very changed form. Thus t becomes a mere curve and m a mere dot or a small circle.

II. THE MEDIAL VOWELS (see Table 2C)

1. Medial a is expressed by means of a wedge or a serif attached to the top of the consonant on the right side. However, in case of certain consonants with a double top, as, for example, ṝ, ṭ, ṭ and ṭ either single or accompanied by a subscribed consonant, we find the vowel sign expressed in the Sarahan Praśasti (col. III) and the Sungal copper plate grant (col. IX), by means of a horizontal top stroke - with a wedge or a serif at its right end - attached to the left top end of the consonant. The vertical on the right is shortened above and remains free from the top bar. Occasionally in the Sungal copper plate grant, the vowel sign in pā (11.7, 10, 21, 24) and sā (11. 25, 26) is expressed in the usual manner, i.e., by a serif attached to the top end of the right hand vertical.

56 Antiquities. I, p.58
In case of the consonants like r, t and n, the a sign is expressed by a hook or a semi circle and in case of j by a small vertical attached to the right end of the central stroke and forming a right angle with it. In the latter case, the letter drops the top bar and the wedge attached to it.

2. The signs for medial i and i̇ are generally the same as in the preceding centuries and consist of curves drawn down respectively to the left and the right of the consonant. A few cases are noticed in the Sarahan Praśasti (col. III) the Hund inscription (col. 1) and Brahмор and Sungal copper plate grants (cols. VIII, IX) where the vowel signs have been marked by the sickle shaped curves in the ancient manner of the Kuśāna inscriptions.

3. Medial u is expressed in two ways:
   (i) by a triangular wedge, which sometimes assumed the shape of a short upward stroke or hook, attached to the foot of the vertical on the left side. In case of consonants, like r, d, ph, ā and h where the vertical is absent, the wedge is attached by means of a short vertical.
   (ii) by a curve which represents the initial u.

   In case of ru, the vowel sign is denoted by the usual curve below the vertical, in the Sarahan Praśasti (col. III), while in the Srinagar stone inscription (col. VII) and the Brahmor and Sungal copper plate grants (cols. VIII) the sign is expressed by attaching a downward steamer to the right of the letter.

4. Medial ū is also expressed like medial u in two ways:
   (i) by a horizontal, sometimes wavy flaglike line, attached to the lower end of the vertical on the
left side.

ii) by the subscribed sign for initial ihn.

Mention may be made of the groups rüh and brüh occurring in the Sarahan Praśasti (col. III).57 Here rüh has been formed by "the mātrikā with the subscribed initial vowel mark." The right hand steamer of the vowel, however, has been attached above the curve near the middle of the vertical of the superscribed r. In brüh we find the vowel sign expressed by two curves attached to the middle of the letter, one slanting downwards and the other rising upwards.

5. According to Bühler 58 the angular medial r is a peculiar development of the Saradā. But in our early Saradā records the shape of the curve, representing the medial r is mostly rounded. The angular form occurs very occasionally, as, for example, in the Sarahan Praśasti 59 (col. III) and the Brahmor copper plate grant 60 (col. VIII).

6. Medial e is expressed either by a stroke - horizontal or slanting - placed over the consonant or by the pristhamātrā, i.e., by a wedge, serif or a small down-stroke attached to the left end of the top bar.

7. Medial ai is expressed by the combination of two e symbols, i.e., by the superscribed stroke and the pristhamātrā. In one case in the Brahmor copper plate grant 61 (col. VIII), the vowel has been rendered by two e strokes placed above the letter.

57 11. 6, 8, 13, 15.
59 In kr 1.15.
60 In vr 1. 2.
61 In vai 1.19.
**TABLE No. 2C**

**The Sarada Alphabet**

8th–10th Cent. A.D.

**Medial Vowels**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I</th>
<th>II</th>
<th>III</th>
<th>IV</th>
<th>V</th>
<th>VI</th>
<th>VII</th>
<th>VIII</th>
<th>IX</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ṣ</td>
<td>ṭ</td>
<td>ṇ</td>
<td>ḷṭ</td>
<td>ḷ</td>
<td>ḷ</td>
<td>ḷ</td>
<td>ḷ</td>
<td>ḷ</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **Coins of Utpalas (Harso) A.D. 955–966 A.D.**
- **Sarthana Prasasti**
- **Delevi inscription**
- **Barikot inscription**
- **Saraswati inscription**
- **Brahmvar copper plate**
- **Sungil copper plate**

Additional notes and symbols are not clearly visible but are typically used to denote specific sounds or combinations in the Sarada script.
8. Medial ओ is expressed in three distinct ways:
   (i) by two wedges attached to the both ends of the top bar or in case of letters with open top, to two top ends,
   (ii) by a superscribed slanting stroke accompanied by a wedge or a curve in case of ठ, न, र attached to the right end of the top bar,
   (iii) by a superscribed flourish.

   The first method is more common in the Sarahan Praśasti. Attention may be drawn to a unique example उग occurring in this inscription (1.7) where the left hand wedge has been attached to the curve instead of the top stroke.

9. Medial आ is expressed by the superscribed ओ flourish combined with the wedge or a serif attached to the right end of the top bar. Occasionally it is marked in the Sarahan Praśasti (col. III) and the Srinagar stone inscription (col. VII) by two wedges attached to both ends of the top bar combined with the superscribed ओ stroke.

III. LIGATURES (see Table 2D)

1. As regards the ligatures, the early Sāradā alphabet preserves faithfully the ancient method of writing the conjunct consonants one below the other.

62 In one case, viz., सउ 1.7 in the Sarahan Prasasti the wedge has been wrongly placed at the left end of the stroke.
63 In कसू 1.11; गउ, 1.17; तउ, 1.17.
64 In गउ 1.3.
2. k retains its ancient form without the loop when in combination with subscript vowels u, I or when forming the upper and the middle element of the ligature. As the final element it retains its usual looped shape.

3. The subscript ū occurs in a form absolutely distinct from the superscript ū. Its shape closely resembles the figure 3 and it occurs only in combination with j. A peculiar form of the subscript ū is noticed in the word ṇī in the Brahmar copper plate grant (1.12).

4. The lingual t as a second member of the ligature occurs in its normal form in the Sarahan Prāśasti (col. III). In our other records, save the Srinagar stone inscription, it assumes a distinctive shape and consists of a semicircular curve open to the right, and a slanting stroke attached to the foot of the upper consonant on the right. In the Srinagar stone inscription (col. VII) its form is identical with that of the subscribed th.

5. The subscribed th occurs in the Hund inscription, the Brahmar and the Sungal copper plate grants in combination with q. Its shape resembles the subscribed v in the Sungal copper plate (col. IX) but has in addition a tail, attached to the foot of the upper consonant on the right. In the Hund inscription (col. I) it consists of the usual circular th with a tail. In the Brahmar copper plate grant (col. VIII) its shape is identical with the subscribed t described above.

6. The dental th as the second or the final element of a ligature considerably differs in shape from the mātrikā. In the Sarahan Prāśasti (col. III)
it is expressed by a spiral or an inward curve drawn from left to right. In the Hund inscription (col. I) it is expressed by a curve open to the right with a stroke attached to its upper end and sloping down to the right. The same form is noticed sometimes in the Sungal copper plate (col. IX) in the ligature ṛth. In the Brahmar copper plate grant (col. VIII) it is rendered by a long drawn curve open on the right and with a hook at its lower end. In the Sungal copper plate grant (col. IX) it usually consists of a spiral similar in shape to that of the Sarahan Prāśasti, but sometimes the curve forming the spiral instead of turning inside turns outward to the left. The same form of the subscribed ṛ (col. V) is found in the Barikot inscription with the difference that the curve turns further back towards the left.

7. The subscribed ṣ preserves the form of the Kusāna and the Gupta inscriptions. Its right limb is not so much elongated as is seen in some of our records of the 6th and the 7th centuries, e.g., the Hatun inscription, and the Gilgit MSS. A unique form of the subscribed ṣ occurs in the Barikot inscription (col. V) in the ligature iy (1.1) where the right limb of ṣ moving upwards forms a contact with the right end of the central bar of ḷ.

8. Bühler has drawn attention to one of the peculiar features of Āradā according to which ṛ as the first

65 Supra p.20.

66 Ind. Pal. p.76.
part of the ligature is inserted into the left side of the second letter. In general the superscript \( r \) retains its full form with the vertical slightly shortened. In ligatures \( rn \), \( rth \), \( rdh \), it does not preserve its distinctive shape and usually loses its bottom part. In the ligature \( rv \), it is marked only by a "small excrescence on the left curve of the \( \text{v mātrikā} \)." In the group \( rv \), it is expressed by a short vertical to which the curve of \( v \) is attached in one continuous stroke.

9. In ligatures where \( r \) forms the middle or the final element, it is rendered by an upward stroke attached to the lower end of the upper consonant on the left. In the Sarahan Prāsasti (col. III) it is sometimes confused with the medial \( \ddot{u} \) but in other records its upward elongation gives it a distinctive character.

10. The subscribed \( v \) in the ligature \( sv \) is generally triangular in shape. In the Brahmor copper plate grant, however, it retains its original rounded form.
TABLE No. 22.
THE SĀRĀDĀ ALPHABET
8th–10th Cent. A.D.

LIGATURES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>HUND INSCRIPTION</th>
<th>COINS OF UTTARAPALAS</th>
<th>SHAHAN PRASasti</th>
<th>DEWAI INSCRIPTION</th>
<th>BARIKOT INSCRIPTION</th>
<th>S.P.S. MUSEUM IMAGINE</th>
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<td>Ⅰ</td>
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<td>A.D. 355–360 A.D.</td>
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<td>A.D. 981–1000 A.D.</td>
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<td>A.D. 999–1000 A.D.</td>
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<td>A.D. 1000–1020 A.D.</td>
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<td>A.D. 1019–1020 A.D.</td>
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<td>A.D. 1020–1040 A.D.</td>
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10th Cent. SĀNGHAL COPPER PLATE 90

5th Cent. SĀHNI COPPER PLATE 94

20th Cent.
We have discussed in detail the features of the Sarada characters as they first appear in the epigraphic and the numismatic records of the 8th, 9th and the 10th centuries. We now proceed to discuss their development in the 11th, 12th and the 13th centuries on the basis of the following records:

(1) Coins of the following rulers of Kashmir and Gandhāra:
   - Ananta (A.D. 1028-63), Kalasa (A.D. 1063-89), Harsa (A.D. 1089-1101), Uccala (A.D. 1101-11), Sussala (A.D. 1112-20), Jayasimha (A.D. 1128-56), and Mahmud of Ghazni.67

(2) The Dacchan (District Kishtwar, Jammu) stone inscription of the reign of Śrī Nantadeva, sām. 12 = A.D. 1036(?).68

(3) The Bhakund (Chamba) fountain inscription of the reign of Trailokya-deva, Śāstra (410) 4 (A.D. 1028-29).69

(4) The Kulait (Chamba) copper plate inscription of Soma-varman (11th century).70

(5) The Chamba copper plate grant of Soma-varman and Ásāta-varman (11th century).71

(6) The Thundu (Chamba) copper plate inscription of

67 Cunningham, C.M.I. Pls. IV, V, VII; Rodgers, JASB, XLVIII, 18.
68 Antiquities of Malev-Wadwan pp. 24-25 and Plate. The King Nantadeva of the inscription is probably identical with the King Ananta of Kashmir (A.D. 1028-63) and sām. 12 probably refers to the Laukika era and corresponds to A.D. 1036.
69 Antiquities I, pp.177 ff. and Plate XX.
70 Ibid. pp.182 ff. and Plate XXIV.
71 Ibid. pp.187 ff. and Plate XXV.
(7) The Luj (Chamba) fountain inscription of the 1st Year of Jāsaṭa, Śastra (41) 81 (A.D. 1105-6).

(8) The S.P.S. Museum Srinagar stone slab inscription of the reign of Jayasimha (Laukika) sam. 25 (A.D.1149).

(9) The Tapar (Kashmir) stone inscription of Pārmānda-deva sam. 33 (A.D.1157).

(10) The Devi-ri-Kothi (Chamba) fountain inscription of Rājānaka Nāgāpāla of the 17th year of Lalita-varman (A.D. 1159-61).

(11) The Nārāyaṇa image inscription of Rājānaka Nāgāpāla.

(12) The Salhi (Chamba) fountain inscription of Rājānaka Ludrapāla of the 27th year of Lalita-varman, Śastra (42) 46 (A.D.1170).

(13) The Arigom (Kashmir) stone slab inscription, sam. 73 (A.D.1197).

(14) The Devi-ri-Kothi (Chamba) inscription of Rājānaka Raṇapāla.

(15) The Mul-Kihar (Chamba) fountain inscription.


(17) The Sai (Chamba) fountain inscription of the reign of

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72 Ibid. pp.197 ff. and Plate XXVI.
73 Ibid. pp.202 ff. and Plate XXVIII.
74 Preserved in the Archaeological section.
75 Now S.P.S. Museum Srinagar.
76 Antiquities I pp.209 ff. and Plate XXX.
77 Ibid. pp.207 ff. and Plate XXIX. The Nāgāpāla mentioned in this inscription is identical with Nāgāpāla of No.10.
78 Ibid. pp.216 ff. and Plate XXXII.
79 EL. IX, pp.300-2 and Plate.
80 Antiquities I, pp.208 f. and Plate XXIX.
81 Ibid. pp. 224 ff. and Plate XXXIII.
82 EL.I. pp.97 ff. The forms of the letters in the table below have been taken from Buhler's Ind. Pal, Pl.V. Col.I.
Ajayapāla Śāstra I (A.D. 1225?).

(18) The Bijbehara (Kashmir) stone inscription of the reign of Rājadeva (Saka) sam. 58 (A.D. 1236).

DETAILS OF THE FORMS

I. VOWELS (see Table 3A).

1. The vowels a and ā retain their earlier forms and do not exhibit any significant change. Only in very rare cases do we find ā with a closed top as, for example, in some coins of Mahmud of Ghazni (col. I) and in one case in the Thundu copper plate grant of Āṣaṭa-varman (col. VI). This form of the letter becomes common in the later Śāradā of Kashmir and in the Devasesa of Chamba.

2. The initial i preserves its older shape consisting of two dots and a curve below. In the Bhakund inscription (col. III) and the Thundu copper plate grant (col. VI) the two dots are replaced by two small circles.

3. The initial ā, the solitary instance of which we noticed in the Sarahan Praśasti above (p.30) shows a distinct development in the Baijnath Praśastis (col. XVI) where the two dots which stood previously on the either side of the central vertical now appear above the top of the letter. The same form of ā is regularly met with in the later Śāradā and the Devāsesa.

4. u and ū preserve their earlier forms, except that in the Bhakund inscription (col. III) ū shows a loop in the middle.

5. No instance of initial r occurs in our records.

6. The initial ē displays no significant change.

7. The initial ai does not occur in the records of the period under reference.

8. The initial o which occurs mostly in the syllable om is

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83 Antiquities, I, pp.232 ff. and plate XXXV.
85 In ato 1.21.
formed like उ with the addition of a wedge at the left top end. In the Bhakund inscription (col. III), the wedge is replaced by a small triangle. An uncommon form of ऋ occurs in the Baijnath Prasastis (col. XVI) where instead of a wedge, we find a curve attached to the back of उ and similar to that of उ.

9. No instance of आ is furnished by our records.

II. CONSONANTS (see Table 3B)

Gutterals

1. क generally preserves its earlier form with a loop to the left. In certain cases, however, it develops a second loop to the right evidently caused by the contact of right hand curve with the central vertical. This double looped form of the letter is regularly found in the later Sāradā and Devāsesā. Examples of the latter form may be seen in cols. I, II, IV, VIII, and XIII.

2. ख occurs regularly with a flat top and a straight or bent vertical to the left. The archaic form with rounded top found in the Srinagar inscription of queen Diddā above, becomes rare.

3. The wedge or seif at the left lower end of ग is replaced sometimes by a small triangle. A unique form of the letter is noticed in the Dacchan inscription (col. II) in the word guptena 1.3.

4. In घ the development is marked by the downward elongation of the right hand stroke which henceforth becomes the regular feature of the letter.

5. न which occurs only in combination with other gutterals generally preserves its earlier shape. An uncommon form occurs in the Arigom inscription (col. XIII) where the wedge at the right top end is replaced by a small vertical which protrudes down and

86 See cols. III, IX, XI.
touches the base stroke.

**Palatals**

6. c occurs mostly in quadrangular form. The ancient rounded form occurs only in ligatures in the Chamba grant of Soma-varman and Āṣaṭa (col. V). In the S.P.S. Museum inscription of Jayasiṃha (col.VIII) the letter shows a triangular loop to the left, and in the Bijbehara inscription (col. XVIII) it occurs with open top. In the Dacchan inscription (col. II) the letter is highly cursive in shape and shows a big circular loop on the left.

7. The conservative letters ch and j occur in their ancient forms and hardly present anything remarkable.

8. No instance of jh is found in the records of the period under review.

9. The palatal nasal which occurs only in combination with other letters preserves the earlier form with the difference that it often shows a wedge or a serif at the lower end of the central vertical to the left. In the Mul-Kihar inscription (col. XV) the wedge is replaced by a slanting stroke attached to the foot of the vertical on the right side.

**Cerebrals**

10. t occurs regularly with a flat top and generally with a wedge or a serif at the right top end. The archaic rounded form found in the Dewai and Barikot inscriptions above, now becomes rare.

11. th is as usual represented by a circle.

12. d shows regularly a wedge or a serif at the lower end.
13. *dh* does not display any significant development.

14. Of the three forms of cerebral *n* noticed in the earlier Sarada records above, one with the connecting base stroke becomes rare and is found only in one case in the Bhakund inscription (col. III) in the word *varuna*, l.1. The other two forms continue to be used with equal regularity.

Dentals

15. *t* a conservative character in Sarada remains unchanged. A peculiar form occurs in the Bhakund inscription (col. III) and the Sai inscription (col. XVII) where the letter is provided with a loop.

16. *th* shows a flat top and is lozenge or rectangular in shape. Ancient crescent form becomes rare.

17. *d* does not exhibit any material change except that it shows a loop in the left limb in the Bhakund inscription (col. III) and a unique form resembling the rounded *g* in the Dacchan inscription (col. II).

18. *dh* shows regularly a flat top and is usually angular in shape. The cursive forms occur only in the Kulait and Chamba copper plate grants (cols. IV, V) and occasionally in the Devi-ri-Kothi inscription (col. X). The crescent shaped *dh* occurs once in the Mul-Kihar fountain inscription (col. XV) in the word *topádháram*, l.21.


Labials

20. The labials *n* and *ph* retain their earlier characteristics
and exhibit no significant change.

21. \( b \) is usually represented by \( y \) and will be described subsequently. Occasionally the distinction is made between the two in the Devi-ri-Kothi inscription (col.X) and the Bajnath Prasastis (col.XVI).

22. \( bh \) generally shows a wedge in the middle. In some cases, the wedge is replaced by a triangular loop as for example, in the S.P.S. Museum inscription of Jayasimha (col.VIII) and in the Devi-ri-Kothi inscription of Fajãnaka Nagapala (col. X). The letter occurs with a less pronounced wedge or an open triangle in the Bhakund inscription (col. III), the Iuj inscription (col.VII) and occasionally in the Mul-Kihar inscription (col.XVI).

23. \( m \) does not present anything remarkable.

Semi vowels

24. \( v \) occurs in a developed form with a closed top in the S.P.S. Museum inscription of Jayasimha (col.VIII) and in the Arigom stone slab inscription (col. XIII). This form of the letter is frequently met with in the later Saradã records of Kashmir. In our all other records, the letter retains its earlier shape with open top.

25. \( r \) generally shows a wedge at the lower end of the vertical to the left. The wedge is occasionally replaced by a small triangle, e.g., in the Bhakund inscription (col. III), the S.P.S. Museum inscription of Jayasimha (col. VIII) and in the Nãrayãna image inscription of Nagapala (col. XI). In the copper plate inscriptions, (cols. IV, V, VI), we find in place of the wedge, a small upward stroke attached to the vertical on the left. In the Dacchan inscription, (col.II) the letter occurs in two cases (1.2) with a big triangular loop on the left.

26. \( l \) displays no change.

"represents b now becomes more angular in"
shape. An uncommon triangular form is found in the Dacchan inscription in the word deva, line 2.

Sibilants

28. ə displays no change. It occurs in the same forms as in the earlier records noted above.

29. In ə the vertical on the right sometimes protrudes downwards, e.g., in the Bhakund inscription (col. III), the Kulait grant (col. IV), the Thundu grant (col. VI) and the Devi-ri-Kothi inscription of Nāgapāla (col. XIII).

30. ə occurs more frequently with a wedge and occasionally with a triangular loop at the left lower end. In the copper plate inscriptions (cols. IV, V, VI) the wedge is left open on one side as in the Brahmor and Sungal copper plate grants, noted above.

Spirants

31. h shows no material change except that the curve below often moves further towards the left.

32. jihvāmulīya generally retains its earlier form. In the Baijnath Prasāstis (col. XVI), it is, however, more angular in shape.

33. upadhmanīya occurs in a changed form and may be described as cerebral n with a horizontal line below. Its shape resembles that of the Gilgit manuscripts noted above (p.18).

Virāma (ṁ T̄bĀ 3D)

Virāma is expressed by a slanting stroke running through the right top end of the vowelless consonant. In the Bijbehara inscription (col. XVIII), we, however, find the stroke running through the middle of the aksara. The consonants with which the virāma is attached appear in modified forms in the copper plate inscriptions (cols. IV, V, VI) and occasionally in the Bhakund inscription (col.
III). In all other records, they retain their fuller and complete forms.

III. THE MEDIAL VOWELS (see Table 3C)

1. The methods for expressing the medial ā continue to be practically the same as in the preceding centuries. The following peculiarity, however, deserves notice: The hook or semi-circle peculiar to nā, tā and nā has also been attached to jñā in the Devi-ri-Kothi inscription (col. X), to dā and yā in the Salhi fountain inscription (col. XII) and to jā in the Baijnath Prāñastis (col. XVI).

2. The medial ā and ā are rendered more frequently by the long curves drawn respectively to the left and the right of the consonant. The small curves placed over the consonants occur only occasionally in the copper plate inscriptions (cols. IV, V, VI) and in the Sai fountain inscription (col. XVII). The sickle shaped ā occurs only in one case in nā (l.1) in the Thundu copper plate grant (col. VI).

3. The signs for expressing the medial ū are the same as in the earlier records, except that in a few cases we find the vowel sign expressed by a stroke similar to that of medial ū, e.g., in pu in cols. VII, VIII.

4. Medial ū is expressed in the older fashion, viz., by a wavy or slanting line attached to the foot of the vertical on the left side or by a subscribed initial ū.

5. The angular form of medial r found only occasionally in the earlier inscriptions, now occurs more frequently.

6. In the treatment of the medial vowels e and ai, the only point worth noting is that they are now formed more often by the superscribed strokes placed over the top of the consonants and less frequently by the prāñamaṭrā.
7. Medial o, is expressed more often by superscribed flourish and less frequently by a wedge at the left top end combined with a superscribed e stroke. The ancient method of two wedges attached to both sides of the top of the letter and used frequently in the Sarahan Praśasti above, becomes rare. It has been used only in two cases in the Arigom stone inscription (col. XVII) in 10, 1.2 and 10, 1.4; where, however, the wedges have been replaced by two small verticals.

8. Medial au is rendered throughout by the combination of superscribed flourish and the a mark. The method of expressing the vowel by two wedges attached to both ends of the top bar combined with the superscribed e stroke, and used in the Sarahan Praśasti above becomes obsolete.

IV. LIGATURES (see table 3D)

1. r as the first member of ligature looses its wedge and assumes the form of a small vertical suspended from the top bar.

2. The subscribed r in the Arigom inscription (col. XVI) is rendered by a long slanting stroke drawn from left to right and attached to the lower end of the upper consonant. This form of the subscribed r becomes more common in the Sāradā of the later periods.

3. The S like form of the subscribed th which occurred occasionally in the earlier records now becomes more common. The spiral form is noticed only in the copper plate inscriptions (cols. IV, V, VI).

4. The ligatures st and sth generally appear in identical forms (cf. cols. V, XIII, XV). The tails are longer in the Salhi inscription (col. XII) the Mul-Kihar inscription (col. XVI) than in the copper plate inscriptions (cols. IV, V, VI). The looped forms of subscribed t and th found regularly in the Sāradā of the following
periods occur only in the Arigom inscription (col. XIII).

5. The subscribed ङ which usually occurs in combination with ङ has, as in the earlier records, the shape of numeral 3 and is attached to the upper consonant in varied positions, sometimes lying, sometimes straight and sometimes half straight half lying. A peculiar form occurs in the Devi-ri-Kothi inscription (col. X) and the Salhi fountain inscription (col. XII) where the letter looses its upper portion.

The following peculiar forms of ligatures deserve notice:

nthy in col. VI, tt and iy in col. XIV, stdh in col. VI, rw and gryv in col. XV, kkre in col. XIII, rth in cols. X, XII, XV.

C. THE FINAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE ALPHABET.

The development of the Sarada alphabet up to the 13th century A.D. has been discussed above. In the following period, the alphabet displays conspicuous development in the records of Chamba and the adjoining hill tracts and forms of a few letters appear in such an altered form that it has been given a separate name, viz., Devāsēṣa. The detailed treatment of the Devāsēṣa would be out of place here and being presently concerned only with the Sarada proper, we shall discuss below the development of this alphabet in the 14th and the subsequent centuries on the basis of the following inscriptions of Kashmir and Gandhāra.

(1) The Kāthih (Kashmir) stone slab inscription of the reign of Shibab-ud-Din, dated (Laukika) saṁ 45 (A.D.1369).


88 The inscription is now preserved in the S.P.S. Museum Srinagar.
(2) The Khonamuh (Kashmir) stone inscription of the reign of Zain-ul-Abidin, dated Kali 4530 (A.D.1428).  
(4) The Hariparbat (Srinagar, Kashmir) inscription of the reign of Muhammad Shah, dated (Laukika) saṃ 60 (A.D.1484).  
(5) The Ushkur (Baramula, Kashmir) relief inscription of certain Yasakadeva dated (Laukika?) saṃ 82 (A.D.1506?).  
(6) The S.P.S. Museum, storage vessel inscription of Avantivarman, dated (Vikram?) 1583 (A.D.1526?).  
(7) The Vular-Hama (Bijbehara, Kashmir) bath-room gate inscription (c.16th century).  
(8) The Zaji-Nai (District Doda, Jammu) stone inscription (c.16th century).  

1. THE INITIAL VOWELS (see Table 4A)  
The initial a is generally closed at the top except in the Kotiher (col. I) and the Peshawar Museum inscriptions (col. III) where the letter occurs in its earlier form with an open top. The peculiar forms of the letter are noticed in the Kotiher (col.I) and the Khonamuh (col.II) inscriptions where the left hand lower curve has been attached direct to the top bar. Again in the S.P.S. Museum storage-vessel inscription(col.VI) the letter shows a small form.
circle in place of the usual wedge at the lower end of the vertical.

2. The initial $\tilde{a}$ occurs regularly with a closed top. The Kotiher (col. I) and Zaji-Nai (col. VII) inscriptions present a peculiar form with the length of the vowel expressed by an upward stroke instead of by the usual curve.

3. The initial $i$ occurs only in the Khonamuh inscription (col. II) and displays significant development. The earlier two dots above the curve are converted into a curve, facing downwards, with a small upward stroke attached to it at the right end.

4. The initial $i$ is found only in the Peshawar Museum inscription (col. III) and has exactly the same shape as in the Baijnath Prasastis noted above.

5. The initial $u$ remains unchanged.

6. No instances of initial $\bar{u}$ and $r$ are provided by our inscriptions.

7. The initial $g$ occurs only in the Hariparbat inscription (col. IV) and preserves its ancient triangular form.

8. The initial $\tilde{a}$ does not occur in our inscriptions.

9. The initial $q$ occurs in the syllable $\tilde{om}$ in the Kotiher inscription (col. I) and shows a marked development with earlier wedge at the left top end now converted into a vertical stroke.

10. No example of initial $au$ is found in our records.

II. CONSONANTS (see Table 4B)

Gutterals

1. The aksara $k$ occurs regularly in the double looped form in all our records except the Peshawar Museum inscription (col. III) where it still preserves its earlier form with a single loop.
2. The letter **kh** preserves its earlier shape and does not present anything remarkable.

3. **g**, also occurs in its earlier forms and shows either a wedge or a small triangle at the lower end of the left vertical.

4. The letter **gh** has an archaic shape in the Kotiher (col. I) and the S.P.S. Museum storage-vessel (col. IV) inscriptions. A peculiar form occurs in the Ushkur relief inscription where the upper ends of the central and the right hand strokes have been joined to form a loop and the central vertical stroke has been prolonged downwards. In our other inscriptions it occurs in its earlier form characterised by the downward elongation of the right hand vertical.

5. The gutteral nasal does not present anything remarkable. It shows as usual, a serif, wedge or a small triangle at the right top end.

6. **g** occurs only in the quadrangular form and shows a circular loop in the left limb in the Wular-hama (col.VII) and Ushkur (col. V) inscriptions.

7. **gh** retains its conservative character and shows no significant change.

8. **i** occurs generally in its earlier form. A peculiar form is found in the Peshawar Museum inscription (col. III) where the central stroke issuing from the top horizontal stroke protrudes far down beyond the level of the bottom of the letter.

9. **jh** a rare character, does not occur in our inscriptions.

10. A developed form of **k** is found in the Khonamuh inscription (col. II) where the earlier wedge at the left top end has developed into a vertical stroke as in the case of **g** noted above.
Cerebrals

11. \( \dddot{t} \) occurs in an ancient cursive form in the S.P.S. Museum storage vessel inscription (col. VI) and shows a knob in place of the usual wedge or a serif at the right top end.

12. \( \dddot{th} \) displays no change.

13. \( \dddot{d} \) shows highly angular forms in the Kotiher (col. I) and the Khonamuh (col. II) inscriptions. Its form remains constant in our all other records.

14. \( \dddot{dh} \) occurs only in the Khonamuh inscription (col. II) and shows a loop in place of the more common kink at the right end of the base horizontal.

15. Of the two forms of \( n \) noticed in the earlier records above, only that without the left hand tail is more commonly found in our inscriptions. In the Kotiher (col. I) and Khonamuh (col. II) inscriptions, this form shows further development and instead of the usual curves we have the three down strokes suspended from the top horizontal bar.

Dentals

16. \( \dddot{t} \) does not present anything remarkable except that in the Wular-Hama inscription (col. VI) it sometimes shows a loop in the middle and in the Kotiher inscription (col. I) the upper vertical is occasionally missing and the curve is attached direct to the top.

17. \( \dddot{th} \) occurs only in quadrangular form. Its shape is similar to that of \( \dddot{g} \) with the difference that it has its top closed by means of a top stroke while the latter has its top open.

18. \( \dddot{d} \) shows a knob or a loop on the left in the Peshawar Museum (col. III), the Wular-Hama (col. VII) and the Ushkur (col. V) inscriptions. Its form remains unchanged in our other records. A peculiar form of \( \dddot{d} \) is noticed once in the Peshawar Museum inscription.
(col. III), in mandara, 1.1, where the base stroke is highly slanting and the usual upward vertical stroke at its right end is greatly lengthened downwards.

19. dh shows regularly a well developed top bar.

20. n does not present anything remarkable.

Labials

21. p retains its earlier form and shows no change.

22. ph occurs only in the Ushkur (col. V) and the Zaji-Nai (col. VIII) inscriptions. In the former, the loop marking the aspirate is attached to the right of p instead of on the inside as in the Bower manuscript above (p.10), and in the latter, the curve instead of turning inside turns sharply round and the letter resembles h.

23. b is usually represented by v. A distinction in their forms is, however, noticeable in the Hariparbat (col.IV) inscription where b is rounded in shape as compared to v which is angular.

24. The form of bh remains constant except that it shows a loop in the middle in the Wular-Hama inscription (col. VII) in place of the usual wedge.

25. The form of m remains essentially the same but for a few peculiarities that it displays in some of our records. The peculiarities mainly consist in the treatment of the left limb. Thus it shows at the left lower end, a circular loop in Hariparbat (col.IV) and Wular-Hama (col. VII) inscriptions, a small circle in the Ushkur inscription (col. V) and a knob in the Khonamuh (col. II) and Peshawar Museum (col. III) inscriptions.

Semi-vowels

26. y occurs with a closed top except in the Peshawar Museum inscription (col. III) where it retains its earlier form with an open top. In the Khonamuh inscription (col. II) it shows an inward stroke issuing from the left top end, similar to
one found in the early Śrādā manuscripts. An uncommon
cursive form occurs in the Kotiher inscription (col. I).
27. ı and ̀ do not display any significant change.
28. v which also represents h occurs in both angular and
cursive forms. A peculiar cursive form is noticed in
the Ushkur inscription (col. V).

Sibilants
29. Thb form of h does not differ materially from the earlier
forms. It shows as usual a wedge or a small triangle in
the left limb. In the Kotiher inscription (col. I) the
wedge is sometimes less defined.
30. s does not display any significant development.
31. ą displays the same characteristics as h but is open at
the top.

Spirants
32. A somewhat developed form of h occurs in the Peshawar
Museum inscription (col. III) which closely agrees with
the modern h of the Devanāgarī. In our other records its
form remains constant.
33. iihvāmūliya does not occur in the records under reference.
34. Upadhmaniya occurs in the Kotiher and Khonamuh inscrip­
tions (cols. I and II) and its shape is similar to that
of angular n described above with a horizontal bar below.

III. MEDIAL VOWELS (see Table 4C).
1. The methods of expressing the medial ā continue to be the
same as in the earlier records. The peculiarities may be
noticed in (i) ā (col. III) where medial ā has been
rendered by a long drawn verticī as in the modern Deva­
nāgarī, (ii) in hā (col. VI) where it has been expressed
by a knob, (iii) in ā (cols. I, V, VII) where the small
verticī denoting medial ā has been prolonged downwards to
touch the central horizontal stroke.
2. Medial ı and ̄ı are rendered as usual by the curves drawn respectively to the left and right of the constant. In the Wular-Hama inscription (col. VII) the curves are sometimes replaced by the verticals attached to the consonants by means of a hook or a rectangle. The ornamental forms of medial ı in ni (col. VII) and of ̄ı in h̄ı (col. I) deserve notice.

3. Medial u is expressed in the older fashion, viz., by a wedge, a small triangle or by a curve at the lower end of the consonant. The peculiar forms of pu in the Hariparbat and Wular-Hama inscriptions (cols. IV and VII) are noteworthy.

4. Medial u is rendered as usual by the subscript initial u or by a horizontal or slanting strokes attached to the bottom of the consonant on the left side.

5. Medial r occurs in both angular and cursive forms. A peculiar form occurs in ghṛ (1.2) in the Peshawar Museum inscription (col. III) where the sign resembles the subscript r.

6. Except in the Peshawar Museum inscription (col. III) medial e is rendered throughout by a horizontal stroke placed above the consonant. The Prsthamātra has been used in only one case in ke (1.3) in the Peshawar Museum inscription. In this inscription the stroke of medial e continues to be a slanting one as in the earlier records.

7. Medial ai is rendered throughout by two horizontal e strokes placed above the consonant.

8. Medial o is likewise rendered only by the superscribed flourish. The other methods noticed in the earlier records become obsolete.

9. Medial au is expressed as usual by a superscribed flourish combined with a sign for medial ā.

Virāma

Virāma is expressed by the usual slanting stroke
in the Peshawar Museum and the Ushkur relief inscriptions (cols. III, V). In the Khonamuh inscription (col. II), however, it consists of a long vertical attached to the consonant on the right side. The final m with a virāma attached to it appears in a modified form in the Peshawar Museum inscription (col. III), while final t in the Khonamuh and Ushkur relief inscriptions (cols. III, V) retains its complete form.

IV. LIGATURES (see Table 4D).

1. The superscript r retains its original form in the ligatures rm in the S.P.S. Museum storage vessel inscription (col. VI) and the Wular-Hama inscription (col. VII) and in rs in the Khonamuh inscription (col. II). In other ligatures it loses its bottom part.

2. The subscript th in the ligature sth is invariably rendered by a loop with a tail attached to it on the right side. A peculiar form of subscript th occurs in the ligature nth in the Wular-Hama inscription (col. VII) where the tail has been attached to the loop on the left side instead of on the right.

3. The subscript n and n occur in developed looped forms in the ligatures ina, in and rn respectively in the Khonamuh inscription (col. II).

4. The following peculiar forms of ligatures deserve notice:

   (i) rth (col. II) which consists of a t with a steamer attached to it on the right side.

   (ii) br (col. IV) where subscript r has the same shape as the subscript th in the ligature nth in the Wular-Hama inscription (col. VII) just noted above.

   (iii) hm (col. IV) where the superscript h has a long stroke sloping downwards attached to the right end of its base stroke.

   (iv) ks (col. VII) where both the elements occur in greatly modified forms.
Thus we find that the inscriptions of 14th, 15th and 16th centuries represent the last stage in the development of the Sāradā alphabet. We notice final development in the forms of letters like Ʌ, Ɇ, ɇ, Ɉ, and in the treatment of the medial vowels ɇ and Ɉ which are now throughout formed by the superscribed strokes instead of by the prathamātṛas. We also find that the forms of ɉ, Ɋ and ɋ with fully developed top bars, of which only a few instances were noticed in the earlier records, now become fairly regular and common.

CONCLUSION

This brings our study of the development of the Sāradā alphabet to a close so far as its use in the inscriptions is concerned. No doubt, the use of this alphabet in the inscriptions continued even up to as late as the 18th century as is attested to by the discovery of a Sāradā inscription dated Vikram 1846 (A.D. 1789) by Pt. Anand Kaul at Shopian in Kashmir.95

But since we do not possess the facsimilie of the inscription nor is the original traceable now, we are not in a position to say what further developments the alphabet displayed in the inscriptions after the 16th century A.D. This much is, however, clear that even in the inscriptions of the 15th and the 16th centuries noted above, the development of the Sāradā script is almost complete with the exception of the letters Ɉ, Ɇ, ɇ, and Ɉ, the final changes in which are noticed, as will be seen later on, in the Sāradā manuscripts of this period.

Now before we close our present account it would be worthwhile to recount the opinions of some earlier eminent epigraphists, about the conservative nature of the Sāradā
alphabet and see how far they hold good in the light of our present knowledge of the script.

The earlier epigraphists like Kielhorn and Hoernle described Śāradā as the most conservative alphabet which remained constant all through and showed but little change during the course of several centuries. Thus Kielhorn while editing the copper-plate inscription of Soma-varman and Āsaṭa observed "that it would have been impossible to determine the age of that inscription even approximately from the characters in which it is written." Dr. Hoernle similarly opined that "the Śāradā characters are no guide as to age" and that "any undated manuscript or inscription written in the Śāradā alphabet must be placed any time after 500 A.D." However, the observations of the learned epigraphists seem to be evidently based on the insufficient evidence of the limited number of Śāradā records accessible to them. Our above study of the development of the Śāradā alphabet based on a very wide range of inscriptions dating from the 8th to the 16th century A.D. would make it sufficiently clear that the Śāradā alphabet undergoes sure and distinct changes right from its first appearance in the 8th century A.D. till its final development in 15th and 16th centuries and there is no justification to label it as a conservative alphabet.

Secondly, Dr. Hoernle's suggestion that "the Śāradā characters are no guide to age" does not seem to be wholly true for keeping in view the forms that Śāradā characters display in the course of different centuries, it should not be impossible to determine the approximate date of any undated Śāradā record.

97 Ibid. XII, p.89.