Had not the Creator invented the art of writing, the best of eyes, the world could have never attained to its happy condition.
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INDIAN PALÆOGRAPHY

PART I

12858

BY

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BANARAS

MOTILAL BANARASI DAS

NEPALI KHAPRA

1952
PREFACE

The palæography of a country is one of the most fascinating and instructive studies. It deals with the art of writing, which, during the march of civilization, distinguished man from animal and provided the former with an instrument for conservation, augmentation and transmission of racial traditions from generation to generation. The art of writing was one of the momentous inventions which have shaped the destiny of man, because it has proved the most stable medium of the propagation of knowledge and the diffusion of human culture. It is highly desirable that a history of such an art, dealing with its origin and evolution, should be made available for the proper appreciation of human struggle for knowledge.

A book on Indian palæography incorporating recent researches and giving a new orientation to the subject in their light was long overdue and hence the present venture hardly needs an apology. Since the time of G. Bühler (1896) and Mm. Pt. Gaurishankar Hirachand Ojha (1918) a large number of new discoveries have taken place. Excavations at Mohenjodaro and Harappa were of a revolutionary character and the specimens of palæography unearthed there have greatly affected the problems of the antiquity and the origin of writing in India. Several other discoveries, though less revolutionary, have also influenced various notions about the art of writing in India. A huge mass of additional materials have accumulated in course of time through the Department of Archaeology in India and private efforts. This has necessitated the revision and completion of the subject of Indian palæography as a whole. Since the time of Ojha no serious endeavour has been made for writing a comprehensive book on Indian palæography. A gap of more than thirty years in this direction has really become intolerable. The present work is just an humble attempt towards filling this gap with an earnest hope that it will be improved upon in near future.
The present work aims at giving a continuous but succinct history of the art of writing in ancient India up to c. 1200 A.D. For the sake of convenience the work has been divided into two parts. Part I, which is being published first, contains the discussions of various problems and aspects of Indian palæography essential for properly following the course of the evolution of the art of writing in India. The topics dealt with in Part I are:

I. Antiquity of the Art of Writing in India.
II. Types and Names of scripts used in Ancient India.
III. Origin of Indian Scripts.
IV. History of the Decipherment of Ancient Indian Scripts.
V. Writing Materials.
VI. Profession of Writing and Engraving.
VII. Technique of Writing.
VIII. Types of Records.
IX. Palæographical Formulae.
X. System of Dating and Eras used.

Necessary tables are provided at the end. While dealing with these problems the author had to reconsider and revise a number of theories so far current regarding the art of writing in India, in the light of a fuller picture of India's past unravelled by researches subsequent to the times of the early writers. Besides, he has attempted the reconstruction of some new aspects of the subject. Part II contains charts and tables arranged in chronological and regional order preceded by sections dealing with their analysis involving formation, derivation and interpretation of characters used in different periods of Indian history. In the following pages an attempt has been made to reduce the scattered mass of materials to a system and to bring the subject up to date by supplying additional information and bringing out new aspects for treatment.

Author's indebtedness to various writers and agencies are acknowledged in the foot-notes. He is grateful to Dr. R. C. Majumdar, Dr. A. S. Altekar and Dr. R. S. Tripathi for many
[vii]

valuable suggestions regarding the subject. His sincere thanks are due to Prof. Awadh Kishor Narain for reading the MS and the proofs of the book. He also expresses his gratitude to the publishers and the printers for their keen interest in the speedy completion of this work.

Banaras Hindu University  Raj Bali Pandey
Vasanta-Pañchamī, V. E. 2008.
# CONTENTS

**Preface**

**I. ANTIQUITY OF THE ART OF WRITING IN INDIA**

1. The Views of some early Orientalists ... 1
2. The Traditions of the Country ... 3
3. Foreign Traditions ... 4
4. Evidence of the Greek Writers ... 5
5. Evidence of the Buddhist Literature ... 6
6. Evidence of the Brahmanical Literature ... 8
7. Positive Evidences ... 16

**II. TYPES AND NAMES OF SCRIPTS USED IN ANCIENT INDIA** 22–28

1. Earliest mention of Scripts in the Astādhyaśyā ... 22
2. Mention of Scripts in the Jain Sūtras ... 22
3. List of Scripts in the Lalitavistara ... 23
4. Classification of Scripts ... 25

**III. ORIGIN OF INDIAN SCRIPTS** ... 29–57

**A. The Origin of the Indus Valley Script** ... 29
1. Theory of Dravidian Origin ... 30
2. Theory of Sumerian or Egyptian Origin ... 30
3. Theory of Indigenous Origin ... 31

**B. The Origin of the Brāhma Script** ... 34
1. Theories advocating Indigenous Origin ... 35
2. Theories advocating Foreign Origin ... 39
3. Conclusion ... 48

**C. The Origin of the Kharoshthi Alphabet** ... 50
1. The Names ... 50
2. The Origin of the Name ... 50
3. The Theory of Aramaic Origin ... 52
4. Indian Origin ... 56

**IV. HISTORY OF THE DECIPHERMENT OF ANCIENT INDIAN SCRIPTS** ... 58–65

1. The Decipherment of the Later Brāhma Scripts ... 58
2. The Decipherment of the Early Brāhma Script ... 60
3. The Decipherment of the Kharoshthi Script ... 62
4. The Decipherment of the Indus Valley Script ... 64
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>№</th>
<th>Writing Materials</th>
<th></th>
<th>66–86</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Bhūrjapatra (Birch-bark)</td>
<td></td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Tāḍapatra (Palm-leaves)</td>
<td></td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Paper</td>
<td></td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Cotton Cloth</td>
<td></td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Wooden Boards</td>
<td></td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Leather</td>
<td></td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Stone</td>
<td></td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Bricks</td>
<td></td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Metals—(1) Gold (2) Silver (3) Copper (4) Brass (5) Bronze (6) Iron and (7) Tin</td>
<td></td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Ink</td>
<td></td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Instruments</td>
<td></td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VI.</th>
<th>Profession of Writing and Engraving</th>
<th></th>
<th>87–96</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Lekhaka</td>
<td></td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Lipikara or Lōbikara</td>
<td></td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Divira</td>
<td></td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Kāyastha</td>
<td></td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Karaṇa, Kṛṇika, Karaṇin, Śāsain, Dharmaśekhin</td>
<td></td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Śilpin, Kṛṣṇikāra, Sūtradhara and Śilākūṭa</td>
<td></td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Officers-in-charge of the Preparation of Documents</td>
<td></td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Manuals for Clerks and Writers</td>
<td></td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Place of Writers and Engravers in the Evolution of Alphabets</td>
<td></td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VII.</th>
<th>Technique of Writing</th>
<th></th>
<th>97–116</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Orientation of Individual Signs and Letters</td>
<td></td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Direction of Writing</td>
<td></td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Line</td>
<td></td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Grouping of Letters and Words</td>
<td></td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Punctuation and Interpunctuation</td>
<td></td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Pagination</td>
<td></td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Corrections</td>
<td></td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Omissions</td>
<td></td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Abbreviations</td>
<td></td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Auspicious Symbols and Ornamentation</td>
<td></td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Seals</td>
<td></td>
<td>112</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VIII.</th>
<th>Types of Records</th>
<th></th>
<th>117–144</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Main Types</td>
<td></td>
<td>117</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2. Types on the Basis of Dharmakāstras ... 117
3. Types on the Basis of the Inscriptions ... 119
   (1) Commercial ... 120
   (2) Magical ... 120
   (3) Religious and Didactic ... 122
   (4) Administrative ... 123
   (5) Eulogistic ... 127
   (6) Votive or Dedicative ... 133
   (7) Donative ... 136
   (8) Commemorative ... 142

IX. Palæographical Formulæ ... 145–175
   1. Initiation ... 145
   2. Invocation ... 148
   3. Benediction ... 152
   4. Laudation ... 156
   5. Imprecation ... 161
   6. Conclusion ... 164

X. System of Dating and Eras Used ... 176–217
   1. Pre-Mauryan Inscriptions ... 176
   2. Mahāvīra Era ... 177
   3. Mauryan Inscriptions ... 177
   4. Mauryan System of Dating ... 179
   5. Śunga Inscriptions ... 180
   6. Āndhra-Sātavāhana Inscriptions ... 180
   7. The Characteristics of the System of Dating under the Āndhra-Sātavāhana ... 182
   8. The Hathigumpha Cave Inscription of Khāravela ... 182
   9. Mauryan Era ? ... 183
  10. The Inscriptions of the Śakas of S. W. India (The Kṣaharātasa of Mahārāṣṭra and the Mahā-kṣattrapas of Ujjayini) ... 184
  11. The Main Features of Dating ... 185
  12. The Eras Used: The Śaka ERA ... 186
  13. The Inscriptions of the Indo-Bactrians ... 188
  14. Era, Whether Regnal or Continuous ? ... 188
  15. The Inscriptions of the Saka-Pahlavas ... 189
  16. The System of Dating followed in the Scythio-Parthian Inscriptions ... 190
  17. An Early Śaka Era ... 191
18. The Kuśaṇa Inscriptions from the Reign of Kaniska ... 192
19. The main Features of Dating in the Kaniska-group Kuśaṇa Inscriptions ... 194
20. The Foundation and the Identification of the Kaniska Era ... 194
21. The Inscriptions of the Republics and other Peoples and Kingdoms ... 195
22. The System of Dating ... 197
23. The Origin and Identity of the Kṛta, the Mālava and the Vikrama Eras ... 197
The starting point of the Vikrama Era ... 202
24. The Inscriptions of the Guptas, their Contemporaries and their Successors ... 202
25. The Main Features of the System of Dating ... 207
27. The Valabhi Era ... 208
28. The Inscriptions of the Vākātakas and their Contemporary in the Deccan and the South ... 209
29. The Main Features of the System of Dating ... 210
30. The Inscriptions of the Maukharis and the Puṣyabhūtis ... ... 211
31. The Main Features of the System of Dating ... 211
32. The Harṣa Era ... 212
33. Early Medieval Inscriptions ... 212
34. The Main Features of the System of Dating ... 215
Bibliography ... 219
Index ... 229
Plates ... 239
CHAPTER I.

ANTIQUITY OF THE ART OF WRITING IN INDIA.

The history of the art of writing in India, like the history of ancient India in general, is still in a melting pot, and a number of divergent and conflicting views are held on it. This state of affairs is mainly due to many lacunae in ancient Indian history and the scarcity of materials on the subject for study. It is not possible here to enter into the details of various theories. It is proposed to deal with the problem as briefly as possible.

1. The Views of some early Orientalists.

Some of the early orientalists of Europe obsessed with the comparative newness of European civilization and the theory of the Aryan invasion of India in the second millennium B.C. and due to the paucity of evidences at their disposal, were inclined to fix the beginning of the art of writing in India rather late and they were not prepared to go beyond the first millennium B.C.

(1) Max Müller, one of the earliest orientalists, opines, “I maintain that there is not a single word in Pāṇini’s terminology which presupposes the existence of writing”.¹ According to him Pāṇini flourished in the fourth century B.C. Thus, the art of writing, in his opinion, started in India even later than the fourth century B.C.

(2) Burnell, another European orientalist, held the view that the Indian script Brāhmī was derived from the Phoenician script and it was introduced in India not earlier than the fourth or the fifth century B.C.²

¹ History of Ancient Sanskrit Literature, p. 262; the great scholar overlooked the fact that a work on developed grammar itself presupposes the art of writing. For terms denoting writing see infra p. 11.

² South Indian Palaeography, p. 9; the hollowness of this view will be shown when dealing with the problem of the origin of the Indian scripts.
(3) Dr. Bühler, who was better equipped than the first two scholars to write on the history of Indian Palaeography, tracing the origin of the Brāhmi script fixes the date of its introduction in the following words: "As, according to the results of the preceding enquiry, the elaboration of Brāhmi was completed about B.C. 500, or perhaps even earlier, the terminus a quo, about B.C. 800, may be considered as the actual date of the introduction of the Semetic alphabet into India. This estimate is, however, merely a provisional one, which may be modified by the discovery of new epigraphic documents in India or in the Semetic countries. If such a modification should become necessary the results of the recent finds induce me to believe that the date of introduction will prove to fall earlier, and that it will have to be fixed perhaps in the tenth century B.C., or even before that".¹

The above views were expressed either in the nineteenth century or in the beginning of the twentieth one. Since then a new mass of materials has become available on ancient Indian history, which has changed the views of historians about it. New works on the history and antiquity of Sanskrit language and literature, the discovery of the Indus Valley script, new light on the Middle East and its relationship with India and on the original home of the Aryans have tended to push back the origin of Indian civilization and with it the origin of the art of writing.²

¹ Indian Palæography (Eng. Tr.), p. 17.
² Even the latest European writer on Indian palaeography David Diringer in his book, 'The Alphabet' (1949), p. 334, mostly relying on the researches of the early European Orientalists, maintains, "On the whole, many different lines of evidence suggest a date between the eighth and the sixth century B.C. for the introduction of writing into "Aryan" India, thus confirming the conclusion that the Brāhmi script was much later than the Indus Valley writing and that the knowledge of writing flourished from the seventh century B.C. onwards".
2. The Traditions of the Country.

In contradistinction with the views of the most of European scholars, Indian traditions claim a very high antiquity for the art of writing in India. A few of Indian traditions are given below:

1) The *Nārada Smṛti*, a work on ancient Hindu Law and assigned to the 5th century A.D., while dealing with the importance of writing, states, “Had not *Brahma*, the Creator, created the written (literature), the best of eyes, this world could have never attained to its happy condition.”¹ The only inference which can be drawn from this tradition is that the Indians in the fifth century A.D. believed that the art of writing was invented with the early development of literature and it was regarded essential for the progress of the world.

2) *Brhaspati* refers to the same tradition, though in slightly different words:

“Because in a period of six months memory is confused regarding a particular thing, in very early times the Creator produced letters depicted on leaves”.² According to this statement the art of writing evolved very early in the history of the Indians to help their memory and for the conservation of literature. This statement also maintains that the earliest and the most common writing material in India consisted of leaves available in abundance.

3) The greatest Sanskrit poet *Kālidāsa* gives his considered opinion on the utility of learning the art of writing in the following words:

¹ नाकरिष्यवादि ब्रह्म लिखितं चलुष्टममः।
तस्मायमस्य लोकस्य ना भविष्यतु सुभा गति:।
Sacred Books of the East Series, XXIII, 58ff; see also *Brhaspati's Vārtika* on *Manu*, ibid. p. 304.

² पाण्डवलिङ्गैः तु समये भावित: संज्ञायते यतः।
बाणाःबाराणिः सृष्टानि पत्राबद्वायत: पुरः।
Quoted in the *Āhniṣa-tattva*. 
“By the proper grasp of the art of writing one reaches the vast treasure of literature, as one approaches the ocean through the mouth of a river”. Against European presumption that the early Indian literature was handed down orally without the help of writing from one generation to the other, Kālidāsa regarded this art essential for the proper study of literature.

(4) The Jain works, Samavāyāngasūtra and Paṇṇavaṇāsūtra, and the Buddhist work Lalitavistara, like the Brahmanical ones, refer to the tradition of the high antiquity of writing in India.

(5) The literary traditions regarding the antiquity of writing in India are supported by the art traditions of the country also. In a sculptural representation of Brahmā found at Badami, he holds in one of his four hands a bundle of palm-leaves, denoting a book. Similarly, the counter part of Brahmā, Sarasvatī, is always conceived with one of her hands decorated with a book. Thus both the deities associated with the beginning of knowledge and literature are also associated with written books in their hands.

3. Foreign Traditions.

They support the Indian traditions. Scholars in China and Western Asia were conversant with Indian traditions regarding the invention and antiquity of the art of writing in India.

(1) The learned Chinese traveller Hiuen Tsang refers to the very early invention of writing in India.

(2) The Chinese encyclopaedia Fa-Wan-Shu-lin states that the Brāhmī script written from the left to the right

---

1 शास्त्रिण्यवाचश्रवणातुष्टं वानरय नदी सुभेनेव समुद्रमातिल व
Raghuvaṃśa, III. 28.

2 Weber, Indische Studien, 16, 280, 399. It is assigned to c. 300 B.C.

3 Ibid. It is assigned to c. 168 B.C.

4 Chapter X.

5 Indian Antiquity, Vol. VI, 366; the date of sculpture is 580 A.D.

6 श्रीशिव नरकरिद्वितेशस्य। भगवति भारति देवि नमस्ते ॥

7 Beal, Si-yu-ki. I. 77.
was invented by *Fan (Brahma)* and it was the best of the scripts.1

(3) The Arab scholar *Alberuni*, referring to the antiquity of writing in India says, "The Hindus once had forgotten the art of writing, and that through a divine inspiration it was rediscovered by *Vyas*, the son of *Parasara*. According to him the history of Indian alphabets would begin with the Kaliyuga, in B.C. 3101". This tradition got currency due to the fact that *Vyas* is believed to be responsible for the collection of the *Vedas* and the composition of the *Mahabharata* and the eighteen *Puranas*.2

4. Evidence of the Greek Writers.

Some Greek writers, who either accompanied Alexander in his invasion of India or visited it afterwards, have recorded their observations regarding the art of writing and the material used for it in India of the fourth and the third century B.C.

(1) *Nearcho*,3 one of the generals of Alexander, who accompanied him in the Punjab and led his retreating army up to the mouth of the Indus and thus observed Indian life, records that "the people of this place know the art of manufacturing paper out of cotton and tattered clothes (certainly for writing purposes)".

(2) *Megasthenes*,4 who stayed at *Pataliputra* (Patna) from 305 B.C. to 299 B.C. as a Greek ambassador to the Mauryan court writes in his *Indica* that "in India milestones are fixed on the roads at an interval of ten stadia to know the distance between the rest houses" for the use of the travellers, who were expected to be literate. He also refers to the customs of relating "*Varṣaphala*" (good or evil prospects of the year) according to an almanac (which could be prepared only with the help

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1 *Babylonian and Oriental Records*, I. 59.
2 *Sachau, Alberuni's India*, I. 171.
3 *Strabo, XV. 717.
of writing), preparing of the horoscopes of individuals and delivering of judgment on the basis of (written) Smṛtis. Unfortunately Megasthenes uses the word ‘memory’ for ‘Smṛti’ which has been misconstrued by some to indicate that the Smṛtis were only remembered and not written. This view has been, however, refuted by Bühler¹ who maintains that by ‘memory’ Megasthenes meant Smṛti literature and not remembrance.

(3) Another Greek writer Q. Curtius² mentions soft inner bark of certain trees as a writing material. This suggests the fact that the birch-bark (Bhūrjapatra) was utilised for writing very early in India.

5. Evidence of the Buddhist Literature.

The first stratum of the early Pali literature was collected and composed, without any doubt, before Alexander’s invasion of India and it records some aspect of contemporary history and reflects even history of times before the fifth and sixth century B.C. This literature contains definite references to the existence of the art of writing, the profession of writing, the contents of writing, and the methods and materials used for it.

(1) The Suttānta, while giving the sermons on the conduct of the Bhikkhus, includes Akkharikā, a game, in the list of things forbidden for them.³ The game Akkharikā (Akkharikā) was played by children. In this game one had to recognize letters written with fingers either on one’s own back or in the sky.⁴ Monks were further restrained from incising the rules which induce people to gain heaven, riches and fame in the life after death through self-mortification.⁵

(2) Works included in the Vinayapitaka praise the art of writing (lekhana) as innocent and commendable for

¹ Indian Palæography, p. 6.
² Mac Crindle, History of Alexander’s Invasion of India. VIII, 9.
³ Suttānta. I. 1.
⁴ Brahmajāla-Sutta, 14; Sāmaññaphalasutta, 49.
⁵ Vinayapitaka, Pārājika Section (3, 4, 4).
monks. For house-holders and their sons the profession of a writer was regarded as a good means of livelihood.

(3) The Jātakas refer to the art of writing in the following contexts:

(i) Letters private and official.
(ii) Royal proclamation.
(iii) Family affairs.
(iv) Moral and political maxims.
(v) Usury and bonds (inapāma) and
(vi) Manuscripts (patrāka).

(4) The Mahāvagga and the Jātaka not only prove the existence of writing before the fifth century B.C. in India but they also refer to the existence of institutions where this art was taught, to the contents of writing on the subject taught and to the methods and material used for it. The Mahāvagga mentions lekha (writing), gāṇanā (arithmetic) and rūpa (applied arithmetic with special reference to coins), which constituted the curriculum of the ancient Indian primary schools. The Jātaka mentions phalaka (wooden writing-board) and varṇaka (wooden pen) as writing materials. A later work, the Lalitavistara, describes how Buddha went to the lipiśāla (a school where writing was taught) and how his teacher Viśvāmitra taught him letters on a writing-board of sandle wood and with a golden pen.

1 Bhikkhu Pāchittiyā, 2. 2.
2 Rhys Davids, Buddhist India, p. 108.
3 Kātāhaka Jātaka; Kāma Jātaka.
4 Ruru Jātaka.
5 Kakha Jātaka.
6 Kurudhamma Jātaka.
7 Ruru Jātaka.
8 Bühler, Indian Studies, III, 120.
9 I. 49; Bhikkhu Pāchittiyā, 65. 1.
10 Kātāhaka Jātaka.
11 Chap. X.
All Buddhist evidences clearly indicate that the art of writing was well known and widely spread in India in the period between the fourth and the sixth century B.C. and that it was not something new and it must have been preceded by a long period of the evolution of this art. The view of Bühler\(^1\) that the terms used for writing in the Buddhist literature—chindati, likhati, lekha, lekhaka, akkhara and also all the writing materials—wood, bamboo, panno (leaves), swânnapatta—refer to the primitive character of writing, that is, incision of the signs on hard materials is not tenable. Really speaking there is only one word in the whole list, chindati, which can suggest incision, which was mostly done in monumental writing on stone. Incision was, no doubt, applicable to hard leaves, e.g., tâlapatra (palm-leaves); but bhûrajapatra (birch-bark) was like paper and letters were written on it with ink. Moreover, the Greek writers\(^2\) of the fourth century B.C. mention the manufacture of paper in India which was used for writing with ink. Even on hard materials, for practice, writing work was done with something liquid, ink or chalk solution. The art of writing during the period under consideration had passed beyond its primitive character and was practised with ease and fluency with suitable materials.


Later classical Sanskrit literature, consisting of epics, Kâvyas, dramas, Smṛtis, works on polity and morals, stories, philosophy and works on technical subjects, contain ample proofs regarding the art of writing in India, by the nature of their contents, style and volume and also by specific references to actual writing. Most of them are, however, posterior to the age of the Aśokan inscription and, therefore, their evidence is not pertinent to the problem of the earlier existence of writing in India. As opposed to the later Sanskrit literature, the evidence of the early Sanskrit literature is very valuable. The part of this literature was contemporary of the early Buddhist literature; but mostly it preceded

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\(^1\) Indian Palæography, p. 5.

\(^2\) Nearchoes (Strabo, XV. 717); Q. Curtius (Mac Crindle, History of Alexander's Invasion of India, VIII. 9).
the rise of Buddhism. To the pre-Buddhist Brahmanical literature Max Müller\(^1\) arbitrarily assigned the period between B.C. 800 and B.C. 1400. The later writers on the history of the Sanskrit literature like Bühler\(^2\) and Winternitz,\(^3\) on the considerations of the political, social and cultural development of India, have pushed back the earliest limit of that literature in the third or the fourth millennium B.C. So the relevant evidences on writing from the early Brahmanical literature will considerably extend the antiquity of the art of writing in India.

(1) The two Great Epics of India, the Rāmāyana and the Mahābhārata, which can be assigned to the period earlier than the fourth century B.C.,\(^4\) though certain interpolations were added to them later on, contain a number of terms pertaining to writing, likh, lekha, lekhana, lekhaka, etc. On this Bühler\(^5\) opines, "Though the testimony of the Epics can, therefore, only be used with due reserve, yet it is undeniable that their terms regarding writing and writers are archaic". In the introduction of the Mahābhārata it is said that Vyāsa, the author of the Epic, used Ganeśa, obviously a human being expert in writing, as his scribe.\(^6\)

(2) Another important Brahmanical work, the Arthaśāstra of Kautilya\(^7\), which belongs to the fourth century B.C. and is earlier than the Aśokan inscriptions, contain direct and specific references to writing. Some of them are given below:

(i) वृत्तचोलकमः विविषीताम् चोपयुऽन्ति I. 5. 2.

(Having gone through the tonsure ceremony, one should learn writing and counting).

\(^1\) History of Ancient Sanskrit Literature.
\(^2\) Quoted by Winternitz in his History of Indian Literature, Vol. I.
\(^3\) A History of Indian Literature, Vol. I. p.
\(^4\) Ibid. Vol. I.
\(^5\) Indian Palaeography, p. 4.
\(^6\) Ādiparva, I. 112.
\(^7\) He was the chancellor of Chandragupta Maurya in the fourth century B.C.
(ii) पञ्चमे मनीषपरिवर्द्धम पञ्चसप्रेष्ठेन मंजित । I. 19. 6.
(In the fifth the king should consult his council of minister through letters).

(iii) संतालिपिविभागचारस्थबारे कुविंने । I. 12. 8.
(With signs and writings he should send his spies).

(iv) अमलसम्प्रसंपेत: सर्वसम्प्रसादायणधाराकरो लेखवाचनसमयों लेखक:
स्वाले । II. 9. 28.
(The writer should be prompt in composing, elegant in writing and able in reading documents).

(3) The Sūtra literature, consisting of the Śrauta, the Grhya and the Dharma Sūtras, has been assigned to the period between the second and the eighth century B.C. This also yields evidences on the wide currency of writing. To take an example, the Vasiṣṭha Dharma-
sūtra mentions written documents as one of legal evidences, and even one of the Sūtras on the topic of evidences is quoted from some still earlier work or from some older tradition.

(4) Early works on Sanskrit grammar, which belong to the Vedāṅga class of Sanskrit literature and can be assigned to the early Sūtra period, not only presuppose the existence of writing, as no developed systems of grammar, phonetics and philology can be evolved without the help of writing, but also contain terms which indicate the existence of writing during their age.

(i) The Āṣṭādhyāyī of Pāṇini contains the following terms denoting the existence of the art of writing:

1 Winternitz: A History of Indian Literature, Vol. I.
3 No dialect or language of the world, without a knowledge of script, has been known to possess a codified grammar.
4 According to Max Müller (History of Ancient Sanskrit Literature) and Bühler Pāṇini flourished in the fourth century B.C. Gold Stucker, on the basis of wide researches, fixed the date of Pāṇini in the eighth century B.C., which is more reasonable.
5 It is really surprising that Max Müller presumed that there is not a single word in the terminology of Pāṇini, indicating writing. See ante, p. 1.
(a) Līpi\(^1\) and Lībi (script)
(b) Līpikara\(^2\) (a writer or scribe)
(c) Yavanānī\(^3\) (Greek script)
(d) Grantha\(^4\) (a book)
(e) Svarita\(^5\) (a mark in writing)

Pāṇini further refers to the marking of the ears of cattle with the signs of figures 5 and 8 and also with religious symbols like Svastiḥ\(^6\) and others.

The mention of the Mahābhārata as a grantha (leaves of a book fastened together) and the names of the earlier writers on grammar, Apiśali,\(^9\) Kaśyapa,\(^10\) Gālava,\(^11\) Gārgya,\(^12\) Chakravarman,\(^13\) Bhār- 

dūja,\(^14\) Yāska,\(^15\) Sākalya,\(^16\) Sākatāyana,\(^17\) Senaka,\(^18\) Sphotāyana\(^19\) are also found in the Āstādhyāyī, which shows that writing on grammar had already

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1 लिपिलिबि विि 13. 2. 21. In the opinion of Bühlter “Dippi and Lippi are probably derived from the old Persian Dippi, which cannot have reached India before the conquest of the Punjab by Darius about B.C. 500, and which later became Lippi”. (Indian Pahography p. 5; Bühlter, Indian Studies, III. 21 D). This view presupposes borrowing on the part of Pāṇini and drags him down to the fourth century B.C.

In view of Pāṇini’s date fixed by Goldstucker, Bühlter’s opinion does not hold good. As regards the derivation of the word ‘Lippi’, Bhauji Dikshita, while commenting upon the Ama-Koṣa लिपिलिबि रने शिवयी I. 8. 16) writes लिपि उपदेिे। लिपि उपदेिे। इकः कृपारभ्यं (वा। ३११०४) ह्रुपादातु विख् (उ। ३१२० इति)। लिपि सोवी वातुः इति मुकुटः। and gives a Sanskrit derivation for the both Lippi and Lippi.

2 Ibid.

3 4. 1. 49; Kātyāyana explains it ‘ववलिपयाम्’; Patanjali comments, ‘ववलिपयाम्वित बलवाम्, ववनामी विनि।’

4 समुदास्यो वमोजनेषे। I. 3. 75; अविकव्यङ्काते गन्धे। 3. 87; 4. 3. 116.

5 स्वरितानामिकाः।। I. 3. 11.

6 कणः लक्षणस्यापिहतापसवर्तनस्यम्बितविषायतुर्वलस्यतिक्रयः।। 6. 3. 115.

7 6. 2. 38.
8 6. 1. 92.
9 1. 2. 25.
10 6. 3. 61.
11 8. 3. 20.
12 6. 1. 130.
13 7. 2. 63.
14 2. 4. 63.
15 8. 3. 19.
16 3. 4. 111.
17 5. 4. 112.
18 6. 1. 123.
begun before Pāṇini, necessitating the use of script.

(ii) Yāska,¹ who flourished earlier than Pāṇini, and wrote his Nirukta on etymology of words, includes among his predecessors the following names: Audumbarāyaṇa, Agrāyaṇa, Aurnavābha, Aupamana-yava, Gārgya, Gālava, Kāṭṭhakya, Kautsa, Charmaśiras, Taitiki, Mundagalya, Varsyāyani, Śakalya, Satabalākṣa, Śakaṭayāna, Śākapuri and Sthanasthin. This series of names pushes back the date of technical works on language to a still higher antiquity and with it the antiquity of writing.

(5) The Vedaṅgas²-Sikṣā (the science of correct pronunciation), Kalpa (ritual procedure of litany), Nirukta (etymology), Vyākaraṇa (grammar), Chhandas (prosody) and Jyotisa (astronomy)—all branches of technical knowledge, implying classification, systematisation, cross-references, repetition, big calculations including multiplication, division etc. necessarily presuppose the art of writing.

(6) The Upaniṣads, which form a still earlier layer of the Brahmanical literature, furnish references to aksaras (letters).³ These letters are mentioned not only as pronounced but also as written, as they are associated with suffix 'Kāra' (something to be made) and with Varna (something to be coloured or painted).⁴ In some of the Upaniṣads⁵ Varna (written letters) and Maṭrās (medial signs) are mentioned together.

(7) In some of the Aranyaka⁶ we find minute differentiation between Usman (sibilants), Sparśa (mutes), Svara (vowels) and Antastha (semi vowels); between Vyañjana

¹ The Nirukta of Yāska.
² They constitute the most ancient technical literature of India.
³ निर्देश इति भव्यति प्रसर्व इतिश्च भव्यति तत्समम्। Chhāndogya II. 10.
⁴ Chhāndogya. I. 13; II. 22.3.
⁵ वर्ण: स्वर: मा भवन। Taittiriya, I. 1.
⁶ Aitareya. III. 2. 1; II. 2. 4; III. 2. 6; III. 1. 5.
(consonants) and Ghoṣa; between Mūrdhanya (cerebral) and Dantya (dental). We also come across discussion on Samādhi (joining of letters). The formation of aksara (letter) aś is explained as a combination of letters a, u and m.

(8) The major portions of the Upaniṣads, the Āraṇyakas and the Brāhmapas are composed in prose and they form a huge volume of philosophical and ritual literature. It is absurd to believe that this stupendous mass of literature, mostly composed in prose, was handed down from generation to generation without any aid of writing. It is just possible that some portions of this literature was remembered. But even for teaching and remembering a written text was needed. Besides, this literature contains a large number of technical terms on grammar, etymology, prosody etc. which could not be used by illiterate people.

(9) Even when we approach the earliest layer of the Brahmanical literature, the Vedas, there are certain evidences to show that the authors of the Vedas were familiar with the art of writing. In the Rgveda¹ we get internal references to the names of the meters—Gāyatri, Anuṣṭubha, Brhati Virāja, Tristubha, Jagati etc. In the Vājasaneyi Samhitā² we find the names of some additional meters like Pankti, Dwipada, Tripada, Chatuspada, Saṭpada. The Atharvaveda³ gives the number of meters as eleven. The names of meters and the technical terms regarding their composition could not have been evolved by illiterate people. The modern primitive races and even the lower strata of the literate races compose songs and sing them heartily, but they cannot name their meters nor do they know the technical side of prosody. Only that section of the literate community, which is acquainted with the bulk of the literature of

¹ X. 14. 16; X. 132. 3. 4.
² Yajurveda, Vaj. Samhitā, XI. 8; XIV. 19; XXIII. 33; XXVIII. 14.
³ VIII. 9. 19.
the race and has the power of observation and analysis, can develop the art of prosody.

The Vedic literature also refers to high figures involving the knowledge of written arithmetic. According to the Rgveda, King Sāvarni gave one thousand cows in alms, on whose ears figure eight was imprinted. The Vājasanyi Samhitā of the Yajurveda includes 'Gaṅaka' (an astronomer) in the list of people enumerated in connection with the Puruṣamedha. As regards the figures we get the following in ascending order: daśa (10), Sata (100), Sahasra (1,000), ayuta (10,000), niyuta (100,000), prayuta (1,00,000), arbuda (1,00,00,000), nyarbuda (1,00,00,000), samudra (1,00,00,000), madhya (10,00,00,000), anta (1,00,00,00,000) and prārdha (10,00,00,00,000). The Brāhmaṇa literature contains a large number of instances, dealing with high figures.

The Satapatha Brāhmaṇa gives minute divisions of day and night. According to it one day and night consists of 30 mūhurtas, one mūhurtā of 15 kṣiṇas, one kṣiṇa of 15 etarhis, one etarhi of 15 idānims, one idānim of 15 prāṇas. Thus one day and night contains \(30 \times 15 \times 15 \times 15\) = 1518750 prāṇas and one prāṇa will be equal to about 1/17 of a second. Illiterate communities or persons are not capable of counting or knowing such high figures and the minutest division of a day. They generally count in the multiples of 4, 5, 16, 20 etc., hardly going up to 100. The figures found in the Vedic and the Brāhmaṇa literature necessarily imply the existence of writing.

Now the question may be asked: If writing existed so early, why is not a single specimen of it found before the fifth century B.C. in India? The answer is that only monumental

1 सह्यं में दंतो अष्टकम्य:। X. 62. 7.
2 शामिल्य गणकमिलिकोशक तत्त्वत्। XXX. 20.
3 Taittiriya Samhitā, IV. 40. 11. 4; VII. 2. 21. 1.
4 Pañchavimśa Brāhmaṇa, XVIII. 3; Satapatha Br. X. 4. 2. 22-25.
5 Satapatha; XII. 3. 2. 1.
writing engraved or incised on hard materials like stone or metal can survive long centuries. All available survivals of early writing found in India are those on stone. Early Brahmanical literature and books were written on leaves, birch-bark and later on handmade paper. Such frail and perishable materials could not be preserved for a long time; old manuscripts were discarded after some time and they were copied afresh for transmission to the new generation. Through this process even script was changing from time to time.

The system of education in ancient India which laid emphasis on learning personally from the mouth of the teacher\(^1\) and remembering the texts has been misconstrued to suggest that the art of writing was unknown in the time when early Brahmanical literature was composed. The religion and belief of the ancient Hindus required that the Vedas should be correctly pronounced; the wrongly pronounced speech would kill the \textit{yajaman}.\(^2\) It could be done only through a teacher, who could recite the \textit{Vedas} correctly, and not from a manuscript; but it does not prevent the possibility of a written copy of the \textit{Vedas} with the teacher for his own reference or consultation. Some of the teachers and reciters used written texts at the time of teaching and reciting, which was not regarded honourable for them.\(^3\) No doubt that, even in the case of secular literature, the Hindus emphasised that the texts should be memorised,\(^4\) as in their opinion the mastery over a subject implied that an expert in a particular subject should not depend upon written texts for his ready reference. But at the time of composing the books writing was used and after they were ready, they could be memorised by the authors for their own personal use and also for transmission to students with perfect ease and freedom.

\(^1\) \textit{Rgveda} VII. 103. 5.
\(^2\) \textit{Pātañjali-mahābhāṣya}, I
\(^3\) \textit{Yātirīvaulya-Sīkṣā}
\(^4\) \textit{Chāṇakya-śāstra}.
It will not be out of place to quote the opinions of some competent authorities on early Brahmanical literature. Bothling in his English introduction to the edition of the *Mānava Kalpa-sūtra* prepared by Goldstücker says that in his opinion, though writing was not used for propagation of literature (which was done orally), it was employed at the time of composing new works. Roth was of a definite opinion that the art of writing must have existed very early in India, because the works like the *Prātiśākhya* of the Vedas could not be composed without its help: Bühler writes, "......there is nothing to bar the conjecture, repeatedly put forward, that even during the Vedic period, manuscripts were used as auxiliaries both in oral instruction and on other occasions. And, an argument in favour of this conjecture, it is now possible to adduce the indisputable fact that the Brahmi alphabet has been formed by phonologists or grammarians and for scientific use".

7. Positive Evidence.

The conclusions drawn from the traditional, literary, circumstantial and inferential evidences are supported by positive evidences in the forms of inscriptions, writing engraved or incised on permanent materials, stone, metal, earthen tablets, ivory, stealite etc., which have survived the long centuries intervening between them and the present time, while their contemporary works written on perishable materials like leaves, bark and paper have perished.

(1) *The Mauryan Inscriptions.* The indisputably datable specimens of writing are found in the inscriptions of Asoka, belonging to the third century B.C. They are engraved in two main scripts of the country—Brāhmi and Kharoṣṭhī—on rocks, pillars of stone and the walls of caves. The inscriptions are distributed over a wide area from the Himalayas in the north to

1 p. 69.
2 Quoted by Ojha, *Pāchima Lipimalā*. p. 15.
3 *Indian Palæography*, p. 4.
the state of Mysore in the south and from Girnar in Kathiawar (West) to Dhauli and Jaugada in S.E. The palæography of these inscriptions is marked by the following characteristics:

(i) **Wide variations in the forms of letters.** The majority of letters have different forms obviously developed in different times and localities and by different persons in course of time. For instance letter 'A' has ten forms.

(ii) **Local varieties.** Broadly speaking there were two main varieties—northern and southern—but other regional sub-varieties are also traceable.

(iii) **Cursive and advanced forms of letters.** The same letter possesses a monumental (mostly angular and carved with great care, paying full attention to its aesthetics) form and at the same time a cursive (having a tendency towards curves written in a hurry as in personal and day-to-day writing) one. This is possible only when a script is intimately familiar on account of its long use which prevents confusion regarding the identification and recognition of different forms. Besides, we get advanced forms of letters, which mean that the letters were changing in their basic forms due to evolutionary causes.

From these characteristics Bühler\(^1\) drew the following conclusion: "The existence of so many local varieties, and of so very numerous cursive forms, proves in any case that writing had a long history in Aśoka’s time, and that the alphabet was then in a state of transition". That several centuries were required for the development of the scripts which were used in the Aśokan time is a fact which is accepted by all. This fact is further reinforced by the internal evidences contained in the Aśokan inscriptions which prove that writing was employed not only for monu-

\(^1\) Indian Palaeography, p. 7.
mental or spare use but was also used for writing extensive books on common and softer materials, necessitating a long practice of writing. Asoka, while explaining the medium of stone for his edicts says, "so that it may last long", implying thereby that writing work was done on perishable materials also. He also prescribed a number of religious texts for daily perusal and recital by monks and laity. These works were, certainly not engraved on stone but written on common materials, leaves, bark or paper.

(2) Pre-Mauryan Inscriptions. There are some legends and inscriptions which belong to a period earlier than that of Asoka and which carry the date of writing back to pre-Asokan times. They can be referred to as follows:

(i) The Eran coin legend. The legend runs from the right to the left, on the basis of which Bühler maintained that it belonged to the period, when Brāhmi was written both from the right to the left and from the left to the right and this period must be earlier than the fourth century B.C. Though it is not safe to assert that there was a period when Brāhmi was written from the right to the left on the basis of sporadic and fragmentary pieces of writing, on the ground of the archaic characters of letters used in the legend (Sha, ma, sa) and numismatic considerations the legend is earlier than the Asokan inscriptions.

(ii) Bhattacharjee relic-casket Drāvīḍi inscriptions. They can be assigned to a date earlier than that of Asokan inscriptions on the basis of (1) liquid characters of

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1 RE. II. (Kalsi).
2 Cunningham, Ancient Coins of India, p. 101.
3 Bühler: Indische Palaeographie Plate II, Cols. XIII-XIV.
some of its letters (da, dha, bha), (2) archaic nature of some letters (cha, ja, sa) and independent forms of two of its signs (la and fa).

(iii) Taxila coin Brāhmī legends.¹ On palæographic and numismatic grounds they are placed in the fourth century B.C.

(iv) The Mahāsthāna stone plaque inscription.² This inscription was found in the Bogra district of Bengal and records an endowment to the Pañcha-vargiya Buddhist monks.

(v) The Sohagura copper-plate inscription.³ It was found in the Gorakhpur district of U. P. and records a provision of grains and fodders during famines.

(vi) The Piprahwa Buddhist vase inscription.⁴ It was found in the Baṣṭi district of U. P. It records the dedication of a relic-casket containing the portion obtained by the Sākyas out of the remains of Buddha and it can be assigned to c. 483 B.C., the date of Buddha’s Nirvāṇa.

(vii) The Badli inscription.⁵ It was discovered in a village of the Ajmer district. It contains the inscription Virāya Bhagavate chatusite vase (dedicated to Lord (Mahā) Vira in his 84th year. By calculation we get (527-84) 483 B.C. as the date of this inscription.

On the basis of above positive evidences the age of writing is pushed back to the fifth century B.C. presupposing a previous long development of scripts. These epigraphs are almost contemporary of the early Buddhist literature.

¹ Cunningham, Coins of Ancient India.
⁵ Ojha, Prāchīna Līpimālā, p. 2. It is preserved in the Rajputana Museum, Ajmer.
(3) The Indus Valley Script. Before the discovery of the Indus Valley Script in 1921 the palaeographists in India stumbled on the pre-Mauryan inscriptions and could not go beyond the fifth century B.C. But the momentous discovery referred to above gave a rude shock to the complacent conception of the chronology of ancient India which was supposed to start in the middle of the second millennium B.C. On the consideration of stratifications and comparison between the Sumerian and Indus Valley civilizations the age of the Indus Valley culture and with it that of its script is fixed in the fourth millennium B.C. at the latest, with the possibility of its being pushed back still further. It is not necessary to discuss here whether this script was indigenous or imported. This will be done in the chapter dealing with the origin of scripts in India. But this much can be said here that the absence of the discovery of monumental writing between the sixth century B.C. and the age of the Indus Valley culture cannot be construed to suggest that the art of writing was unknown in India during that period. The beginning of the earliest Vedic literature, which contains evidences on writing, and the rise of the Indus Valley culture, were contemporary. Both the evidences

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2 There is no sound argument to prove that this script was imported. The traditions of Sumeria, which is supposed to be the source of the Indus Valley script, themselves maintain that writing with the arts of agriculture and metalworking went there from sea-side (Wolley, C.L., *Sumerians*, p. 189). The possibility of the derivation of the Brāhmi script from the Indus Valley script has been suggested by some competent authorities on the subject (Hunter, *The Script of Harappa and Mohenjodaro and its connection with other Scripts*, Kegan Paul, London, 1934, p. 49).

3 Numerous mounds in northern India, which cover the ancient culture of the land have not been excavated as yet. Unless it is done, it will be highly presumptuous to emphasise the negative evidence unduly.
combined strongly indicate the existence of writing in the fourth millennium B.C. in India.

Thus the traditions of the country, the testimony of foreign writers, literary evidences and positive palaeographical survivals all tend to prove a very high antiquity of the art of writing in India, stretching in the past upto the fourth millennium B.C. The earliest specimens of writing in India can be regarded contemporary of those found in Sumeria, Egypt and Elam.
CHAPTER II.

TYPES AND NAMES OF SCRIPTS USED IN ANCIENT INDIA.

The earliest mention of the word for 'script' (Lipi or Libi) is found in the Ag̱tādhyāyi, a work on grammar written by Pāṇini in c. B.C. 800. But how many types of script were current in the country and what were their names, there is nothing in Pāṇini to answer these questions. Pāṇini mentions only one script by name, Yavanāṃi (Greek script), the existence of which was known to him. He did not, however, find any occasion to mention Indian scripts, which were a bit too familiar with him. The Arthaśāstra² of Kautilya also refers to 'script' (lipi) as one of the subjects to be taught to a child prince, but nothing further is known from it. The inscriptions³ of Aśoka contain the words 'Lipi', 'Libi' and 'Dipi' all meaning 'Script'. At least two types of script—Brāhmi and Kharoṣṭhī—were prevalent in the time of Aśoka, but their names are nowhere mentioned in his edicts. It is when we come to the Jain Sūtras⁴—the Pan-navaṇāṣūtra, the Samavāyāṅgasūtra and the Bhagavatīsūtra, the names of various scripts are presented to us. The first two contain a list of eighteen scripts and the last one refers to only one, Brāhmi.⁴

The eighteen scripts are listed as follows:

1. Bambhī (=Brāhmi),
2. Javanāli or Javanāliya (Greek script),
3. Dosapuriya (or Dosapuriṣa),
4. Kharotthi (Kharoṣṭhī),
5. Pukkharasariyā,
6. Bhogavaiyā,
7. Pahārāiya (or Paharaiyā),
8. Uya-amṭarīkkhiyā (Uyamitara Kariya),

¹ III. 2. 21.
² 2. 1. 2.
³ These Sūtras are later than the Brahmanical Sūtras.
⁴ नमो बंमीये जिविये (Salutation to the Brāhmi Script).
9. Akkarapiṭṭhiyā (Akkharapunitṭhiyā),
10. Tevanaiyā (or Veṇaiyā),
11. Gi (ni?) nhaïyā (or Vhinattiyā),
12. Amkalivi (or Amkalikkha),
13. Gānitalivi (or Ganiyalivi),
14. Gāndhavva-liyī,
15. Aḍamsalivi (or Aṣaya-liyī),
16. Māhessari (or Māhassari),
17. Dāmili (=Dravidian) and
18. Polimdi (=Paulindi, belonging to the Pulindas).

The Buddhist work, ‘Lalitavistāra’¹ has preserved a much bigger list than that contained in the Jain Sūtras. The names of the scripts mentioned in the Lalitavistāra are given below:

1. Brāhmi,
2. Kharoṣṭhī,
3. Puṣkarasāri,
4. Aṅgalipi,
5. Vaṅgalipi,
6. Magadhali,pi,
7. Maṅgalyali,pi,
8. Manusyalipi,
9. Aṅguliyali,pi,
10. Śakārili,pi,
11. Brahmavallilipi,
12. Aḍavidalipi,
13. Kanārilipi,
14. Daksinālipi,
15. Ugrali,pi,
16. Samkhya-li,pi,
17. Anulomalipi,
18. Ordhva-dhanurli,pi,
19. Daradali,pi,
20. Khasyali,pi,
21. Chīnali,pi,
22. Hānali,pi,
23. Madhyakṣara Vistāralipi,
24. Puspali,pi,
25. Devalipi,
26. Nāgalipi,
27. Yakṣalipi,
28. Gāndhavvalipi,
29. Kinnarali,pi,
30. Mahoragali,pi,
31. Asuralipi,
32. Garuḍalipi,
33. Mrgachakralipi,
34. Chakralipi,
35. Vāyumarali,pi,
36. Bhaumadevalipi,
37. Antarikṣalipi,
38. Uttarakuṇḍavipali,pi,
39. Uparagandalipi,
40. Purvavidehalipi,

¹ It is a work written in Sanskrit and deals with the biography of Lord Buddha. It is not possible to fix its date exactly. But as it was translated in the Chinese in 308 A.D., it must belong to a time at least one or two centuries earlier.
The above lists contain the names of scripts, Indian and foreign, known to, or imagined by, the Indians during the periods when these lists were compiled. Out of the whole lot only two scripts can be identified on the basis of positive evidence. These two are the Brāhmī and the Kharoṣṭhī. The Chinese Encyclopaedia Fa-Wan-Su-Lin (composed in 668 A.D.) helps us in this connection. According to it the invention of writing was made by three divine powers; the first of these was Fan (Brahma), who invented the Brāhmī script, which runs from the left to the right; the second divine power was Kia-ku (Kharoṣṭhī) who invented Kharoṣṭhī, which runs from the right to the left, and the third and the least important was Tsam-ki, the script invented by whom runs from the up to the down. The Encyclopaedia further informs us that the first two divine powers were born in India and the third in China. The instances of the first two types of writing were found at the same period in the inscriptions of Aśoka. Two of his rock edicts, found at Mansera and Shahbazgarhi, running from the right to the left were obviously written in the Kharoṣṭhī Script\(^1\). The rest of his edicts, running from the left to the right were certainly written in the Brāhmī\(^3\), which was almost universally current in the country. On account of

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1 Babylonian Oriental Record, I. 59.
3 Ibid.
their wide currency in India, the Brāhmi and Kharoṣṭhī were given prominent place in the lists.

On a close observation the majority of the scripts can be divided under the following groups, though some of them still defy recognition and identification:

1. *The most current writing in India: Brāhmi.* It was an alphabetic system of script.

2. *The writing confined to the north-west part of India: Kharoṣṭhī.* It used the same alphabets as the Brāhmi, but its characters were different.

3. *Foreign scripts known in India:*
   - (1) *Yavanāli (Yavanāni)=Greek.* Through commerce the Indians were acquainted with it. It was also used in the legends on the Indo-Bactrian and the Kuśāṇa coins.
   - (2) *Daradalipi (the script of the Darada people)*
   - (3) *Khasyalipi (the script of the Khasas—the Šakas)*
   - (4) *Chiṇalipi (the Chinese script)*
   - (5) *Hūnalipi (the script of the Hūnas)*
   - (6) *Asuralipi (the script of the Asuras—the cousins of the Aryans in W. Asia)*
   - (7) *Uttarakurudvipalipi (the script of the Uttara Kurus beyond the Himalayas)*
   - (8) *Sāgaralipi (Oceanic scripts)*

4. *Provincial scripts of India.* Like modern provincial scripts of India, there must have been provincial scripts current side by side with the Brāhmi, either its varieties or derivatives or derived from the proto-Brāhmi or some independent scripts. Except the variants of the Brāhmi all other perished in course of time. Yet among the following names some of them survive:
   - (1) *Puḫarasāriya (Puṣkaraśāriya).* Most probably it was a script prevalent in Western Gāndhara, the capital of which was Puṣkaraṇavati.
   - (2) *Pahāraiya (the script of the northern mountainous regions)*
(3) Āṅgali (the script of Anga—N.E. Bihar)
(4) Vaṅgali (the script prevalent in Bengal)
(5e) Magadhalipi (the script current in Magadha)
(6) Dravīḍalipi (Damili) (the script of the Dravīḍa-pradeśa)
(7) Kanārili (the Canarese script)
(8) Dakṣiṇalipi (the script of the Deccan)
(9) Apara-Gauḍi-lipi (the script of western Gauḍa)
(10) Purva-Videha-lipi (the script of E. Videha)

5. Tribal scripts:
(1) Gandharvalipi (the script of the Gandharavas, a Himalayan people)
(2) Polindi (the script of the Pulindas, a Vindhyan people)
(3) Ugralipi (the script of the Ugras)
(4) Nāgalipi (the script of the Nāgas)
(5) Yakṣalipi (the script of the Yakṣa, a Himalayan people)
(6) Kinnaralipi (the script of the Kinnaras, a Himalayan people)
(7) Garuḍalipi (the script of the Garuḍas)

6. Sectarian scripts:
(1) Mahessari (Mahessari = Māhekvarī; a script current among the Saivas)
(2) Bhanumadevalipi (a script used by the gods on the earth = the Brāhmans)

7. Pictographic scripts:
(1) Maṅgalya-lipi (an auspicious script)
(2) Manuṣyalipi (a script representing human figures)
(3) Anģuliya-lipi (script resembling fingers)
(4) Urḍhva-dhanulipi (a script resembling a drawn bow)
(5) Puṣṭali (a flowery script)
(6) Mrgachakralipi (a script forming circles of animals)
(7) Chakralipi (a circular script)
(8) Vajralipi (a script resembling a bolt)
8. **Mnemonic scripts**:
   (1) **Ankālipi** (or **Sanākhyālipi**)
   (2) **Ganitālipi** (some kind of arithmetical writing)

9. **Engraved or incised script**:
   (1) **Adamśa or Ajasalipi** (literally bitten, that is, chiselled, incised or drilled with the help of an iron instrument)

10. **Stylish scripts**:
    (1) **Utkēpalīpi** (scripts thrown upwards)
    (2) **Nikēpalīpi** (scripts thrown downwards)
    (3) **Vikēpalīpi** (scripts elongated on all sides)
    (4) **Praṅkepalīpi** (scripts exaggerated on one side)
    (5) **Madhyakṣara-vistāralīpi** (scripts exaggerated in the middle)

11. **Transitional scripts**:
    **Vimśīrtaśali** (scripts representing a mixture of pictographs, syllabrics and alphabets)

12. **Shorthand or Dictation**:
    (1) **Anudratālipi** (fast or shorthand writing)

13. **Special style for books**:
    **Śāstraśaśtra** (monumental scripts used in writing standard works)

14. **Special style for Accounts**:
    (1) **Ganāvarta** (some kind of mathematical scripts)

15. **Supernatural or imaginary**:
    (1) **Devalīpi** (the script of gods)
    (2) **Mahoragalipi** (the script of serpents)
    (3) **Vāyumarali** (the script of winds)
    (4) **Antarikṣadevali** (the script of the gods of the sky)

Excepting supernatural or imaginary scripts, other varieties and types of scripts have their representatives in different parts of India, in the neighbouring countries, in provincial characters and in other pictographical and decorative styles of writing.

The archaeological excavations at Harappa and Mohenjodaro revealed the existence of a system of writing prevalent in India
in the fourth millennium B.C. On the basis of the positive evidences this is the earliest system of writing current in India. It is a mixed (Vimśrita) writing of the transitional period between the age of embryonic writing and the age of phonetic writing. It consists of pictograph, ideographs and syllabus (corresponding to various names given in the lists referred to above).
CHAPTER III

ORIGIN OF INDIAN SCRIPTS

Both the Indian and the Chinese traditions are unanimous on the point that the two main scripts of India—the Brāhmī and the Kharoṣṭhī—were invented in India. But, as before the discovery of the Indus Valley script, no specimen of writing belonging to the period between the fifth century B.C. and the fourth millennium B.C. was found in India, and the positive evidences on writing for this period were discovered in Western Asia, many scholars, believing in the monogenic nature of writing, attributed the origin of the Indian scripts to some country in Western Asia or to Greece. Some scholars maintained and some are still of the opinion that at least the Brāhmī is of indigenous origin. The Kharoṣṭhī has been almost unanimously regarded as of a foreign origin imported from Western Asia. As regards the origin of the Indus Valley script, the scholars are again divided in their opinion and a number of theories have been propounded in this connection. In this chapter the problems of the origin of these three systems of writing will be discussed separately.

A. The Origin of the Indus Valley Script.

The earliest script known in India is that discovered in the Indus Valley at Harappa and Mohenjodaro.¹ Unfortunately it has not been satisfactorily deciphered as yet. This fact has rendered the solution of the problem of the origin of the Indus Valley script all the more difficult. Scholars, who think that the Indus Valley culture was Dravidian, regard the script also of Dravidian origin. The main difficulty in accepting this view is that the earliest specimen of writing posterior to the Indus Valley script is found in northern India and not in the South where the bulk of the Dravidian people live. On the basis of the resemblance between the Indus Valley script on the one hand and the Sumerian

and the Elamite on the other many scholars are inclined to suggest that the Indus Valley script was imported into India from Western Asia. To our great disadvantage the language of the script is still a mystery, and it cannot be definitely ascertained on positive grounds as to which of them were the borrowers.

1. Theory of Dravidian Origin

Some of the scholars, who believe that the Indus Valley civilization was pre-Aryan and, therefore, non-Aryan, hold the view that the people, the language and the script of the pre-historic Indus Valley were Dravidian. The strongest advocate of this view is Rev. H. Heras, S.I., though Sir John Marshall and his colleagues held, more or less, similar views. Heras reads the Mohenjodaro inscriptions from the left to the right and transliterates them into the Tamil language. Our greatest difficulty in accepting this view is that we have absolutely no knowledge of the Tamil spoken or written in the fourth millenium B.C. and, therefore, the reading proposed by Heras cannot be verified; the equation of mediaeval or modern Tamil with the Indus Valley language under consideration cannot be regarded as correct. As regards story-telling about the symbols used in the Indus Valley script, it can be accomplished in any language without any real check, because the script is partly pictographic.

2. Theory of Sumerian or Egyptian Origin

L. A. Waddel in his book, ‘The Indo-Sumerian Seals Deciphered’ maintained that in the fourth millennium B.C. the Indus Valley was colonized by the Sumerians and that they introduced their language and script there. In this book he tried to prove the Sumerian origin of the Indo-Aryans, and on the seals he read the names of the Aryan kings and their capitals mentioned in the early literature of the Indo-Aryans. Waddel was definitely of the opinion that the Indus Valley script was derived from

1 Mohenjodaro, the People and the Land, Indian Culture, III, 1937; Proto Indian Script and Civilization.
2 Mohenjodaro and the Indus Civilization, Vols. I, II.
3 London: Luzac & Co., 46, Great Russell Street, W.C. 1925.
the Sumerian. Among Indian scholars Dr. Pran Nath\(^1\) shares the views of Waddel and traces the origin of the Indus Valley script to Sumeria. There is no doubt that due to the pictographic nature of the earliest scripts of India, Western Asia and Egypt and Crete and their contact through sea-faring there is some resemblance in them. But who can decide at this stage of our knowledge as to which of them was the originator of the art of writing and which of them the borrowers? According to the historical traditions in Mesopotamia the authors of the Sumerian civilization themselves came from outside and they brought with them agriculture, metal-work and the art of writing. The names of gods and heroes responsible for the introduction of writing in Sumeria appear Indic rather than Semetic. Under the circumstances the opinion of Waddel seems to be fantastic and does not deserve our credence.\(^2\)

3. Theory of Indigenous Origin;

Those, who are of the opinion that the people of the Indus Valley were either the Aryans or the Asuras, a human stock allied with the Aryans in race and culture, who later on migrated to Mesopotamia and Western Asia, hold the view that the Indus Valley script originated in this country; its resemblance with the Proto-Elamite, the Sumerian and the Egyptian scripts does not prove that the Indus Valley script was derived from either of the other three; and that perhaps the Indus Valley script was the original one, which spread to other lands through the Asuras and the Pañis.\(^3\)

It will be instructive to quote the opinion of G. R. Hunter on this point:

"Many of the signs bear a remarkable resemblance to the monumental script of ancient Egypt. The entire body of anthropomorphic signs have Egyptian equivalents which are virtually


\(^3\) K. N. Dikshit: Pre-historic Civilization of the Indus Valley, p. 46.
exact. And it is interesting to note that not one of these anthropomorphic signs have the remotest parallels in Sumerian or Proto-Elamite. On the other hand there are many of our signs that are exactly paralleled in the Proto-Elamite and Jemdet-Nasr tablets, such as that have no conceivable morphographic equivalent in Egyptian. One is bound to conclude that the presumption is strong that our script has been borrowed in part from Egypt, and in part from Mesopotamia. Of course, there is a considerable proportion of signs that are common to all three scripts, such as the signs for tree, fish, bird, etc. But this is co INCIDENTAL and indeed inevitable in the very nature of pictography. It is only safe to draw inferences of casual connection when the less obvious and more conventionalised ideograms, especially those that are so conventionalised that their pictographic origin is hardly determinable, show a marked correspondence, and in a lesser degree, where easily recognisable pictographs show the same variations. Now the latter is very marked as between our script and Proto-Elamite, as will appear from a study of the comparative Table.

Of course it is possible that all three had a common ancestry, and that the Egyptian element in our script alone was borrowed. It is even possible that all four scripts may have had a common origin. But this is an enquiry that does not concern us here, and which in the nature of pictography, would be very hard to solve without the aid of anthropological evidences as to whether or not there was in pre-historic times racial affinity between the inhabitants of the Nile, Euphrates and Indus Valleys".¹

While dealing with the problem of the origin of the Indus Valley script, David Diringer writes, "Two other problems must be mentioned; the origin of the script, and its influence on the creation of other scripts. It seems obvious that the Indus Valley script, which is rather schematic and linear on the extant inscriptions, was originally pictographic, but it is impossible to decide whether it was truly indigenous or imported. A connection between this script and the common ancestor of the

¹ The Script of Harappa and Mohenjodaro and its connection with other scripts, pp. 45-47.
Cuneiform writing and of the early Elamite script is probable, but it is impossible to determine what the connection was. Some solutions—none of them can be considered certain—may be suggested, for instance:

(1) The Indus Valley Script was perhaps derived from an, at present unknown, early script, which may have been the common ancestor also of the cuneiform and early Elamite writing.

(2) All three might have been local creations, one probably the prototype of the Cuneiform or of the early Elamite script, being an original invention and the other two being creations inspired by the knowledge of the existence of writing.¹

In the present state of our knowledge it is not safe to dogmatise on any particular point of view; we can talk only of the possibilities. There is no doubt that during pre-historic times countries bordering on the Arabian and the Mediterranean seas had mutual intercourse and they must have influenced one another. As regards the question of borrowing by one from the others, the following historical tradition will help us:

(1) The authors of ancient Egyptian civilization migrated from Western Asia to Egypt.²

(2) The Phoenicians, the great sea-faring and culture-spreading people of ancient times, were colonists in Tyr, the great sea-port of Western Asia, according to the Greek writers.³

(3) The Summerians themselves came to Sumeria from outside through seas.⁴

(4) The Aryan tribes, according to the ancient historical traditions recorded in the Purāṇas and the Epics, migrated from N.W. India towards the north and the west.⁵

¹ The Alphabet, p. 85.
² Maspero: The Dawn of Civilization: Egypt and Chaldea, p. 45; Passing of the Empire, VIII; Smith: Ancient Egyptians, p. 24;
³ Herodouts, 11. 44.
⁴ Wolley, C.L., The Sumerians, 189.
⁵ F. E. Pargiter, Anc. Ind. Historical Traditions, XXV.
Under the circumstances, there is no impossibility about the fact that either the Aryans or their cousins Asuras invented the Indus Valley script and carried it to Western Asia and Egypt and thus inspired the evolution of scripts in these parts of the world.

**B. The Origin of the Brāhmi Script**

As its very name suggests the Brāhmi script was invented by the Indo-Aryans for the preservation of ‘Brahma’ or Veda and was mainly employed by the Brāhmaṇas, whose duty it was to conserve the Vedic literature and to hand it down to the succeeding generations by writing and copying the texts from time to time and by teaching them to their students. This fact was accepted by the Jain and the Buddhist writers of later centuries, who, being highly critical of the Vedic literature and the Brāhmaṇas, cannot be accused of euphemism. Even the modern writers, who trace the origin of the Brāhmi to some Semitic source, admit that the Brāhmaṇas of ancient India borrowed this script, through the traders, from Western Asia and perfected it almost beyond recognition. It may be submitted in this connection that original impulse for the invention of writing in India was not commercial, as it was in Sumeria and Babylonia, but religious and it is highly improbable that the Brāhmanaṣ from the cradle of the Aryan civilization in northern India picked up the threads of their sacred script ‘Brāhmi’ from the sea-ports of Sindhu and Surashtra. The greatest difficulty in the way of modern scholarship in solving the problem of the origin of the Brāhmi script is the absence of any inscription in the Brāhmi, which can be assigned to the period prior to the fifth century B.C. Consequently a number of theories have been propounded to trace

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1 See Table No. II.

2 Oral recitation played an important part in teaching. This fact has misled many scholars to suppose that the written texts were not in existence at the time of teaching. Such scholars forget the fact that even today, after the invention of the most advanced type of printing, the orthodox Hindus insist on oral teaching and in their opinion an able teacher should not depend on books at the time of teaching.
the origin of the Brāhmī script. These theories can be divided broadly into two groups; (1) the theories which regard the Brāhmī script of indigenous origin and (2) the theories which trace the origin of the Brāhmī script to some foreign source. In the following lines an attempt is made to reproduce briefly and to discuss the various theories.

1. Theories Advocating Indigenous Origin:

(1) Dravidian Origin: Edward Thomas¹ and other scholars of his opinion maintained that the Dravidians were responsible for the invention of the Brāhmī characters which were borrowed by the Aryans. The basis of this opinion seems to be the assumption that before the supposed Aryan invasion of India the Dravidians occupied the entire land and they, being culturally more advanced than the Aryans, invented the art of writing. This supposition is basically wrong, as the original habitat of the Dravidians was in the South and the original home of the Aryans was in northern India.

Against this theory it may be urged that the earliest specimens of writing are found in northern India, the original home of the Aryans and not in the south, the native place of the Dravidians. Moreover, the present purest representative of the Dravidian languages, Tamil, has only the first and the fifth letters of a Varga (class) whereas the Brāhmī has all the five letters of a Varga (class). Phonetically the poor Tamil characters obviously seem to have been borrowed from the phonetically commodious Brāhmī characters.

(2) Aryan or Vedic Origin:—General Cunningham², Dowson³, Lassen⁴, etc. held the view that the Aryan priests developed the Brāhmī alphabet from indigenous Indian hieroglyphics.

Bühler³ criticises Cunningham in the following words, "Cunningham's opinion, which was formerly shared by some

¹ Numismatic Chronicle, 1883 No. III.
³ JRAS, 1881, p. 102, Indian Antiquary, Vol. XXXV, 253.
⁴ Indische Alterthumskunde, 2nd edition, i. p. 1006 (1867).
⁵ Indian Palæography, p. 9."
prominent scholars, presupposes the use of Indian hieroglyphic pictures of which hitherto no trace has been found". The discovery of the Indus Valley script\(^1\), which is partly pictographic, has considerably weakened the objection put forward by Bühler. He also minimised the importance of some pictographic evidences, the survivals of which are found in some of the caves of India\(^2\). Unless the phonetic values of the Indus Valley script are exactly fixed nothing certain, regarding its bearing on the Brāhmi character, can be said. But it is quite possible to derive some of the Brāhmi characters from some of the signs of the Indus Valley script.\(^3\)

R. Shamasāstri\(^4\) propounded a theory according to which the Brāhmi characters were derived from various signs and symbols, representing devas (deities) and called 'devanagāra', 'the city of gods'. The greatest weakness of this theory is that all the evidences produced by him come from the Tantric texts of a very late origin. Yet this theory cannot be categorically rejected and it is very near the pictographic origin of the Brāhmi characters. The name of the script, 'Brāhmi' also lends some support to this theory.

Dr. David Diringer\(^5\) has reminded the advocates of the indigenous origin of the Brāhmi script of the following facts:

'(1) The existence in the same country of two or more successive scripts does not prove that one depends on the other; for instance the early Greek alphabets employed in Crete did not descend from the early Cretan or Minoan script.

(2) Even if similarities could be proved between the shapes of the Indus Valley characters and those of the Brāhmi letters, evidence would still be lacking that the latter descended from the former, unless the likeness of the signs belonging to the two systems corresponds with the identity of their phonetic values.

\(^1\) Marshall: *Mohenjodaro and Indus Valley Civilization*, Vol. II.
\(^2\) *Indian Palæography*, p. 9.
\(^5\) *The Alphabet*, pp. 328-334.
(3) The Indus Valley writing was presumably a transitional system or a mixed syllabic-ideographic script, while the Brāhmī script was a semi-alphabet. As far as we know, no syllabic-ideographic script became alphabetic without the influence of another alphabetic script. No serious scholar has ever tried to show how the Indus Valley ideographic script could have developed into the Brāhmī semi-alphabetical writing.

(4) The extensive Vedic literature gives no indication of the existence of writing in early Aryan India. Writing is never mentioned. Among the ancient Indian divinities there was no god of "writing", but there was Sarasvati, the goddess of knowledge, learning and eloquence.

(5) Only the Buddhist literature gives clear references to writing in ancient times.

(6) On epigraphic grounds alone it is supposed that the Brāhmī script existed in the sixth century B.C.

(7) According to the great authorities on the subject, the period 800-600 B.C. in India shows a remarkable advance in industrial life. This period coincided with the development of maritime commerce from parts on the south-west coast of India to Babylon. It is generally argued that the development of commerce favoured the diffusion of a knowledge of writing.

(8) Very little is known about the early Aryan history of India. The fantastic theories such as that of Mr. Tilaka, who attributed the earliest hymns of the Vedic literature to about 7000 B.C. or that of Mr. Shankara Balakrishna Dikshit who attributed certain Brāhmaṇas to 3800 B.C. cannot be taken seriously. The immigration of Aryan tribes into India is now attributed to the second half of the second millennium B.C. and the entire Vedic literature is attributed to the same period continuing into the early part of the first millennium B.C.
(9) In the sixth century B.C. northern India witnessed a remarkable religious revolution which profoundly influenced the course of Indian history. There is no doubt that while the knowledge of writing may have favoured the diffusion of Jainism and Buddhism, these two religions, and specially the latter, contributed much to the diffusion of the knowledge of writing.

(10) On the whole many different lines of evidences suggest a date between the eighth and the sixth century B.C. for the introduction of writing into ‘Aryan’ India...

The reminders of Dr. David Diringer demand consideration. The first two of these are at the best prudentials. Unless it is conclusively proved otherwise the existence of two successive scripts in a country is more in favour of the latter’s derivation from the former than against it. As regards the third reminder, it is yet to be proved that the Indus Valley script has no phonetic elements in it. The fourth reminder is totally untrue and it is based upon the inadequate study of the Vedic literature. The statement that ‘there was no god of ‘writing’ but there was Sarasvati, the goddess of knowledge, learning and eloquence’ is not correct. Sarasvati herself and her counter-partner Brahmā (a god) both are depicted in the Hindu pantheon with a written book in one of their hands. To get rid of the fifth reminder one has simply to go into the background of the Buddhist literature and study the Vedāṅgas and the early Vedic literature. The sixth reminder refers only to monumental survivals; it cannot go against the use of writing on perishable materials. The seventh reminder of the commercial contact between India and the west does not prove that the former was the borrower; it may be just the opposite. The eighth reminder tries to show that the Indian civilization is comparatively younger than the civilization of Western Asia. The theories of Tilaka and Shankara regarding the age of the Vedic literature, may appear fantastic to western writers, but even sober western scholars like Bühler and Winternitz have shown that the beginning of Aryan civilization in India can be assigned to the fourth millennium B.C. As regards the ninth reminder, there is no doubt that Jainism
and Buddhism popularised the use of Prakrits, and with it the use of writing, but both the religions presuppose the use of writing for Vedic or Sanskrit language; as a matter of fact, the Buddha prohibited his disciples from writing his dialogues in Chhandas (Vedic or Sanskrit language). The tenth reminder is no argument at all; it is based upon the presumption that the origin of writing is non-Aryan and that the Aryans were intruders in India. So far nothing substantial has been said which can negative the possibility of the derivation of the Brāhmī from some pre-existing indigenous system of writing.

2. Theories Advocating Foreign Origin.

Theories advocating the foreign origin of the Brāhmī script can be divided into two sub-groups—(1) some of the theories suggest that the Brāhmī was derived from the Greek alphabet and (2) the majority of them believe that the origin of the Brāhmī lies in some of, or in the combination of two or more of, Semitic characters.

(1) Greek Origin. The tendency among early European scholars was to trace anything good or great in India to some Greek source. Otfried Mueller, James Prinsep, Raoul de Rochette, Emile Senart, Goblet d’Alviella, Joseph Halevy, Wilson etc. were of the opinion that the Brāhmī script was derived from the Greek alphabet. In the words of Dr. Bühler this "a priori" improbable theory may be at once eliminated, as it does not agree with the literary and palaeographic evidences just discussed, which makes it more than probable that the Brāhmī was used several centuries before the Mauryan period, and had had a long history at the time to which the earliest Indian inscriptions

1 Quoted by David Diringer in his book 'Alphabet', p. 335.
2 Ibid.
3 Ibid
5 Alphabet, p. 335.
6 Journal Asiatique, 1588, P. 268.
belong". The relation between the Greek and the Brāhmi characters seem to be just the otherwise. There is no doubt that the Greek alphabet was deeply indebted to the Phœnician characters. It has already been suggested that the Phœnician (≡ the Vedic Panis) were of the Indian origin, who carried with them the art of writing from India and spread it over western Asia and Greece.

(2) Semitic Origin. This theory has a large number of supporters, but they differ as to which branch of the Semitic characters produced or influenced the Brāhmi characters. For the sake of convenience they can be divided into the following groups:

(a) Phœnician Origin. The Phœnician origin of the Brāhmi alphabet was favoured by the eminent scholars like Weber, Benfey, Jensen, Bühler etc.1 The main argument in support of this theory was that about one-third of the Phœnician letters were identical with the earliest forms of the corresponding Brāhmi signs; that another third were somewhat similar, and the remainder can be more or less harmonized. The great difficulty in the acceptance of this theory was believed to be the lack of direct communication in the period when the Brāhmi script appeared, between India and Phœnicia and the influence of the Phoenicians on the neighbouring scripts of Western Asia was supposed to be negligible. I do not think that there was a lack of communication between India and the eastern coast of the Mediterranean any time between 1500 B.C. and 400 B.C. The similarity between the Phœnician and the Brāhmi characters is also patent. Now the question is which of the two was the borrowers? This question is also linked up with the origin of the Phœnicians.

1 David Diringer, Alphabet, p. 335; Bühler, Indian Palæography, pp. 9-11.
as a people. The scholars of Tyre always maintained, and it was accepted by the Greek historians also, that the Phoenicians went to the east coast of the Mediterranean from the east via sea.\(^1\) The \textit{Rgvedic}\(^2\) evidences indicate the Indian origin of the Phoenicians. The lack of similarity between the Phoenician alphabet and the Semitic characters of Western Asia also suggests that the Phoenicians were immigrants there from outside. Thus it becomes very probable that Phoenician alphabets were carried from India to the shores of the Mediterranean.

\textit{(b) South Semitic Origin.} Taylor, Decke and Canon were of the opinion that the \textit{Brāhmī} characters were derived from the southern Semitic characters.\(^3\) It is difficult to support this opinion. Though the contact between India and Arabia was quite possible, as the latter lay between the Indian Ocean and the Mediterranean Sea, Arabian influence on Indian culture, before the advent of Islam in India, is not traceable. Moreover the similarity between the \textit{Brāhmī} character and the South Semitic characters is so negligible that it is ridiculous to suggest any connection between the two.

\textit{(c) North Semitic Origin} The greatest champions of this theory was Dr. Bühler.\(^4\) While pointing out the difficulties in deriving the \textit{Brāhmī} characters from the Southern Semitic characters, he said, “These difficulties disappear with the direct derivation of the \textit{Brāhmī} from the oldest North Semitic alphabets, which show the same type from Phoenicia to Mesopotamia. The few admissible equations, which Weber’s earlier attempt contains, may be easily removed with the help of recently discovered

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\(^1\) Herodotos, II, 44.
\(^2\) Vi. 51, 14; 61, 1; Vi. 6, 3; Vi. 39, 2.
\(^3\) David Diringer, \textit{Alphabet}, p. 335.
\(^4\) Indian Palaeography, pp. 9-11.
forms, and it is not difficult to recognize the principles, according to which the Semitic signs have been converted into Indian ones”.

Attempting the derivation of the Brāhmi from the Northern Semitic alphabet, Bühler recognized the following peculiarities of the old Indian alphabet:

“(1) The letters are set up as straight as possible, and with occasional exceptions in the signs of ṭa, ṭha and ba, they are made equal in height.

(2) The majority consists of vertical lines with appendages attached mostly to the foot, occasionally at the foot and the top, or rarely in the middle; but there is no case in which an appendage has been added to the top alone.

(3) At the top of the letters appear mostly the ends of verticals, less frequently short horizontal strokes, still more rarely curves on the tops of angles opening downwards, and quite exceptionally, in ma and in one form of jha two lines rising upwards. In no case does the top show several angles, placed side by side, with a vertical or slanting line hanging down, on a triangle or a circle with a pendent-line”.

Bühler explained the above peculiarities and deduced the principles of the derivation of the Brāhmi from the North Semitic characters on the basis of the following tendencies of the Hindus:

(1) A certain pedantic formalism.

(2) A desire to frame signs suited for the formation of regular lines.

(3) An aversion to top-heavy characters. In his opinion “the last peculiarity is probably due in part to the circumstance that since early times the Indians made their letters hang down from an imaginary or really drawn upper line, and in part due to the introduction of vowel-signs, most of which are attached horizontally to the tops of the consonants. Signs with the ends of verticals at the top were, of course, best suited for such a script. Owing to these inclinations and aversions
of the Hindus the heavy tops of many Semitic letters had to be got rid of by turning the signs topsy-turvy, or laying them on their sides, by opening the angles, and so forth. Finally, the change in the direction of the writing necessitated a further change, in as much as the signs had to be turned from the right to the left, as in Greek”.

On the basis of the above considerations Bühler maintained that twenty-two letters of the Brāhmi alphabet were derived from North Semitic alphabet, some of them from the early Phœnician, a few from Mesa’s stone inscription and five from the script on the weights from Assyria. The remaining letters of the Brāhmi were also derived from the borrowed signs by introducing certain devices. The comparative table (No. 111) will show the method of derivation suggested by Bühler.

Another great advocate of the theory of the North Semitic origin is Dr. David Diringer.1 He writes, “All historical and cultural evidence is best co-ordinated by the theory which considers the early Aramaic alphabet as the prototype of the Brāhmi script. The acknowledged resemblance of the Brāhmi signs to the Phœnician letters also applies to the early Aramaic letters, while in my opinion there can be no doubt that of all the Semitics, the Aramaean traders were the first who came in direct communication with the Indo-Aryan merchants.”

He further says,

“Over sixty years ago, R. N. Cuṭ, the then Hon. Secretary of the Royal Asiatic Society, published an article in the journal of that society (on the Origin of the Indian Alphabet, J. R. A. S. N. S. XVI, 1884, pp. 325-359). Since then, many new discoveries have been made, and the problem has been discussed in many hundred of books and articles, and yet, concerning the origin of the Brāhmi script, I even now fairly well agree with the first two of his conclusions:

“(1) The Indian alphabet is in no respect an independent

1 Alphabet, pp. 336, 337.
invention of the people of India, who, however, elaborated to a marvellous extent a loan, which they had received from others.

(2) The idea of representing vowel and consonant sounds by a symbol of a pure alphabetic character was derived from Western Asia beyond any reasonable doubt.” (The Indian characters, however, are semi-alphabetic and not pure alphabetic).

In a way of arguments in favour of his theory he states,

(1) “We need not assume that the Brāhmi is a simple derivative of the Aramaic alphabet. It was probably mainly the idea of alphabetic writing which was accepted, although the shapes of many Brāhmi signs show also Semitic influence and the original direction of the Brāhmi character from right to left was also of Semitic origin.”

(2) “Some scholars hold that, as the Indian writing is in appearance a syllabary, it could not have been derived from an alphabet; alphabetic script being obviously more advanced than syllabic. These scholars seem to have forgotten the fact that Semitic alphabet did not contain vowels, and while the Semitics could, if necessary, dispense with vowel signs, the Indo-European languages could not do so. The Greeks solved this problem satisfactorily, but the Indians were less successful. It may be that the inventor of the Brāhmi did not grasp the essence of the alphabetic system of writing. It is quite possible that the Semitic script appeared to him as semi-syllabic, as it could seem to any speaker of an Indo-Aryan language.”

Before we examine the theory of the North Semitic origin of the Brāhmi characters, it is necessary that we should closely study the comparative table of the Semitic and the Brāhmi characters:

1 See Table No. III.
The main arguments in favour of the Semitic origin of the Brāhmi script are the following:

1. The resemblance between the Semitic and the Brāhmi characters.

2. The early Indian writing was pictographic; no alphabetic writing can be derived from pictographs; the earliest known alphabets are Semitic; hence, the Brāhmi (semi-alphabetic) could be derived only from the Semitic sources.

3. The supposed original direction of the Brāhmi from the right to the left.

4. The absence of the specimens of writing before fifth century B.C. in India.

Let us examine these arguments one by one. There is no doubt that there is a remote resemblance between the Phœnician and the Aramaic alphabets of North-Western Asia and the Brāhmi script of India. But the contention of Bühler and other scholars of his school of opinion that the latter was derived from the former can not be proved. Specially the methods of derivation suggested by Bühler are fantastic, and if they are accepted as valid the Brāhmi characters can be derived not only from the Phœnician and the Aramaic but from any known characters of the world. Some instances of forced derivation are given in the Table No. IV.

The remote resemblance between the two sets of characters is due to the fact that the Phœnicians originally belonged to India, as it has been suggested in the first chapter of this work.\(^1\) The Phœnicians carried the Indian alphabet with them to the extreme North-West of Asia. But surrounded as they were by Semitic peoples, their characters underwent a great change, though they also influenced the Northern Semitic characters called Aramaic, which inspired a number of other characters of Western Asia excepting the Southern Semitic and the Egyptian. So, if there was any derivation, either in form or in inspiration, it were the Phœnician and the Aramaic.

\(^1\) Cf. Rigveda, vi and vii.
characters which derived some elements from the proto-type of the Brāhmī and not the vice versa.

As regards the second argument, first of all its very premises that an alphabetic writing cannot be derived from a pictographic one is wrong. There is absolutely no doubt that all earliest writings, by very nature of things, were pictographic. "Man began his writing with picture-writing, just as the child likes to begin." Of course, it is a different matter as to which of the inventors of pictographs could develop alphabets out of pictographs and to what amount of perfection. Secondly, the earliest specimens of writing found in India on the Indus Valley inscriptions are not purely pictographic and mostly phonetic, syllabic and tending to become alphabetic. Moreover, many of the symbols, which are supposed to be pictographs, are nothing more than the combinations of phonetic symbols mistaken for pictographs. Hence the derivation of the Brāhmī alphabet from the Indus Valley Script can, under no circumstances, be ruled out.

The third argument that the Brāhmī was originally written from the right to the left and that this fact indicates the Semitic origin of the Brāhmī is based upon very meagre and doubtful data. When Bühler wrote in his ‘Indian Studies’ and finally published his ‘Indian Palæography’ the specimens oft he Brāhmī written from the right to the left consisted of the following:

1. A few letters in the edicts of Aśoka.
2. Inscriptions on the coins discovered by Cunningham at Eṟanā in the Jubblulpur district of C. P. (Madhya Pradesh).

To these may be added
3. The Yerraguḍi Version of the Minor Rock Edict of Aśoka found in the Kānul district of the Madras Presidency.

Bühler regarded the above two sets of specimens as the missing link in the chain of arguments which went to prove the

1 David Diringer, Alphabet, 21.
2 Cf. Marshall, Mohenjodaro And The Indus Civilization, Vol. II.
derivation of the Brāhmī alphabet from the Semitic alphabets which were written from right to the left. But this link discovered by Bühler appears to be very weak. First of all the specimens are sporadic and very small in number in comparison with a large number of contemporary inscriptions written from the left to the right. Some irregular forms of letters indicate the fluid state of characters which became fixed later on and not their derivation from any foreign source. Secondly, the inscriptions on coins are sometimes reversed due to the mistake of the mould-maker, who inadvertently engraves straight letters on the mould, and, therefore, they cannot be sure indicators of the directions of writing, unless they correspond with the majority of cases. That is why Hultsch and Fleet did not agree with the conclusions drawn by Bühler. As regards the Yerraguḍi version of the Minor Rock Edict of Aśoka, it is a peculiar case. It seems that the engraver, though originally practised in the usual style of Brāhmī writing from the left to the right, was trying a new experiment. He wrote the first line from the left to the right and the second from the right to the left and thus he continued, changing the direction of writing in the alternative lines. Thus it is clear that he was not following any regular and set style, but he was trying a new experiment. Moreover, in the line which ran from the right to the left only the positions of letters were changed and not their forms, which shows that it was a forced and artificial type of writing and it had no bearing on the origin of the Brāhmī alphabet.

The fourth argument is at the best an argumentum ex silentio for the period between the fifth century B.C. and fourth millenium B.C. to which the Indus Valley script belongs. As a matter of fact all archaeological discoveries are chance discoveries and unless all ancient cities in Northern India are excavated and full allowance is made to its destructive floods and damp climate, no body can claim that writing did not exist in this vast period. Literary evidences indicating the existence of writing during the pre-Buddhist period of Indian history going back to millennia are overwhelming.
Even Bühler recognized its weight in the following words: "the inference that a Vedic work which does not mention writing must have been composed when writing was unknown in India will be dropped." Even the Indus Valley inscriptions, which are fragmentary and contain names of persons, guilds and deities, and which have survived on hard materials of writing, prove that extensive writing work was done on perishable soft materials also available in India. Under the circumstances one need not go outside India for searching the proto-type of the Brāhmi alphabet.

3. Conclusion.

Before seeking to derive the Brāhmi alphabet from any known alphabet one should note its following characteristics:

1. The Brāhmi alphabet contains independent and indubitable symbols for almost all pronounced sounds.

2. Identity between pronounced letters and written alphabets.

3. The most exhaustive symbols for vowels and consonants, numbering sixty-four.

4. Different signs for short and long vowels.

5. Signs for Anusvāra (nasal sound $= \sim$) Anuṇāśīka (nasal sound $= \frac{2}{2}$) and Visarga (a sort of hard breathing $= :$).

6. The phonetic classification of the alphabet according to the places of pronunciation.

7. The combination of vowels with consonants with the help of medial signs.

With the above characteristics the Brāhmi alphabet could not possibly be derived from the Semitic alphabets, which completely lack in them. The Northern Semitic alphabet consists of twenty-two signs for eighteen sounds. In it there is no identity between the pronounced letters and the written alphabet. It has several characters for one sound. It does not make any distinction between the long and the short vowels, nor does it contain any signs for Anusvāra
(nasals) and *Visarga* (hard breathing). In the Semitic alphabet the consonants and the vowels cannot coalesce, rather the vowels are written after the consonants. Phonetically the Semitic alphabets are a jumble rather than a system, for instance just after *a* (*alif*) which is guttural we have *b* (*be*) which is libial. A set of alphabets poor and defective like the Semitic could not form the basis of the *Brāhmī* alphabet. Why should the authors of the *Brāhmī* alphabet look to the Semitic and take resort to all the cumbersome devices suggested by Bühler for the derivation of the *Brāhmī* from the Semitic?

Bühler recognizes the highly phonetic and grammatical nature of the *Brāhmī* alphabet and concedes that its oldest shape was determined by the Indians: “Nevertheless, the oldest known form of the *Brāhmī*, without a doubt, was a script framed by learned Brahmans for writing Sanskrit. This assertion is borne out not only by the remnants of the Gaya alphabet of Asoka’s stone masons, which must have contained signs for the Sanskrit vowels *AI* and *AU* and which is arranged according to phonetic principles, but also by the influence of phonetics and grammar which is clearly discernible in the formation of the derivative signs. The hand of phonologist and grammarian is recognisable in the following points:

1. The development of five nasal letters and of a sign for nasalisation ......... , as well as of a complete set of signs for the long vowels .......

2. The derivation of the signs for the phonetically very different, but grammatically cognate *sa* and *sa* ......

3. The notation of *U* by the half of *Va*, from which the vowel is frequently derived by *samprasadha*

4. The derivation of *O* from *U* ...... by the addition of a stroke.

5. The non-expression of medial *a*, in accordance with the teachings of the grammarians who consider it inherent in every consonant .........

All this has so learned an appearance and is so artificial that it could only have been invented by Pandits, not by traders and clerks.”
A people who had the exceptional genius of evolving scientific phonetics and grammar and who could invent more than half of their alphabet need not look towards the poor and defective Semitic alphabets for borrowing. It is rather surprising how Bühler in view of these facts believed that the Indians borrowed their alphabet from the Semitics.

A full consideration of various factors for the evolution of an alphabet clearly indicates that the Brāhmī characters were invented by the genius of the Indian people who were far ahead of other peoples of ancient times in linguistics and who evolved vast Vedic literature involving a definite knowledge of alphabet. The Brāhmī was derived from pictographs, ideographs and phonetic sings, the earliest specimens of which are to be found in the Indus Valley inscriptions. For illustration of the derivation of the Brāhmī from the Indus Valley script the comparative table (No. V) is instructive.

C. The Origin of the Kharosthī Alphabet.

1. The Names.

The Kharosthī script¹ is known by various names. It was formerly called Bactrian, Indo-Bactrian, Aryan, Bactro-Pali, North-Western Indian, Kabulian, Kharosthī etc. It most popular name, however, is Kharosthī, which was accepted on the basis of the Chinese literature in which this name continued up to the seventh century A.D.²

2. The Origin of the Name.

Generally the following explanations of this name are found:

(1) The inventor of this script was a person called Kharoṣṭha (Khara = Oṣṭha³ = asslip).

(2) It is so called, because it was used by the Kharoṣṭhas, the barbarous peoples on the north-western boundaries

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¹ See Table No. V.
² Fa-wan-shu-lin; Babylonian and Oriental Record, I. 59.
³ Kša-lu-se-ta = K-lu-se-to = Kh-ro-s-ta = Kharoṣṭha.

See Fa-wan-shu-lin.
of India, for instance the Yavanas (Greeks), the Sakas (Scythians), the Tuṣāras (Kuṣāṇs) and other peoples of Central Asia.

(3) Kharoṣṭha is the Samskrit form of Kashgar, a province in Central Asia, which was the latest centre of this script. Sten Konow opined on this suggestion in the following words, "It is true that numerous Kharoṣṭha documents have been found in Chinese Turkestan, notably in the eastern oases to the south of the desert, and that the only known Kharoṣṭhi manuscript comes from the Khotan country. The alphabet is, however, everywhere, used for writing an Indian language, and we should a priori be inclined to think that it was brought to Turkestan by Indian immigrants. Moreover, the manuscript and the documents belong to a comparatively late date, none of them being apparently older than the second century A.D. In India on the other hand, the use of the Kharoṣṭhi can be traced back to the third century B.C."

(4) It is the Indian adaptation of the Iranian word 'Khara-oṣṭa or 'Kharaposta', meaning 'ass-skin'. Most probably this script was used for writing on ass-skin.

(5) There was an Aramaic word 'Kharoṣṭha' used for this script, which in course of time, through popular method of derivation, assumed the Samskrit form Kharoṣṭha. (Cf. Ludwig, Gurupiya Kaumudi, pp. 68 ff.)

The earliest tradition about the name is recorded in the Fa-wan-shu-lin, a Chinese work of 668 A.D., according to which

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1 Professor Sylvain Levi maintained that the correct name of the script was Kharoṣṭra, which was derived from the Chinese word, 'kia-lu-shu-ta(n)-le' used for the province of Kashgar. (*Bulletin de l'École Francaise d'Études Orientales*, ii, 1902, pp. 246 ff). Messrs. O. Franke and R. Pischel protested against the derivation of the Chinese word from 'Kharoṣṭra' and held that 'Kharoṣṭra' was never used in India and the only known and the correct form was 'Kharoṣṭha'. *Sitzungsbericht der Preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, Berlin*, 1903, pp. 184ff., 735ff.
the script is so called, because it was invented by a person who bore that name Kharoṣṭha. Whether this tradition is a name-myth or based upon facts, it is difficult to say. So far as other explanations are concerned, they are mere conjectures without any evidence. The name ‘Kharoṣṭha’ is evidently Indian, a Prakritised form of Sanskrit ‘Kharauṣṭha’. The script may have been called so due to the fact that most of the Kharoṣṭhi characters are irregular elongated curves and they look like the moving lips of an ass (Khara). Originally it must have been a nick-name, which got currency in course of time.


The most current theory regarding the origin of the Kharoṣṭhi script is that it originated from the Aramaic alphabet. The following arguments are produced in favour of this theory.

(1) Resemblance between the Aramaic and the Kharoṣṭhi characters. “Finally, they are confirmed by the circumstance that the majority of the Kharoṣṭhi signs can be most easily derived from the Aramaic types of the fifth century B.C. which appear in the Saqqarh and Teima inscriptions of B.C. 482 and of about B.C. 500, while a few letters agree with somewhat earlier forms on the later Assyrian weights and the Babylonian seals and gems, and two or three are more closely allied to the later signs of Lesser Teima inscription, the Stele Vaticana, and the Libationable from the Serapeum. The whole ductus of the Kharoṣṭhi, with its long-drawn and long tailed letters, is that of the characters on the Mesopotamian weights, seals and cameos, which reoccurs in the inscriptions of Saqqarh, Teima and the Serapeum.”

(2) The direction of the Kharoṣṭhi script from the right to the left.

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1 The greatest champion of this theory was Bühler (Indian Palæography, pp. 19-20) and it was accepted by the majority of scholars.
2 Bühler, Indian Palæography, p. 20.
(3) The Kharosthi has certain characteristics common with the Semitic scripts, for instance, the absence of long vowels.

(4) The use of Kharosthi in only those parts of India which were occupied by the Iranians from the second half of the sixth century B.C. up to the fourth century B.C.

(5) The Asokan edicts found in the North-West of India at Mansera and Shahbazgarhi use for ‘writing’ or ‘edict’ the word ‘Dipi’ which evidently was borrowed from the old Persian.

(6) The appearance of the Kharosthi in India after its Iranian invasion.

(7) The wide use of the Aramaic alphabet in Western Asia and Egypt and its acceptance by the Iranian emperors for administrative use, which brought it to India.

(8) The Aramaic alphabet was adapted to Indian Languages by introducing a number of modifications and additions.

(9) The later analogy of the Arabic script which was introduced into India in the mediæval times with some modifications and it was used for writing Indian languages.

Let us examine the arguments in favour of the Aramaic origin of the Kharosthi one by one:

(1) There is some resemblance in the general external appearance of the Kharosthi and the Aramaic characters as regards the system of their formation, their cursive style and their direction of writing from the right to the left. But resemblance cannot go beyond this. Bühler’s attempt at derivation of the Kharosthi signs from the Aramaic ones is very laboured and the principles of derivation suggested by him look like principles underlying agility exercises. As a matter of fact all letters are formed by the combination of lines, curves, angles, hooks, knots, circles etc. and
by changing the position of these constituents any one letter can be derived from the other. The absurdity of Bühler’s theory becomes patent when we note that he derives the Brāhmi characters from the Aramaic of the eighth or the tenth century B.C. and he again derives the Kharosthi signs from the same Aramaic of the fifth century B.C. A close study of the comparative table will reveal that resemblance between the Kharosthi and the Aramaic is very superfluous and it does not warrant the derivation of the former from the latter.

(2) The direction of the Kharosthi from the right to the left is no guarantee that it was derived from the Semitic source, as leftward movement of writing cannot be regarded an absolute monopoly of the Semitic people. In a vast country like India the evolution of two types of writing, one running from the left to the right and the other from the right to the left was not an impossibility.

(3) The absence of long vowels in the Kharosthi is due to the fact that it was used for writing Prakrits which avoid long vowels, big compounds and difficult ligatures. Thus the so-called common characteristics of the Kharosthi were due to its popular use and not due to any Semitic influence.

(4) It may be possible that the North-West part of India was under Persian empire from the sixth to the fourth century B.C. But not a single official document of the Persian emperors in Kharosthi is found in that part of India, nor any Persian document in Aramaic, which could be imitated by Indians. Most probably the Persians did not rule over India directly and they had no colonies or settlements in this country. Therefore, their influence on India was not so deep as to initiate a new system of writing. Whenever foreign alphabets were adopted in India, they were adopted almost directly and
completely, for instance the Arabic letters in the mediaeval times and the English (Roman) letters in modern times.

(5) Bühler does not give any reason as to why the word 'Dipit' should be regarded exclusively Persian or non-Sanskritic. This word can easily be popularly derived from the Sanskrit root 'dip' 'to shine', 'to be illustrious' or 'to manifest'. Letters were figuratively regarded as shining, illustrious and manifesting.

(6) The marking of Persian siglois with Kharosthi syllables presupposes the existence of the Kharosthi script in a developed form before the Persian domination over the North-Western part of India.

(7) There is no doubt that the Aramaic alphabet had a wide currency in Western Asia, but it had no circulation in India. First of all it is highly doubtful whether India was administratively ever under Persian rule; secondly, as pointed out before, there is not a single official document of the Persian emperors written in the Aramaic found in India. Under the circumstances there was hardly any occasion or impetus for imitating or adapting the Aramaic characters by the Indian.

(8) Resemblance between the two scripts is so remote and contact between India and Persia was so formal that the question of adaptation could not arise.

(9) The analogy of the introduction of the Arabic or the so-called Persian script into India during the mediaeval period is not apt. The Arabic alphabet was exclusively used by the Arab and the Turk invaders of India and, when they settled in this country as rulers, they used the Arabic and Persian languages as official languages. Here there was no case of borrowing but bodily introduction of the Arabic script with Arabic and Persian languages.

1 Dr. R. C. Majumdar, Indian Historical Quarterly, Vol. XXV, No. 3, Sept. 1949.
4. Indian Origin.

In deciding the problem of the origin of the Kharosthī alphabet it is necessary to keep in mind the place of its rise and the areas of its expansion later on. The earliest known inscriptions in the Kharosthī so far have been found in the north-west of India. In no country of Western Asia any document or any specimen of writing in Kharosthī has been discovered. Even the Persian emperors, who are supposed to be instrumental in the evolution of the Kharosthī alphabet did not use Aramaic or its supposed derivative Kharosthī for their official business. The earliest known Kharosthī inscriptions of Aśoka belong to the third century B.C. All other inscriptions in Kharosthī found in Baluchistan, Afganisthan and Central Asia are later in date and they clearly indicate that they were carried there by the Indian colonists and the missionaries. Another fact to be noted in connection with the origin of the Kharosthī is that its letters are Indian and it was used for writing Indian languages even in countries outside India. Inspite of its direction from the right to the left its nature of formation is Indian, specially, in attaching Anusvāra (nasal symbol) and the medial signs to its characters and also in the formation of ligatures.

Keeping all the circumstances in view it can be safely maintained that the Kharosthī script originated in the north-west part of India and, as it is recorded in Chinese traditions, it was invented by an Indian genius whose nickname was Kharosthī, as the letters resembled ass-lips. During the Persian domination over that part of the country the Kharosthī was recognized as a popular script and that is why Persian sigilos were stamped with Kharosthī syllables. When the Maurays of Mid-India occupied that part of the country they had also to adopt the Kharosthī script for that part of the country. Next, the Bactrians, the Parthians, the Sakas and the Kuṣanās used this script for Indian languages side by side with the Greek. Under the Kuṣanās the expansion of Buddhism carried the Kharosthī to western and northern regions and the Kharosthī continued upto the fourth century A.D.
The long association of the \textit{Kharoṣṭhī} with foreign powers in India in the areas dominated by them created some aversion towards it in the rest of India. With the rise of the Gupta power and the upsurge of the unification of the country and nationalism, the \textit{Kharoṣṭhī} died with its official foreign support and the \textit{Brāhmi}, which was the most widely current script in India, replaced \textit{Kharoṣṭhī} in the north-west part of India also.\footnote{In the west and the north it was replaced by the \textit{Arabic} which spread there with Islam.} But, really speaking, there was nothing foreign about \textit{Kharoṣṭhī}. It had its origin, rise and fall in India.
CHAPTER IV.

HISTORY OF THE DECIPHERMENT OF ANCIENT INDIAN SCRIPTS.

The Indians had long forgotten the reading of the ancient scripts of their country. Some scholars of Sanskrit and Prakrit with great efforts, could read the manuscripts belonging to the seventh and the eighth centuries A.D. but not earlier. The Gupta script and the earlier Brāhmi script were sealed books to the Indians. This state of things obtained as early as the fourteenth century A.D. When Firoz Shah Tughlaq shifted the Asokan pillars from Topra and Meerute to Delhi, he invited a number of Sanskrit scholars to read the edicts on those pillars but they were not able to decipher the script of those edicts. Akbar the Great Moghal was also inquisitive about the writing on these pillars, but even in the sixteenth century no serious attempt was made to read this ancient script. People were satisfied with the fanciful legend that these pillars were the Staffs of Bhima (one of the Pāṇḍavas) and the script of them contained the instructions given to the Pāṇḍavas by Śri Kṛiṣṇa in the Pāśaṭhā language. This ignorance about Indian history and archaeology was due to the disorganization and the consequent disintegration of the political and intellectual life of the country since the last decade of the twelfth century A.D. India started the regaining of its intellectual inquisitiveness and stability when the Asiatic Society of Bengal was established on the 15th January, 1784 which inspired the scholars to engage themselves in the study of India's past in all its aspects. Now Indian palaeography and epigraphy also attracted the attention of the Indologists.

1. The Decipherment of the Later Brāhmi Script.

Soon after the foundation of the Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal the discovery and the decipherment of the Brāhmi

1 Shams-i-Sirai, Elliot, Hist. India, III, 350.
2 Akbarnāma.
inscriptions began. In 1785 A.D. Charles Wilkins read the Bodal pillar inscription of the Pāla king Nārāyaṇapāla found in the Dinajpur district of Bengal.¹ The next attempt at reading the Brāhmī script was made in the same year. Pandit Radhakant Sharma read the Topra-Delhi pillar inscription of the Chāhamāna King Visaladeva (Vigraharāja IV), dated V.E. 1220.² These inscriptions could be easily read, as they were very recent in date. In the same year again Mr. J. H. Harrington discovered the Nagarjuni and the Barabar cave inscriptions of the Maukharī king Anantavarman. The script of these inscriptions being more archaic than the script of the Pāla and the Chāhamāna inscriptions was found difficult to be read and Harrington could not decipher them. But Charles Wilkins laboured on these inscriptions between 1785 and 1789 and with the help of these inscriptions he was able to read almost half the letters of the Gupta script.³ The great historian Colonel James Tod collected a large number of inscriptions found in Rajasthan, Central India and Gujrat between 1818 and 1823 and with the help of Yati Jānachandra he was partially successful in reading some of these inscriptions. These inscriptions belonged to the period between the seventh and the fifteenth centuries.⁴

Another landmark in the decipherment of the later Brāhmī was made when Babington in 1828 prepared a table of letters on the basis of the Sanskrit and Tamil inscriptions discovered at Mamlallapuram.⁵

The proper decipherment of the Gupta script was, however, started when in 1834 Captain Troyer read part of the Allahabad pillar inscriptions of Samudragupta. Dr. Mill was more successful in reading the Allahabad pillar inscription⁶

² Ibid.
³ Tod: *Annals of Rajasthan*.
and he read completely the Bhitari pillar inscription of Skanda-gupta in 1837. About the same time W. H. Bothon read a number of copper-plates discovered in Gujrat and which belonged to the kings of the Valabhi dynasty. More substantial and successful reading was that of James Prinsep. He deciphered the Delhi, Kahaum, Erāṇa, Sanchi, Amaravati and Gīrnār inscriptions of the Gupta period. This completed the reading of the Gupta script. A table of the complete Gupta alphabet was prepared.

2. The Decipherment of the Early Brāhma Script.

The Brāhma inscriptions in the Elora caves attracted the attention of the scholars first. In 1795 Sir Charles Mellet prepared the stampages of these inscriptions and sent them to William Jones for their decipherment, who forwarded them to Wilford for reading them. Wilford could not do any justice to them. Under the wrong guidance of a Sanskrit Pandit made a wrong reading of these inscriptions and he returned them with his reading to Sir William Jones. They were kept lying with Sir William Jones for several years and later on the reading was found to be imaginary.

The first abortive attempt at reading the early Brāhma inscriptions was followed by another attempt by Ch. Lassen. He read the Brāhma legend on the coins of the Indo-Bactrian King Agathocles in 1836. But the legends being very small, only a few of the Brāhma letters were deciphered. The credit of a fuller decipherment of the Brāhma script went to James Prinsep. In 1834-35 he got the stampages of Allahabad, Radhia and Mathia pillar inscriptions and compared them with the Delhi pillar inscription. To his great satisfaction he discovered that all the four inscriptions were identical. Encouraged by this result he analysed the letters of these inscriptions. He found that the same principles of application in the case of the medial signs were present in the early Brāhma

4 Cunningham, Archaeological Survey Reports, Vol. I.
inscriptions as in the case of the Gupta inscriptions. A continued study of these inscriptions established the unity and the continuity of the early Brāhmi and the Gupta scripts. Previously some scholars had mistaken the early Brāhmi script for some form of the Greek alphabet; this confusion was removed by the attempts of Prinsep. Prinsep first separated the vowels and medial signs and then the consonants; he compared them with the Gupta characters, fixed their sound-values and classified them under vargas (phonetic classes). Thus he was able to decipher the majority of the early Brāhmi characters. The table of signs prepared by him was later on found quite correct, except in the case of the signs for U and O. Almost during the same period Father James Stevenson engaged himself in the task of deciphering the Brāhmi characters. He recognized the letters ka, ja, pa, and ba. With the help of these letters he tried to read inscriptions. But two obstacles stood in his way. Firstly, he had only a partial knowledge of the Brāhmi alphabet and secondly he believed that the language of the Brāhmi inscriptions was Sanskrit. Therefore, he could not succeed in reading them.

In 1837 James Prinsep made another attempt at reading the early Brāhmi script. He collected and compared the stampages of the small inscriptions on the railing and gate pillars at Sanchi. At the end of all inscriptions he found two letters common. The last two common letters were preceded by sa (Prakrit of Sanskrit sva, meaning 'of'). He could easily conjecture that the word preceding sa must be a proper name and the word following it must be an equivalent of 'gift' or 'dedication'. The first of the last two letters was marked with a medial sign for ā and the second was marked with a sign for anusvāra. Now the word could easily be read as dānam and the two Brāhmi letters were clearly recognized. At the same time it was also established that the language of the inscription was Prakrit and not Sanskrit. After this the six missing signs of the Brāhmi alphabet were discovered.

among which I, U, ṣa, sa and ḫā were published in Bühler’s plate II.1 Grierson found letter ṭa in Gaya which figured in Bühler’s *Indian Studies*.2 The existence of the sign for AU in the third century B.C. was proved by the Gaya alphabet of Asoka’s masons.3 Ū and Ṣa were first recognized by Cunningham.4 One form of ṣa was read by Senart5 and another by Heerne.6 Bühler discovered ṭa in the Sanchi Votive inscriptions.7 The credit of preparing a complete and scientific table of the Brāhmi characters will certainly go to Bühler.

3. The Decipherment of the Kharoshṭhi Script.

The decipherment of the Kharoshṭhi script should have been easier than the decipherment of the Brāhmi script, as a large number of bilingual inscriptions in the Greek and the Kharoshṭhi scripts were found in the north-west of India, but for the confusion regarding the language of the Kharoshṭhi inscriptions. The Brāhmi had another advantage; it was certain that the language used in it was Indian and its aksaras (letters) were Sanskritic and already well known.

Colonel Tod collected a big hoard of Greek, Scythian, Parthian and Kušāṇa coins assignable to the period between 175 B.C. and 200 A.D. They were bilingual. On the one side they bore a legend in Greek. On the other side there was as yet undeciphered legend in Kharoshṭhi. After some speculation in 1824 Tod declared that the script and the language used on the other side of the coins were Sassanian, perhaps in view of the fact that the foreigners, whose coins he had collected, were closely associated with the Sassanians.1 In 1830 A.D. General Ventura excavated the Mankiala stupa, which yielded a number of coins and two Kharoshṭhi inscriptions. He was, however, not able to read them.2 Sir Alexander

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1 *Indische Palæographie.*
2 Vol. III, pp. 31, 76.
4 Cunningham, *Inscriptions of Asoka* (C. II. 1 pl. 27.
5 Senart *Inscriptions de Piyadasi I.* 36.
6 *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, 56, 74.
7 *Epigraphia Indica*, II, p. 368.
Burns also collected a large number of coins bearing Greek and Kharoṣṭhī legends. He could read the Greek legends, but he could not discover any clue to decipherment of the Kharoṣṭhī legends.\(^1\)

In 1833 Prinsep conjectured that on one side of the coin of Appolodotos the script was Pahlavi\(^2\) and that the script of the Manikiala inscriptions was Pali (Brāhma).\(^3\) In support of the latter part of the conjecture he maintained that Kharoṣṭhī was the cursive form of Pali (Brāhma) used by clerks and businessmen.\(^4\) A further study of the script compelled him to change his views.

Ch. Masson while engaged in the archaeological researches in Afghanistan observed that the Greek legend on one side of the coins was identical with the Kharoṣṭhī legend on the other side of the coins. It was a great step forward and it made the task of deciphering the Kharoṣṭhī script easier. By conjecturing and ultimately fixing the Prakrit equivalent for Greek terms he read the Kharoṣṭhī legends and recognized the Kharoṣṭhī signs on the coins of Menander, Appolodotos and Harmeus. He conveyed the results of his investigations to Prinsep.\(^5\)

Prinsep followed the researches of Masson. He was able to read twelve names and six titles of the Greek kings in the Kharoṣṭhī scripts. He fixed the direction of the script from the right to the left. He regarded the Kharoṣṭhī as of the Semitic origin. But he committed a mistake regarding the language of the Kharoṣṭhī script. He thought that its language was Pahlavi. This mistake obstructed the further progress of decipherment.\(^6\) In 1838 he realised, however, that the language was Pali (Prakrit). The determination of the language further facilitated the work of decipherment. He could now read seventeen Kharoṣṭhī characters.\(^7\) Next six signs were read by

\(^{1}\) Ojha: Prachina Lipimālā, p. 40.
\(^{4}\) Ibid, p. 319.
\(^{5}\) Prinsep's Indian Antiquities I. 178-185, II. 128-143.
\(^{7}\) Prinsep's Indian Antiquities, II. 125-142.
E. Norris and the rest by Cunningham. Thus the reading of the Kharosthī alphabet was complete on the coins. As regards the reading of independent and bigger inscriptions in Kharosthī, with the help of the knowledge gained from the reading of legends on the coins, the Shahbazgarhi pillar inscriptions of Aśoka and the bilingual (both in Brāhma and Kharosthī) Kangra inscriptions were read satisfactorily except a few ligatures. The Śaka inscriptions were read with greater ease and so was the manuscript of the Dhammapada from Khotan. As already pointed out, some very cursive forms of the individual Kharosthī characters and a few of the ligatures still defied certain decipherment and a number of Parthian and Kuśana inscriptions could not be read with certitude. The credit of preparing a systematic comparative table of the Kharosthī alphabet again goes to Bühler.

4. The Decipherment of the Indus Valley Script.

In the absence of any bilingual inscription, having one of its version in the Indus Valley script and the other in some already deciphered script, the Indus Valley script has remained a puzzle and it will continue to be so until some effective clue to its reading is discovered. Under the circumstances, the decipherment of the Indus valley script is in the stage of conjectural attempts at it. Some very important attempts in this direction are briefly referred to below:

(1) Meriggi thought that the Indus Valley inscriptions consist of ideographs. He regarded every single symbol as an ideogram.

(2) Hunter and Langdon considered the Indus Valley script as the proto-type of the Brāhma script. Hunter

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followed the scientific method of tabulating every occurrence of each sign. He claimed that by this process he obtained the interpretation of certain symbols, for instance, the ordinal suffix, the oblative and the dative terminations, the numeral signs and the determinatives for the words, ‘slave’ and ‘son’. The similarity between the two scripts is, however, only external and unless the sound values for signs in the Indus Valley resembling the Brahmi characters are fixed beyond doubt no absolute certitude can be claimed for this view.

(3) The German scholar Hrozny, who read the Hittite hieroglyphic inscription in Asia Minor, maintained that the Hittite and the Indus Valley scripts were similar and the latter can be read as the former. Hrozny arrived at far-reaching conclusions, but they are considerably weakened by a number of hypothetical statements. By selection and elimination he recognized one hundred and ten symbols as the most important phonetic signs—a large number for any phonetic or alphabetic system of writing. By further sifting he concluded that out of these signs eighty-six stood for six sounds only and forty-five signs for four sounds si, se, sa and s. Albright expressed his opinion on the work of Hrozny thus: “while acknowledging Hrozny’s brilliancy as a decipherer, one cannot help feeling that he has tackled too difficult a task”.

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1 David Diringer, *Alphabet*, p. 85, 86.
CHAPTER V

WRITING MATERIALS

The selection of materials for writing depended mainly on two factors—(1) the availability of suitable materials in different parts of the country, though when a material became current in one part of the country it travelled to other parts also and (2) the nature of documents, e.g., long books and ordinary correspondence were written on pliable, soft and perishable materials whereas religious edicts, eulogy of kings, legal documents etc. were engraved or incised on durable materials like stone, copper, iron, silver etc. These materials are mentioned below with relevant details about them.

1. Bhūrjaptara (Birch-bark)

One very common material for writing books and long documents in ancient India was birch-bark. It was the inner bark of the tree called Bhūrja (Baetula bhojpattr). The Himalayan regions produced this material in abundance. Originally it was used in the north-western part of India but later on it travelled to other parts of India and to Central Asia, though in the south, on account of the abundance of palm-leaves, it could never become very popular.

The earliest mention of brick-bark as a writing material is found in the accounts of the Greek writer Q. Curtius, who writes that at the time of Alexander's invasion of India the Indians wrote on bark, though it should be noted that other Greek writers mention only cotton cloth or paper. The famous lexicon Amarakosa refers to 'Bhūrja' (birch-bark) under forest products. In the Kumārasambhava of Kālidāsa it is mentioned as a writing material and its description is given in the following words: "Where (in the Himalayas) the birch-barks, spotted

2 viii. 9.
3 भृज भृजमुद्रक च II. 4. 46.
like the skin of an elephant, were used by the celestial damsels for writing love-letters, on which letters were written with the solution of metals. The northern Buddhist works frequently mention birch-bark as a writing material. The most detailed description of its use is met with in Alberuni’s India. “In Central and Northern India people use the bark of the teak tree, one kind of which is used as a cover for bows. It is called Bhūrja. They take a piece one yard long and as broad as outstretched fingers of the hand, or somewhat less, and prepare it in various ways. They oil and polish it so as to make it hard and smooth, and then they write on it. The proper order of the single leaves is marked by numbers. The whole book is wrapped up in a piece of cloth and fastened between two tablets of the same size. Such a book is called puthī (cf. pusta, pustaka). Their letters, and whatever else they have to write, they write on the bark of the teak tree.”

Birch-barks of various dimensions were found. They were cut into pieces of different sizes according to the needs and tastes of writers. According to Alberuni the pieces generally measured one ell in length and one span in breadth. They were prepared for use by rubbing oil on them and getting them polished. Bark was written on with the aid of a reed pen and ink of a special kind. The middle portions of leaves were left unwritten and punched in order to get a string passed through them. They were fastened to two wooden plates, which were of the size of leaves and were also bored in the middle.

After the introduction of cheap and beautiful paper during the Moghal rule in India, the use of bark as a writing material declined, though on account of its sanctity it was used for writing sacred books and amulets to much later times. Amulets are still written on birch-bark.

1 ज्ञातात्रार धातुरसेन व भूजळवचः कुम्भरविन्दुश्रोणं | ज्ञातिः विद्याधरसुन्दरीणामनुप्रेक्ष्यक्षयोयपयोगम् || I. 7.
3 *India* (Sachau), I. 171.
4 *India* (Sachau), I. 171.
The earliest manuscript on bark is that of the Kharoṣṭhī Dhammapada which was discovered in Khotan and belongs to the second or third century after Christ. The Manuscript of the Samyukta-gama belongs to the fourth century A.D. Next in chronological order are the inscribed ‘twists’ tied up with threads discovered by Masson in the stupas of Afghanistan. The manuscripts of Bower and Godfrey collection are of about sixth century A.D. and those of Bakhshali arithmetic are of the eighth. These ancient manuscript could survive only because they remained buried under sand and stone, whereas their other contemporary manuscripts perished. The latest manuscripts on birch-barks belonging to the fifteenth and subsequent centuries come from Kashmir and are found in the libraries at Poona, London, Oxford, Berlin, Viena. A member of manuscripts are still found in Kashmir, Orissa, and some other parts of India.

2. Tādāpatra (Palm-leaves)

Another writing material, which was very common in ancient India, was Tādā-patra (Tāla or Tāli). Tādā-patra was palm-leaf of the borassus flahelliformis, corypha umbraculifera and c. talieta. The Buddhist Jātakas refer to leaves (pañña) as a writing material, which most probably were palm-leaves. The biography of Hiuen-Tsang written by Hwuli contains a tradition according to which in the first Buddhist council held just after the death of Lord Buddha the Tripitakas were written on palm-leaves. Palm was originally indigenous to Southern India, so we can infer that in the beginning its use for writing became common in the south and then gradually it spread to the other parts of India, though in Kashmir, part of the Punjab and Rajputana its use was negligible. That

1 Ojha: Prāchīna Lipimāla, p. 144.
2 Ibid.
3 H. H. Wilson: Ariana Antiqua, pl. 3 at p. 54, No. 11.
4 J.A.S.B., 65, 225ff.
5 Kātāhaka Jātaka; Mahāsutasoma Jātaka; Kāma Jātaka; Chullakālinga Jātaka; Ruru Jātaka etc.
6 Si-yu-ki (Tr. by Beal), p. 166-177.
the use of palm-leaves for writing, in certain parts of India, was earlier than the use of birch-bark is proved by the fact that the latter was cut into pieces corresponding to the former in shape and size. The Taxila copper-plate¹, belonging to the first century A.D., is also fashioned after a palm-leaf.

The earliest manuscript written on palm-leaves is that of a fragment of a drama, which roughly belong to the second century A.D.² The manuscripts discovered by Macartna in Kashgar can be assigned to the fourth century A.D.³ The manuscripts of the ‘Prañā-pāramitā-hṛdayasūtra’ and the Uṣṇīṣa-vijayadhārīni, which were originally prepared in Central India, travelled to Japan and now are preserved in the Hori-uzie monastery are of the sixth century A.D.⁴ The manuscript of the Skanda-purāṇa now kept in the Durbar library at Kathmandu (Nepal) belongs to the seventh century A.D.⁵ The Cambridge manuscript of the Paramāṇuvatana is dated Harṣa era 252 (=Christian era 858)⁶. The manuscript of the Buddhist work ‘Lankāvatāra’ is dated Newar era 28 (=906—7 A.D.)⁷. It should be observed here that the early manuscripts on palm-leaves are found mostly in the cold and dry countries and parts of India. No manuscript of a date earlier than the fifteenth century A.D. is found in the south due to the hot and humid climate of that part of India.

Palm-leaves were prepared for writing in a particular way. For writing books and permanent documents palm-leaves were first dried, then boiled or soaked in water, next dried again and in the end they were polished with a smooth stone or conch-shell and cut into proper pieces. Palm-leaves in their natural form were used for ordinary and daily

¹ J.R.A.S. 1863, 222, pl. 3.
² Published by Dr. Lüders (kleinere Sanskrit-Texte, Part I).
³ J.A.S.B. LXVI, p. 218pl. 7.
⁴ Anecdota Oxoniensia (Aryan Series), pls. 1-IV.
⁶ Ibid.
⁷ Ojha, Prāchīnā Līpimālā, p. 143.
purpose. The size of a prepared leaf varied from one to three feet in length and from one to four inches in breadth. In northern India ink was used in writing on palm-leaves. In the south, however, letters were incised on leaves with a stilus; then the leaves were besmeared with soot or powder of charcoal. The leaves of small length were punched on one side in the middle and those of considerable length on both the sides in the middle. Strings were passed through the holes in order to keep the leaves together. As palm-leaves were found in plenty in several parts of India, it was very widely used in the country. But with the introduction of cheap paper the use of palm-leaves diminished. In the primary schools, temples and country-side shops palm-leaves are still used for its sanctity and easy availability.¹

3. Paper.

It has been a common opinion that paper was first introduced by the Muslims in India and that it was for the first time manufactured by the Chinese in 105 A.D.² Contrary to this view, Nearchos, a Greek writer, who accompanied Alexander during his Indian campaign in 327 B.C. writes that the Indians were manufacturing writing paper out of cotton by pounding.³ Sporadic references, like one in the “letter-writer” by king Bhoja of Dhārā in Malwa (eleventh century A.D.), also prove that paper was used for writing letters.⁴

The earliest manuscripts on paper were discovered in Central Asia at Kashgar and Kugier, written in the Gupta script of the fifth century A.D.⁵ It was doubted by some scholars whether paper used for these manuscripts was of Indian origin or not. There is, however, no justification for it in view of the Greek evidence on the use of paper in

¹ Cf. Ojha: Prāchīnā Lipimālā, p. 143.
² Barnet: Antiquities of India, p. 229.
³ Strabo, XV, 717, Bühler confused cotton-paper with cotton-cloth (Indian Palæography, p. 98.).
⁴ Gough’s Papers, 16.
⁵ J.A.S.B. 66, 215ff., 258f.
India in the fourth century B.C. Under the climatic conditions of India paper cannot survive for long. Hence, the paper manuscripts from Gujrat and Rajputana cannot be traced back to a time earlier than the fourteenth century A.D.

It is true that in ancient India paper was sparingly used in view of the cheap and easy availability of palmleaves and birch-bark, which had also the greater power of survival than crudely manufactured paper. Yet, there have been indigenous paper factories in India since ancient times long before the advent of the Muslims and the Europeans and they are still continuing in some parts of the country.\(^1\) Paper-sheet were covered with a thin layer of rice or wheat pulp and then polished with conch-shells or stone-roller. This process was necessary so that ink may not penetrate roughly made paper. Paper was cut into pieces of convenient size. Writing on paper imitated writing on palmleaves. Writing pieces were punched in the middle\(^2\) and fastened together by passing a string through the holes.

4. \textit{Cotton Cloth}.

Cotton cloth was also used as a writing material in ancient India and it is still being used for special purposes. The specific terms used for it were ‘pāṭa’, ‘pāṭikā’ or ‘Kārpāśīka pūṭa’.\(^3\) The earliest mentions of ‘pāṭa’ are found in the Nasik inscriptions\(^4\) of the Andhra period. Some of the metrical \textit{Smṛtis} of later periods also refer to writing on cotton cloth.\(^5\) Cloth like paper is also not very durable, as moisture weakens it and moths are very fond of it. Therefore, surviving documents on cotton-cloth are not very old. At Śringeri-mathā some accounts written on cotton-cloth are two to three hundred years old. In the \textit{Bṛhajjñānaśāstra} at

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\(^1\) Cf. Ojha: \textit{Prāchīnā Lāpipāṭalē}, p. 144.

\(^2\) Specimens can be seen in the collection of ancient Jain Mss. in possession of the descendants of Seth Kalyanamalla Dhaddha at Ajmer.

\(^3\) J. Jolly, \textit{Recht und Sitte, Grundriss}, II, 8, 114;

\(^4\) \textit{Nasik Inscriptions} No. 11A. B in \textit{J. ASR}, 4, 104 ff,

\(^5\) J. Jolly, \textit{Recht und Sitte, Grundriss}, II, 8, 114,
Jasalmer Bühler discovered a silk band with the list of the Jain sūtras written with ink. Peterson found at Anhilvad Patan a manuscript of the Jain work ‘Dharmavidhi’ of Śriprabhasūrī dated V. E. 1418 (A.D. 1361-62). The MS covers ninety-three leaves, thirteen inches broad. At present in Jain temples a number of papers are found, containing mandalas and figures made at the time of the consecration of temples. In the learned families of the Brahmans also pātas are available which contain ‘Sarvatobhadra’, ‘Lingatobhadra’ etc. mandalas and the sketches of ‘Mārykāsthāpana’, ‘Grahasūtāpana’ etc. In Rajputana there is a class of people who prepare almanac on long pieces of cloth. In the south merchants and traders use cloth for the maintenance of permanent accounts.

Like paper cloth was also made smooth and non-poreous by applying a thin layer of wheat or rice pulp on it. After it got dried it was polished with a conch-shell on stone. Letters were written on it with black ink. In Mysore cloth is blackened with tamarind-seed pulp and charcoal powder. On dried pieces of such cloth letters are made with chalk or stealite. Mandalas and figures on cloth are made with the powder of cereals and dyes also.

5. Wooden Boards.

The earliest mention of wooden boards and bamboo chips as writing materials is found in the Vinayapiṭaka in connection with the prohibition of the incision of precepts on religious suicide. The next reference to them occurs in the Jātakas. The Jātakas call the writing boards as ‘phalaka’, which were used by beginners for learning alphabets. Bamboo chips (Ṣalākas) with some marks or letters served as pass-ports for the Buddhist monks. According to the

1 Indian Palaography, p. 93.
2 Ibid.
3 Cf. Ojha: Prāchīnā Līpimālā, p. 146.
4 Ibid.
6 Jātaka No. 125 (Kapāhaka Jātaka).
7 Burnouf, Introd, à l’histoire du Bouddhisme, 259 note.
Lalitavistara sandal wood boards were used in schools like slates. The epigraphical records of the Sakas of Maharashtra also refer to the use of wooden boards (phalakas) in the guild-halls for recording agreements in connection with loans. The Kātyāyanasūrti, a work on legal procedure, prescribes that plaints should be entered on boards with chalk (pāṇḍu-lekha). In the Datakumāra-charita, a Sanskrit fiction, Apaharavarmar wrote his declaration addressed to his lady love on a piece of varnished wood. In Burma Buddhist manuscripts were written on slips of wood covered with gold or silver lacquer, the letters being black. Specimens of these MSS. are found in the British Museum and similar libraries in Europe. Though no examples of such MSS. are found in India at present, there are indications that the Indians too used wooden boards for literary purposes. It is learnt from Winternitz that the Bodleian Library possessed a Mss. from Assam written on wooden boards. In northern India cases are found where poor people copy religious works on wooden boards with chalk. Even to-day students in infant classes, astrologers and country merchants write on wooden boards with chalk.


In view of the easy availability of natural writing materials in India in the form of leaves, barks and wood, leather as a writing material did not attract the attention of the ancient Indians.

Moreover, the Hindus regarded leather, except deer-skin and tiger-skin used by ascetics, as impure and would not associate it with the art of writing which had a sacred origin in India. In Western Asia, Egypt and Europe where nature

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1 Lalitavistara, X (Eng. tr. p.181-5).
2 Nasik Ins. No. 7, 1.4 in B. ASRWT, 4, 102.
3 Burnell, Elements of South Indian Palaeography. 87 note 2.
4 Uchchhvāsa II.
5 Burnell, South Indian Palaeography, p. 87.
6 Ibid.
7 Bühler, Indian Palaeography, p. 93.
8 Ibid.
did not supply ready-made writing materials and people had no aversion to the use of animal materials, leather was in common use for writing.

There are, yet, some sporadic references to the use of leather in Indian literature. D’Alwis writes that some Buddhist works include skin among writing materials. A Samskrit work Vāsavodattā of Subandhu contains a passage from which it can be inferred that in Subandhu’s time skin was used for writing. It should be pointed out here that so far no leather MS. has been discovered in India. In Petersbug collection there are, however, some pieces of leather from Kashgar inscribed with Indian characters, though it cannot be mentioned, that these fragments reached Central Asia from India, because Indian characters were introduced there and they were used by the local people. The only specimen of leather, a blank piece of parchment, was found lying among the MSS. in the Jain library at Jasalmer called Bhajjñāna-kośa.

7. Stone.

Ever since man made first scratch on the wall of a cave he was impressed by the permanence of his art. ‘Writing on Stone’ became a symbol of durability. When the art of writing became common, documents, which were supposed to be of importance and expected to be permanent, came to be engraved on stone. The Buddhist emperor Aśoka, who belonged to the third century B.C., specifically states that he got his edicts engraved on stone, so that they may last for a long time. In spite of the introduction of other pliable materials for writing the use of stone for permanent documents has continued even upto the present time. Stone as a medium of writing has been used in the following forms:

1 Introduction to Kachchhāyana, p. 27; Bühler, Indian Palæography, p. 95.
2 व्रिजिन गणयो विघुत: रसघोकोड़ीनः काष्ठे तमो मंडितयामेजित्य इव नमसि संसारयातिशृगात्वान्तथािविन्यासव इव Vāsavodattā (Hall’s Edition), p. 182.
3 Bühler, Indian Palæography, p. 95.
4 ब्राह्मणितब च होरूतीति। Aśokan PE II (Topera version).
(1) Rocks smoothed or sometimes rough.
(2) Pillars.
(3) Slabs.
(4) Pedestal or the back of images.
(5) Rims and lids of vases, caskets etc.
(6) Prisms of crystal.
(7) The walls of temples, the pavement, and the pillars of colonnades.
(8) Caves.

As regards the contents of writing on stone, they included the following varieties:
(1) Royal edicts or proclamations.
(2) Royal eulogy (Praśasti).
(3) Treaties between kings.
(4) Agreements.
(5) Dedications.
(6) Commemorations.
(7) Donations.
(8) Grants.

1 Asokan RE. Hultsch, Inscriptionum Indicarum, Vol. I.
2 Asokan PE. ibid; Besanagar Garuda Pillar Ins. Lüders List No. 669.
4 Patna Image Ins. Lüders List, Nos. 957-58.
5 Ibid.
6 Piprahwa Buddhist Vase Ins.. Lüder's List No. 931.
8 Lüder's List Nos. 14, 21, 63, 68, 77 etc.
9 Ibid.
10 Ibid.
11 Bhandarkar’s List, Nos. 1712, 1713 etc.
14 Bühler: Indian Palaeography, p. 96.
15 Ibid.
(9) Poetical effusions.¹
(10) Literary works.²
(11) Sometimes big religious works.³

Before letters were incised or drilled on stone, a particular rock, slab or a piece of stone was selected, chiselled smooth and then polished by rubbing. Exceptions are, however, found where rough stone was also used for writing. Straight lines were drawn on the stone, next, some good writer wrote on them with ink or dye and finally the engraver incised or drilled the letters. To make the stone look artistic adequate margins were left on the sides, top and bottom. Sometimes area to be engraved was made lower than the rims on four sides. If during the process of engraving stone was chipped off the hollow so created was filled with some plastic and then letters were engraved on them. In the beginning and at the end of document engraved generally some auspicious or religious symbols were also engraved.

8. Bricks.

Though in Mesopotamia and other countries of Western Asia the ancient peoples used bricks very commonly for writing purposes, in ancient India the use of bricks for writing was rather sporadic. Cunningham,⁴ Führer, and other archaeologists discovered specimens of inscribed bricks in different parts of India, containing a single or a few letters and originally set up in the walls or the niches of temples or on the pedestals of images. Sometimes religious texts were also inscribed on bricks. A specimen of such inscription was discovered by Hoe in the Uttar Pradesh (then North West Provinces) where Buddhist sutras were engraved.⁵ A number of inscriptions on

¹ Lüders List Nos. 992, 997, 998, 1000, 1100, 1125, 1126, 1124, 1146 etc.
² The Harikèlínä̂ska of Chahumäna king Vigraha IV and the Lalita-Vigrarahä̂janä̂ska of his court poet Somadeva, I.A. XX. 201ff.
³ The Unnatiśikhipurä̂na—a Jain work of V.E. 1226 is engraved on a rock near Bijolia in Mewad (Ojha: Prachina Lipimäla p. 150 note 6).
⁴ C. ASR. 1, 97; 5, 102.
⁵ Proc. ASB. 1896, 99ff.
bricks are preserved in the Archaeological Museum at Mathura, which can be assigned to the first century B.C. on palaeographical grounds. Besides bricks, earthen wares\(^1\) and earthen seals\(^2\) were also used as media of writings. The process of inscribing on bricks, earthen pots and earthen seals was this: The characters were obviously scratched on moist clay before it was dried and baked.

9. **Metals.**

More than stone and brick metal was a lasting and handy material for writing for the types of documents similar to those which were incised or drilled on stone and brick. It should be, however, observed here that stone and brick have been almost uniformly used since very ancient times down to the present day, whereas metal was sparingly used in early times and it became more frequently used in later periods. Among the metals used for writing gold, silver, copper, brass, bronze, iron and tin may be included.

(1) **Gold.** This metal, being costly, was rarely used for writing. Buddhist Jātakas refer, however, frequently to the inscription of the important family records of wealthy merchants, royal edicts, poetic verses and moral maxims on gold.\(^3\) But it can be easily conceded that the Jātakas were giving an idealised picture of society in which elements of imagination were playing important part. Burnell states that gold was used for royal letters and land-grants also.\(^4\) Cunningham discovered a gold plate at the Gangu Stupa near Taxila with a votive inscription in Kharoṣṭhi.\(^5\) Two leaves of gold were found at the village Hmazwa in Burma on which was inscribed the Buddhist formula ‘Ye dharmā hetuprabhavā etc.’ followed by Pali verse. Palæographically they belong to the fourth or the fifth century A. D.\(^6\)

\(^{1}\) *Ind. Ant.* Vol. XIV, p. 75.
\(^{2}\) *ASRI*, 1903-4, plates 60-62.
\(^{3}\) Ruru-Jātaka; Kurudhamma-Jātaka; Tesakum-Jātaka.
\(^{4}\) B. *Elements of South Indian Palæography*, 90-93.
\(^{5}\) C. *ASR* II 129, pl. 59.
(2) **Silver.** It is though much cheaper than gold it is less frequently referred to as a writing material. Very few inscriptions on silver have been discovered so far. Specimens of small MSS. and official documents inscribed on silver are still preserved. One of them comes from the ancient stupa at Bhattiprolu. Another was discovered at Taxila. Some Jain temples even to-day contain silver plates on which are inscribed sacred verses like *namokāra mantras* and tāntrika formula like ‘riṣi-manḍala-yantra’.

(3) **Copper.** The most commonly used metal for writing was copper and it has been in use since very ancient times. An inscribed copper plate or copper piece was called tāmrapuṭa, tāmrapattra, tāmrakṣāṣana, śāsanapattrā or dānapattrā according to the contents of the inscription. The types of documents inscribed on copper were almost the same as inscribed on stone, except in the case of land-grants, which were almost invariably inscribed on copper and were ceremoniously handed over to donee to serve as title-deeds. As regards the earliest use of copper for writing Fa-hien states that during the course of his travel in India (c.400 A.D.) he found many Buddhist monasteries in possession of grants engraved on copper, some of which belonged to the time of Buddha. Nothing certain can be said in this connection in the absence of any positive confirmation. But it should be pointed out that the discovery of the Sohagaura copper-plate belonging to the Mauryan period on the ground of palæography, renders the statement of Fa-hien plausible. Another Buddhist pilgrim Hiuen Tsiang, who visited India in the seventh century A.D. writes that king Kaniska convened a Buddhist assembly under the inspiration of Pārśva, which prepared three commentaries— (1) the *Upadeśa-sāstra* on the

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1 B. Indian Palæography, p. 95.
3 Ojha: Prāchīṇa Lipimālā p. 152 foot-note 5.
4 Cf. B. Indian Palæography, p. 95.
5 Si-yu-ki (Beal) I, xxxvii.
6 Proc. ASB, 1894, p. I.
Sūtrapitaka (2) the Vinaya-Vibhāṣā-śāstra on the Vinaya-piṭaka and (3) the Abhidharma-Vibhāṣa-śāstra on the Abhidharmapitaka which were engraved on copper-plates and kept in stone caskets; the caskets were placed in the stupas built over them.¹ No excavator's spade has been able to unearth these caskets so far. There is a similar story preserved regarding the Vedic commentary of Śāyana being engraved on copper.² Burnell regards this story to be untrustworthy without sufficient reasons.³ The possibility of religious and literary works being engraved on copper is rendered very strong in view of the existence of copper MSS. of literary works at Tripatty, though belonging to a comparatively later period.⁴ Some specimens of books inscribed on copper from Burma and Ceylon are preserved in the British Museum.⁵ The list of other types of copper inscriptions discovered in India is very long. It may be observed that the use of copper for writing was not very frequent up to the sixth century A.D. During the subsequent centuries down to the 12th it became very common and then it again dwindled after the advent of the Muslims in India.

Copper-plates were prepared in a variety of ways. There is a single instance of the Sohgaura copper-plate which was cast in a mould of sand, into which the letters together with emblems had been previously scratched with a stīlus or a pointed piece of wood. On this plate both the letters and the emblems appear in relievo.⁶ The majority of copper-plates were hammered into various shapes and sizes, a fact which is proved by the existence of distinct traces of blows on them. Copper-plates of different thickness and size were prepared. Some of them were so thin that they could be bent double and they hardly weigh a few ounces, whereas

¹ Cf. B. Elements of South Indian Palaography, p. 86.
² Max Müller, R.I. XVII.
³ South Indian Palaography.
⁴ B. Indian Palaography, p. 95.
⁵ J. Pali T. Soc. 1883, 136 ff.
some of them were very thick and heavy and they weighed about nine pounds and more.¹ The factors which determined size were two-fold—(1) the size of commonly used writing material in the district where the copper-plate was issued and (2) the content of the document to be inscribed, that is the size of the draft prepared by the clerk.

If the models before the smith were palm-leaves, copper-plates imitated the length and narrowness of those leaves; if birch-bark was the model, the breadth of the copper-plates increased and they were made almost square in size. Broadly speaking, copper-plates in the south imitated palm-leaves and in the north birch-bark except the Taxila plate which is modelled upon a palm-leaf. It is evident from the copper-plates of Gujrat and northern India that with the growing size of the Prañastis (eulogies) of kings, the size of the copper-plates also increased².

The number of plates for one tāmrajāsana depended upon the size of document. If more than one copper-plates were required for a document they were fastened together by copper-rings passed through round holes in the plates. In case there was a single ring the hole was generally made in the left side of the plate; when there were two rings, the holes went through the lower part of the first plate and the upper part of the second plate, and so on alternatively. Rings served the purpose of threads which kept various palm-leaves together and made the copper-plates as one volume which could be opened conveniently.³

Sufficient margins were left on the copper-plates. Lines generally ran parallel to the broadest side of the plate. First

¹ The Taxila plate weighing 3.3/4 ounces was found bent double; Alina plates of Silāditya VI of Valabhi, taken together, weigh 17 pounds, 3.3/4 ounces, Fleet, G. L., C. I I, 3, 172.
² Cf. The inscriptions of the kings of Valabhi, the inscriptions of some of the Gupta kings and the inscriptions of the mediaeval dynasties.
³ Ep. Ind. Vol. I, p. 1ff (the Kasakundi grant of the 8th century is engraved on eleven plates and the Hirahadagalli grant of the 4th century on eight plates).
of all an expert writer wrote on the copper-plate the document prepared by relevant authorities with ink in legible and beautiful letters. Next a black-smith or a gold-smith incised the letters with a chisel, very rarely with a graver. Sometimes letters were formed of dots instead of lines. From the minute letters on many of the southern copper-plates, it can be inferred that first the copper-plates in question were besmeared with chalk, then a writer traced the letters on them with a pointed piece of iron and lastly a smith incised the letters with a fine instrument. For the protection of documents the rims of the plates were raised and thickened; for the same purpose the first side of the first plate and the second side of the last were left blank.

On royal documents official seals were attached to the plates in various ways. Sometimes it was impressed upon the metal piece which covered the joint of the ring fastening the plates together. Very often the royal seal was cast separately and the inscription and emblem thereon were raised on a countersunk surface. In some cases it was incised on the copper-plate itself. Generally the seals attached to the copper-plates were made of copper, though the royal seal for other purposes was, in rare circumstances, made of gold, as it is evident from the statement of Bāṇa that Harṣavardhana used a golden seal.

(4) Brass. As a writing material brass was seldom used for independent inscriptions. We have only very small inscriptions on the pedestals of big brass statues or on the back of small brass statues. The earliest date for such statues is the seventh century A.D. and they almost all belong to

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3 Cf. The inscriptions of the Paramāras, the Chālukyas and the Senas.
4 The inscriptions of Bhoja, Mahendrapāla and Vināyakapāla of the Pratihāra dynasty (Ind. Ant. Vol. XV, p. 112, 140).
5 The inscriptions of the Paramāras of Malwa.
Jainism. In some of the Jain temples brass-plates are found on which religious formulas are inscribed.1

(5) Bronze. As regards this metal only on bronze-bells in temples the names of donors and the dates of donation are found inscribed.2 Like brass it was rarely used for independent writing.

(6) Iron. Though iron was very commonly used for implements and weapons and other human needs, its use was sporadic so far as writing was concerned. There is only one instance of the Mihrauli Iron Pillar Inscription,3 situated near the Qutub Minar near Delhi, where a long Prāñāsti is inscribed on iron. There are a few examples where small inscriptions are found on the tridents of Śiva and canons made of iron.4 The spare use of iron for writing was perhaps due to the fact that it was ordinarily subject to rusting and decay; the Mihrauli Iron Pillar is one of rare exceptions where iron was made rust-proof.

(7) Tin. This metal being rare in India was rarely used for writing. There is only one specimen of writing on tin; the British Museum possesses a Buddhist MSS. inscribed on tin.5

10. Ink.

For writing on hard materials like stone, bricks, metals etc., where engraving or drilling was necessary, ink or any kind of dying was not imperative. In such cases chisel or stile would do, though later on in some cases pigment was used. But for writing on soft materials like birch-bark, palm-leaves, paper, cloth, leather etc. some kind of ink or dye was employed.

The terms used in India for the ink were ‘masī’ or ‘masī’. These words frequently occur in the Gṛhyasūtras, which

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1 Specimens of brass inscriptions are found on the statues in the Jain temples of Achalgadh at the Abu mountains.
2 Only very late specimens of bronze inscriptions are available.
4 Such specimens belong to the fifteenth and the subsequent centuries.
5 J. Pali T. Soc. 1883, 134ff.
were definitely written before the Christian Era. As regards
the derivation of the term ‘masti’ or ‘masti’ it is derived from
the Sanskrit root ‘mas’ (himsayam) crushing or pounding.1
Because in the preparation of ink its ingredients were pounded
and mixed, the term ‘masti’ was used for it. In the Hindi
word ‘masalna’ (crushing) the original sense of the term is still
preserved. In some parts of India the word used for ink is
‘mela’. On the basis of this usage Benefy, Hincks and Weber
tried to derive the term ‘mela’ from the Greek word ‘melas’2.
Bühler suggested that the word ‘mela’ is derived from the
vernacular ‘maila’ (dirty or black) and it is unnecessary to search
its foreign origin. But a more plausible derivation of the
term ‘mela’ is from the Sanskrit root ‘mel’ (to mix). The
word ‘mela’ obviously means the state of being mixed, implying
the mixing of many ingredients in the preparation of ink. The
word ‘mela’ in the sense of ink was used by Sanskrit writers
also. For instance Subandhu uses the expression, ‘melanandayate’
(becomes an ink-stand).3 In Sanskrit lexicons the words used
for ‘ink-stand’ are ‘melananda’, ‘melandhu’, ‘melandhuka’ etc. which
also shows that the word ‘mela’ was very well known to
the Sanskrit writers.4 The word ‘masti’ was, however, more
frequently used and the words for ink-stand very often
employed were ‘masipatra’ ‘masibhanda’, and ‘masikupika’

The use of ink by the Indians in the fourth century B.C.
is also evidenced by the Greek writers Nearchos and Q. Curtius5
who state in their accounts that the Indians wrote on paper
and cotton cloth, obviously suggesting that ink was used by
the writers. Some of earliest epigraphical records too point to
the same fact. In some of the Asokan edicts dots are
sometimes substituted for loops in the formation of certain
letters which suggests that ink was used when edicts were

1 Bothlingk and Roth, Sanskrit Worterbuch, sub voce ‘Masti’.
3 Bothlingk and Roth, Sanskrit Worterbuch, sub haec voce.
4 मेला मसीजने चमकर्जने च स्मानमिसिऊयो: इति विकार्यो: quoted on the
    Amarakosa, III. 5. 10.
5 Strabo, XV. 717 Hist. Alex. VIII. 6.
engraved. The earliest specimen of writing with ink is found in the relic-vase of the stupa at Andher, which can be, at the latest, assigned to the second century B.C. A more extensive use of ink is found in the Kharosthi MSS from Khotan datable from the first century A.D. From the same century Afghanistan also yields specimens of ink-writing on the twists of birch-barks and earthen vessels. Slightly later MSS in the Brāhmī characters written with ink on birch-bark and palm-leaves are also found. A few specimens of painted inscriptions are there in the Ajāntā Caves.

Different kinds of ink were used, out of which the black one was the most common. It was of two varieties ordinary or delible for temporary purposes and permanent or indelible for writing MSS and documents of permanent value. The first variety was made of some kind of pulverised charcoal mixed with water, gum, sugar or with some other stickly substance. The permanent variety was prepared from lac mixed with water, borax, loddhara (a tree with white flowers) and lamp-suits of sesame oil all boiled into strong solution. This kind of ink was indelible not affected by water and damp. In Kashmir, for writing on birch-bark, ink was manufactured out of charcoal made from almonds and boiled in cow’s urine. Ink so prepared was absolutely free from damage when MSS were periodically washed in water-tubes. Ink was introduced in the South rather late.

Of coloured varieties red was the most common and yellow was also sometimes used. The Puranic texts refer to the donation of MSS. written with coloured inks. The Jain writers of northern India also very often employed coloured inks. Red ink was made either from alaktaka (red dye) or

1 Bühler, Indian Studies III, 6ff, 69.
2 Bühler, Indian Palaeography, p. 98.
3 Ibid.
4 B. ASRWT. 4, plate 59.
5 Ojha: Prāchīna Līpimala, p. 155.
6 Burnell: South Indian Palaeography, p. 93.
7 Hemādi, Dānakhaṇḍa, 549ff.
8 Cf. Facsimiles in Rajendralal Mitra’s notices of Sanskrit MSS, 3, pl. I.
hingula (lead or minium). These materials were solved in water with resin or some other sticky substance. Red ink was mostly used in the MSS. for marking the medial signs and margins on the right and the left sides of the text. Sometimes the endings of chapters, stops and the phrases like 'so and so said thus' were written with red ink. Green and yellow inks were fashionable with some Jain writers, who wrote the ending of chapters with them.  

Somadeva, the author of the Kathāsarit-sāgara refers to writing with blood, which Burnell regarded as a transparent fiction of the writer. It should be observed that Somadeva mentions writing with blood only in the absence of ink in a forest. Sometimes abnormal persons, to show the solemnity of their purpose and iron determination, wrote their vows with blood. But such instances are very rare.

For artistic writings on paintings or in preparing the MSS. of sacred books or even literary works for the use of the rich patrons gold and silver inks were used. Literary evidences refer to the use of these inks in ancient times, though available specimens belong to much later times.

11. Instruments.

Instruments for writing, in general, were called 'lekham', a word which occurs as early as in the Great Epics of India. It is, however, a generic word and is used variously in the sense of a pen, a stilus, a pencil or a brush made of reed, wood, iron, fibres or hairs. The rationale behind this wide use of this term is that writing implied both engraving and painting or writing materials.

Other words denoting writing instruments are as follows:

(1) Varnaka. The literal meaning of this term is 'maker of a letter'. It was used in the sense of a pen. In the Lalitavistara it is referred to as a small stick.

1 Ojha: Prāchīna Lipīmālā, p. 156.
2 तौ कथामतमशोभिते । अद्वयं मध्यभावास्वच्छ विके ख स महाकावि । I. 8.3.
4 Cf. BRW. and BW. sub hac Voce.
without a slit, which was used by school-children to draw letters on the writing-board.¹

(2) *Varṇikā*. It is a variant of *Varṇaka* generally found in Sanskrit lexicons.²

(3) *Varnavartikā*. It was a coloured pencil. It is mentioned in the *Daśakumāracharita*.³

(4) *Tuli* or *Tulikā*. It was generally used in the sense of a brush.⁴

(5) *Śalākā*. It meant a stilus or engraver.⁵

In connection with the art of writing other instruments were compass and ruler. The former was used mainly by astrologers in preparing horoscopes containing various circles and cross-circles, and occasionally, by a few writers for making artistic figures at the end of the chapters of books. Compasses used for these purposes were highly refined. For drawing straight and parallel lines ruler was also employed. It was a piece of wood with strings fixed at equal distances. It was called *rekhāpati* or *samāsapaṭi*.⁶
CHAPTER VI.

PROFESSION OF WRITING AND ENGRAVING.

In India alphabets were invented by literateurs, teachers and priests for literary and religious purposes. There is no doubt that the invention of alphabets required some knowledge of linguistics and phonetics and as such it could be undertaken only by experts educated and cultured. That is why, for a very long time, the art of writing remained a special preserve of literary and priestly experts, mainly belonging to the Brahman class. So long as the extent and use of literacy was limited, there was no need of a class of professional writers, who would write for the sake of earning their livelihood. With the evolution and expansion of society and the bifurcation of professions writing also developed as a profession. In the ancient literature of India there are ample indications that at an early period there existed a class or caste of professional writers. They were designated differently for various reasons—chronological, artistic and official. They are briefly dealt with as follows:

1. Lekhaka.

The earliest term used for writers in general was 'lekhaka' (one who writes). This word and terms allied to it\(^1\) are found in the Great Epics of India—the Rāmāyaṇa and the Mahābhārata.\(^2\) The use of these terms in the epics indicate that the art and the profession of writing both were in existence when the epics were composed. The early Pali literature yields a large number of evidences regarding the profession of writing. For instance, in the Vinayapitaka 'writing' is praised as one of the most distinguished arts;\(^3\) the sisters of the order are allowed

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\(^1\) Likh, lekha, lekhana etc.

\(^2\) For most important passages connected with 'writing' see the St. Petersburg Dictionary under the words mentioned in the footnote No. 1 on p. 134, Das Mahābhārata, 185ff. by J. Dahlmann.

\(^3\) iv. 7.
to learn the art of writing, obviously not as a pastime but as a useful occupation of copying the sacred texts; in a discussion as to what career a lad should adopt, his parents opine that if he adopts a profession of a writer, he will live in ease and comfort, though his fingers will ache. The Mahāyāga and the Jātakas frequently mention official letters which involved specialised professional knowledge of writing. Even MSS. (Pothaka) are mentioned twice, the preparation of which required professional writers. Rhys Davids’s views that writing industry was not known when the early Buddhist literature was under preparation, are based upon very meagre data and cannot stand examination. In the subsequent literature of India the word ‘lekha’ has been used both in the general sense of a writer and in the specific sense of a professional writer.

As regards epigraphical evidence regarding the profession of writing and the use of term ‘lekha’ an early reference to it is found in one of the Sanchi inscriptions. The word ‘lekha’ here is evidently used to denote the profession of the donor. Bühler translated it as ‘copyist of MSS’ ‘writer, clerk’, though he doubted his own translation. In a large number of later inscriptions the word ‘lekha’ was used to denote a person who prepared the documents to be incised on stone or metal. In still later times a ‘lekha’ was one who mainly did the work of copying MSS. Generally, devoted and pious Brāhmaṇas and, in some cases, poor and worn-out Kāyasthas were engaged in this work. Temples and libraries employed such people. Epigraphical records also show that many Jain MSS were copied by monks and nuns who spent their time in preparing the MSS of sacred texts. Similar instances are

1 iv. 305.
2 Ibid. i. 77; iv. 128.
3 I. 43.
4 Bühler, Indian Studies III. 8f. 120.
5 Ibid.
6 Buddhist Indian pp. 109-11.
8 Indian Palaeography, p. 100.
9 Ep. Ind. I., 1A; Fleet, Gupta Int. (C11. 3) Nos. 18 & 80.
also found in Nepal where Bhikhus, Vajracharyas and nuns copied Buddhist MSS.

2. Lipikara or Libikara.

Besides the term 'lekhaka' another term which was used in the sense of a 'writer' in the fourth century B.C. was 'lipikara', 'libikara' or 'dipikara'. It occurs many times in the edicts of Aśoka. Sanskrit lexicons regard the term 'lipikara' as a synonym of 'lekhaka'. But it seems that in the Aśokan edicts the term is used both in the sense of a 'writer' and an 'engrave'; more in the sense of the later. In the Sanskrit fiction Vāsavadatta the word 'lipikara' means 'writer' in general. Royal writers were sometimes designated as 'ṛājavālipikara', meaning 'a writer of the king'. For instance in one of the Sanchi inscriptions Subahita Gotiputa is called 'ṛājalihipikara'. A perusal of Sanskrit literature and epigraphical documents will show that the term 'lipikara' was less frequently used than the term 'lekhaka', and it was employed more in the sense of 'a copyist' and 'an engraver' than in the sense of 'a writer'.

3. Divira.

Divira is another word employed in the sense of a writer. It first occurs in a Central Indian inscription of A.D. 521-22. In a large number of Valabhi inscriptions of the seventh and the eighth centuries A.D. the 'minister of alliance and war' (Sāndhivigrāhādhirīta), who was responsible for the preparation of the draft of documents, is called 'divirapati' or 'divirapati', which means 'the lord of diviras'. The term 'divirapati' clearly indicates that there were a number of diviras (writers or clerks) under the charge of the minister of alliance and war, who prepared documents. As regards the origin

1 पड़ेन लिखिते लिखिकरेण : Brahmagiri Minor RE. No. 2.
2 लिखिकरारस्येन (RE. No. 14, Girmar version).
3 दिष्कर (RE. No. 14 Shahbazgarhi version).
4 लिखिकरोशत्यसन्ततिः सङ्कृत लेखके : Amara. II. 8. 15.
5 Hall's ed. p. 239.
6 Stupa 1, No. 49 (Ep. Ind. II. 102).
7 Fleet : Gupta Inscriptions.
of the term 'divira' Bühler writes: 'Divira' or Divīra is Persian 'Devir' 'writer', which probably became domesticated in Western India during the time of Sassamians, when the trade and intercourse between Persia and India was greatly developed. In this connection it should be observed that there was no Scythian or Sassanian rule in India in the 7th and the 8th centuries A.D., nor there was any commercial or cultural intercourse between Persia and India due to the Arab occupation of Persia during these centuries. The Scythian rule in Central India became extinct in the last quarter of the 4th century A.D. The use of the word 'devir' or its adaptations is not evidenced during the first four centuries of the Christian era so far. The origin of the term 'divira' seems to be in the word 'dipikara' (a writer or engraver) used in the Asokan edicts. 'Dipikara' could easily be Prakritised into divikara — diviara = divira. It is likely that 'dipikara' and 'devir' were derived from the same common source, as Sanskrit and ancient Persian were allied languages. The use of the term 'divira' continued up to the 11th and 12th centuries A.D. The word occurs in the Rājatarangini and other works of this period. For instance, Kṣemendra's Lokapraṅkāsa refers to the various classes of the 'diviras', e.g. gajadivira (bazaar-writers), nagaradivira (town-writers) etc. The currency of the word 'divira' was mostly confined to N. W. parts of India.


The most prominent term to indicate a fixed class or caste of professional writers was 'Kāyastha'. It first occurs in the Yājñavalkya-Smṛti in a not very happy reference: "The king should protect his subjects being oppressed by swindlers, thieves, bad characters, robbers and Kāyasthas, specially by the last." Vijñāneśvara comments upon the term 'Kāyastha' in the following words:

1 Indian Palæography, p. 101.
2 RE. No. 14 (Shahbazgarhi ed.).
3 Indian Antiquary, VI. 10.
4 चातुर्वर्तितमहासाहसकादिभि:
परिष्ठमाना: प्रजा: रक्षेत् कायस्थेष्वर विशेषतः II I. 336.
"Kāyasthas," mean 'lekha's (writers) and 'gaṇakas' (counters or accountants). Subjects should be specially protected from them, because, being favourite of the king and cunning of disposition, they are difficult to be warded off".\(^1\) Obviously, corruption in offices was responsible for this attitude towards the Kāyasthas. Next, the word 'Kāyastha' occurs in the Damodarpur Copper-plate Inscription of the time of Budhagupta (c.476-495 A.D.)\(^2\), where the head of the Kāyastha community was one of the members of the District Council of Kośivāra (=the Dinajpur district of Bengal). The word is also found in the Kanasa inscription of 738-39 A.D. discovered in Rajasthan.\(^3\) Later the Kāyasthas are mentioned very often in the inscriptions found in Gujrat\(^4\) and Kalinga.\(^5\) In the Rājatarangini of Kalhana and the Lokaprakāśa of Kśhmendra the Kāyasthas are mentioned frequently, which shows that the role of the Kāyasthas in Kashmir was very prominent up to the 13th century AD.

The term 'Kāyastha' is capable of different interpretation. In the present context, a person, who was settled in the kāya (body) of the state, was called Kāyastha. Mythologically one fixed in the kāya, body of God, representing the recording or cognizing faculty in Him, was the first Kāyastha from whom the community emanated. There is a philosophical interpretation. According to it one is called Kāyastha, because 'all his ideals and aspirations are centered in his kāya (body) and he does not care for anything beyond it.' In the beginning Kāyastha was not a caste or Varna. It was a group or class of people, who chose to enter the ministerial service of the state and came from different Varnas and castes. In course of time such people developed into a community and ultimately

\(^1\) कायस्था लेखका गणकाष्ठ तैः पीढ़यमणा विकोपति रखेतु। तेनां राजवल्लम-तयातिमयाविविभाजना दुनिवारत्ताल। ibid.
\(^2\) प्रथमकायस्थ विविधाल। Ep. Ind. XV, p. 138.
\(^3\) Ind. Ant. XIX. 55.
\(^4\) Ibid. VI, 192.
\(^5\) Ep. Ind. III. 224.
into a caste, though their different sources of recruitment survived in the form of a custom according to which the Kāyasthas married in their own sub-caste up to very recently. As regards the social status of the Kāyasthas as a caste, they occupied an influential and effective status among the Hindus, though the orthodox Hindus regarded them as mixed with the Śūdras, evidently on account of some admixture of Śūdra element in them, their evil reputation in offices and their close association with the Muslims later on.

5. Karana, Karnika, Karanin, Śasanin & Dharma-lekhin

Writers or clerks were known by many designations other than Kāyastha in different parts of India. These designations were Karana, Karnika, Karanin, Śasanin and Dharma-lekhin. Perhaps associated with an adhikarana (office) a clerk was called ‘Karana’. This term seems to be a synonym of Kāyastha, as a Karana also, like a Kāyastha, is not viewed with favour by the law-givers, and it is classed with mixed castes (Varṇa-saṅkara). According to the Manu-Smṛti¹ Karana is one of the progeny born from a Vṛatya Kṣatriya in a woman of the same Varṇa. Yājñavalkya² defines ‘Karana’ differently: “Karana is born from a Vaiśya in a Śūdra woman.” The status of a Karana suffered for almost the same reasons as that of a Kāyastha. ‘Karnika’ was interpreted by Kielhorn as ‘a writer of legal documents (Karana³). The context in which the term ‘Karani' is used indicates that it was not employed in the sense of a caste but in the sense of an official group of writers. The terms Karanin⁴, Śasanin⁵ and Dharma-lekhin⁶ are variously used in the sense of ‘a writer in an office’, ‘one who writes down orders from an officer or a ruler’ and ‘one who writes legal documents’ respectively.

¹ जली मल्लद्वा राज्यानि द्वाग्रायसिद्धिविवेद कि।
न्द्रव्य करणेव लसो इविवेद एवं तत्। X. 22.
² बंशारात् करणः गृहघात विनाशस्य विष्णु: स्मृतः। I. 92.
³ Ep. Ind. I. 81, 129, 166; Ind. Ant. XVI. 175; XVIII. 12.
⁴ Harṣacharita, 227 (N. S. ed.).
⁵ Ind. Ant. XX. 315.
⁶ Ibid. XVI. 208.
6. Śilpin, Rūpakāra, Sūtradhara and Śilākūṭa.

The above terms were used for masons and engravers, who carved letters on stone and metals. From a large number of inscriptive evidences it is known that Praśasti or Kāvya dedicative and commemorating documents were first composed or written by poets or other competent persons. Next, a fair copy of them was prepared by a professional writer. Ultimately the documents were handed over to a mason or an engraver to be incised or engraved on stone or metals as a particular case required.¹ Bühlér witnessed a case which fell under his own personal observation, which he describes as follows: “The mason received a sheet with a fair copy of a document (the Praśasti of a temple) exactly of the size of a stone on which it was to be incised. He first drew the letters on the stone under the supervision of a Pandit, and then incised them.”² Sometimes there were some exceptions to this regular procedure. In some cases the authors did the work of the mason also³ and in a few cases the masons claim that they prepared their own fair copy.⁴

So far as the Sāsanas on copper-plates are concerned references to engravers are very rare and they are found in late inscriptions only. Engraved plates were called ‘utkṛṣṭa’⁵, ‘Unmilita’⁶ and ‘Uttakṣṭita’.⁷ Persons who engraved the documents on plates, belonged to the professional castes of blacksmiths, copper-smiths, gold-smith and other artisans. The terms used are ‘ayaskara’⁸ or ‘lohakara’ (black-smith), kāniṣṭhayakara or

² Indian Palaeography, p. 101.
³ In the Talgund Prasasti (Ep. Car. vii. 176) the poet Kulya makes this claim; in the Ajneri ins. (Ind. Ant., XII. 127) Divakarapandita states.
⁴ Ind. Ant. II. 103, 107, XVII. 140.
⁵ समामेदितकृष्णमयीदिपरेण | Ep. Ind. IV, p. 208.
⁶ Fleet, C. I. I, vol. III,
⁷ चक्षसितोत्तकटितम् | Ep. Ind. XV, p. 41.
⁸ Ep. Ind. iv. 170; Ind. Ant. xvii, 227, 230, 236.
tāmracara (copper-smith), hemakara¹ (gold-smith), silpin² or vijnānike³ (artisan). In Orissa technical terms used for engravers were ‘akṣaṭālīn’ and ‘akṣaṭālīka’⁴ (Prakritised forms, akhasalin and akhasale), all meaning ‘a person who belongs to a record-house.’

7. Officers in charge of the Preparation of Documents.

Epigraphical records are not very exact and clear on this point. They very often confuse between the officers in charge of the preparation of documents and the persons who actually prepared the documents. Officers mentioned in this connection are amātya (a minister or high official), sāndhivigrahika (minister in charge of alliances and war), senāpati (minister in charge of army), baladhiṣṭa (commander of army), mahāsapatālādhikarāṇādhiṣṭa-mahāsāmanṭa mahāraja (a vassal of the sovereign who was also in charge of the office of the Royal Records) etc. One illustration will explain the situation. The Valabhi Copper-plate Inscription of Dharasena (Valabhi E.269=588 A.D.) is concluded as

“My own signature of Mahārājādhīraja Śrīdharasena. Dūtaka Sāmanta Śilāditya. Written by Sandhivigrahādhiṣṭa-nādhiṣṭa-divirapati Skandabhaṭa”⁵

From the above extract it is evident that at the end of the document the signature of the king was affixed, a Dūtaka (representative) of the king was present when the royal document was executed and the document was (caused to be) written by an officer, who was in charge of the ‘Office of Alliance and War’ and who was also the supreme head of the diviras (clerks). In the present case, really speaking, the document was prepared by a divira (clerk), though in the inscription it is asserted that this was done by the officer

¹ Ep. Ind. III. 317; Ind. Ant. XVIII. 17.
² Ind. Ant. XVII. 234.
³ Ind. Ant. XVI, 208.
⁴ Ind. Ant. XIII, 123; XVIII, 145; Ep. Ind. III. 19, 213.
⁵ स्याहीति मम महाराजाधिराजजियमयस्य । दूतकः सामान्तशीलाधियः । वियिनिकत सम्भविष्प्रहारिकरणाधिकत दिविरसतिकल्यक्षम। Ind. Ant. Vol. VI, p. 9.
himself. According to the Rājatarangini the kings of Kashmir used to maintain an officer designated as ‘paṭṭopādhyāya’, “the teacher (charged with the preparation) of title-deeds’. This special officer belonged to the aksapatala office. Stein regarded aksapatala as the Accountant-General’s office. Bühler, however, took it to be the Record Office or Court of Rolls.  

8. Manuals for Clerks and Writers.

The ancient Hindus not only evolved the art of writing by inventing and reforming alphabets but they also developed a system of correspondence and drafting which helped and stimulated the art of writing. Books were written to give technical assistance to clerks and writers. One of such manuals, the Lekhapanchāśikā lays down rules for drafting various kinds of private letters, official documents of different varieties e.g., orders, proclamations, land-grants etc. and political and diplomatic documents like the treaties between kings. A section of Kṣemendra-Vyāsadāsa’s Lokaprabha gives detailed rules regarding the drafting of commercial and economic documents, for instance, bonds, bills of exchange (hundi) etc. There is also another ‘letter writer’ (Patra-mañjari) attributed to Vararuci, one of the nine jewels of Vikramāditya. Because this work refers to letter-writing on paper, Burnel was of the opinion that it should be assigned to a period after the Muslim invasion of India. This opinion is untenable in view of the fact that the use of paper in India is referred to by Greek writers in the fourth century B.C.


There were three sets of people, who influenced the course of alphabets. Firstly there were the Brahmanical teachers, literateurs and priests, who invented alphabets and modified

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1 V. 397f. (Stein ed.).
2 Indian Palæography, p. 101.
4 South Indian Palæography, p. 89.
5 Stratbo. XV, 717.
them for literary and religious purposes on the basis of pictographs, representations and symbols created by still earlier men. They further introduced changes under the impact of grammar and phonetics. This process was later on facilitated by the Buddhist and Jain monks and nuns, who assiduously devoted themselves to the task of writing and copying sacred texts.

The second set of people, who affected the evolution of alphabets, consisted of the individual professional writers and the castes of writers, which originated in India. Their genius was not creative, but they had the power of adaptation and modification of forms to suit their convenience regarding writing materials and speed in actual writing. They were also not indifferent to the elegance of letters. This must have necessitated changes in the shape of letters. This third set of people responsible for variations in the forms of letters included the stone-masons and the engravers on metals. This set being semi-educated was less effective than the first two. But the very nature of materials (stone and metals) on which they had to work gave new orientations to the various limbs of letters. The evolution of the monumental forms and alphabets was mostly due to the needs of this class of people in carving, incising, drilling and engraving.
CHAPTER VII
TECHNIQUE OF WRITING.


Beginning from the Indus Valley script\(^1\) up to the Brāhmi and the Kharoṣṭhi scripts of the fifth and the fourth centuries B.C. and subsequent periods\(^2\) one can very easily see that the signs and letters are formed almost in a uniform manner. They are traced vertically from top to bottom as if from an imaginary line. The groups of signs are arranged horizontally except in the case of some Kuśaṇa\(^3\) and Gupta\(^4\) coins where they are arranged vertically due to the paucity of space. In the Indus Valley inscriptions, where animal designs accompany them, the animal is usually placed immediately below the inscription and, in the majority of cases, faces to the right. In some cases, however, the animal faces to the left.\(^5\)

2. Direction of Writing.

The direction of writing in the Indus Valley inscriptions is still a matter of speculation. On quite insufficient data some scholars have held the view that the inscriptions read from the right to the left. Smith and Gadd are of the same opinion: "The number referred to is no. CCCLXIV of our list and it is true that in the impression of this seal the bird enclosed in a ring (it seems to be somewhat carefully marked as a drake) faces to the right. It is, of course, a well-known rule of the Egyptian hieroglyphs that the inscription is read from the side towards which the figures face. But it is easy to show that this is no safe indication for the 'Indus' writing; for while most of

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\(^2\) Bühler: *Indische Paläographie*, Tables I-VI.

\(^3\) Whitehead: *The Catalogue of the Coins of the Punjab Museum, Lahore*.


\(^5\) G. R. Hunter: *The Script of Harappa and Mohenjodaro etc*. Plates I and IA.
the 'men' signs face to the right (Cf. Nos. CCCLXXIV-CCCLXXX in the list) there are several birds and animals (cf. Nos. CCCLIV-CCCLVIII) which face to the left. Some other criterion therefore must be sought, but it is not altogether easy to find. First it will be noticed that in nearly all cases the bull or other animal which forms the main subject of the seal faces to the right, and there is consequently a presumption that the inscription begins from the head. There is, nevertheless, at least one exception to this instance of the animal, for in the impression of the seal No. 341 a rhinoceros faces to the left. This may be an inadvertement, but it suffices to warn us against relying too much on the usual position of the animal as indicating the beginning of the inscription. Another small indication may be found in the usual manner of writing the sign composed of seven strokes ('III') in which the lower three are nearly always placed level with the right end of the upper four. A very significant example, too, is a seal from Harappa (No. 5929) which makes it evident that the engraver has been cramped for space, and that in consequence not only were his signs closely bunched together, but the space remaining on the left side was not sufficient to take another sign, which has therefore been dropped below the line. The inference that the inscription began from the right is almost irresistible. But there is a final instance which puts this conclusion beyond doubt. The seal H. 173 found in the excavations of 1926-27, is peculiar in having no animal device, but a long inscription which occupies two whole sides of the square and most of the third side. Now (in the impression of course), this inscription occupies all the top side, all the left side and most of the bottom, thus |←|, the signs being turned 90 degrees at each corner in such a way that their tops always follow the edges. It is manifest, therefore, that the inscription was read turning the sealing round in the

1 This indication may suggest just the opposite. In the modern Indian numerical system, in which figures are written from left to right, for addition and multiplication both, figures are arranged exactly as in this sign. In Arabic based upon Indian system the same system is followed.
hand, and the position of the second and the third sections shows that it was turned over towards the right; in other words, the reader began from the right of the first and the longest section, turned the sealing through 90 degrees, read the second section again from right to left, and similarly the third. Proof that these inscriptions are to be read from right to left seems herewith complete.***1 G. R. Hunter holds almost the same view.***2

It should be observed here that instances referred to above are not conclusive. First of all, we are not yet sure whether a particular piece bearing inscriptions is a seal or an amulet. In an inscription on a seal the direction of letters is reversed,***3 but in an inscription on an amulet letters run in their usual direction. In the latter case, it is the original which will indicate the direction of writing and not its impression, which has been used by the authorities quoted above. As regards the grouping of the strokes (in the second line of the sign) towards the right, it has already been pointed out that it may equally suggest the rightwards direction of writing. The third and the fourth instances have some force, provided we can finally decide whether the pieces in question are seals or amulets. Thus in the present state of our knowledge it is not safe to make an exclusive assertion. If we are able to establish a close relation and sequence between the Indus Valley script and the Brāhmī script, the possibility of the rightward direction of the former is increased.

The Brāhmī script, the best known in ancient India, reads from the left to the right. This fact is evidenced by the earliest specimens to the latest of this script (from the Piprahwa Buddhist Vase Inscription***4 to the Gahaḍavāla and the Chedi inscriptions***5). Bühler was of the opinion that, due

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3 In the copper-plates of India, which belong to a much later times, the seals were bodily attached to the documents and they bear inscriptions in the usual direction from the left to the right.
4 *Indian Antiquary*, XXXVI, 117ff.; Lüder’s List No. 931.
5 *Sarnath Ins. of Kumaradevi*, Ep. Ind., IX, pp. 324 ff.
to its Semitic origin, the Brāhmi script was written from the right to the left in the beginning and later on it changed its direction. According to him a specimen of early Brāhmi was found in the inscriptions on the Eran coin with the legend running from the right to the left. Unfortunately no other specimen of this kind has been discovered on stone or on other writing materials, and the Eran coin represents, most probably, the inadvertence of the maker of the mould, who instead of putting reversed letters on it put the letters in their proper form which resulted in a reversed direction of writing on the Eran coin. Another specimen may be suggested in the signature of the engraver Paḍa at the end of the Siddhapur version of the Minor Rock-Edict of Aśoka. But the main body of the inscription is written from the left to the right. This fact clearly indicates that the style of the signature of Paḍa was not usual and coming from the N. W. of India, where the Kharoṣṭhī was written from the right to the left, he was just adapting the Brāhmi script to the Kharoṣṭhī style for his signature.

That the Brāhmi script might have been, once, written in the boustrophedon style, that is, the lines alternatively written from left to right and from right to left, is suggested by the Yerragudi version of the Minor Rock-Edict of Aśoka. In this edict the engraver continues in the second line from right to left. Thus he alternates the direction of lines up to l. no. 16, the rest of the lines except nos. 20 and 26 are written from left to right. Now the question is: Does this isolated and incomplete specimen in the southern corner of India prove that the Brāhmi script was in earlier centuries written in a boustrophedon style or does it only suggest

1 Indian Palæography, p. 8.
2 Cunningham: Coins of Ancient India, 101.
3 Hultsch, Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum. Vol. I.
4 It is a Greek word derived from bous = ox + strphos = turning + don (adv. suf.). Just as an ox turns in ploughing, so does this style of writing.
that an engraver from N. W. India, like Pađa, was unsuccessfully forcing the Kharosthi style of writing in the alternate lines for the Brāhmī script which he was employed to engrave. The latter possibility appears to be greater than the former, specially in view of the fact that no specimen of boustrophedon writing is found among the inscriptions of the fifth and the fourth centuries B. C.

The direction of the Kharosthi script is from right to left. There are, however, some Kharosthi inscription of later periods in which the direction of writing is from left to right. The change of direction has been ascribed to the influence of the Brāhmī on the Khāroṣṭhī. But there is a suspicion, in view of the Indian and Chinese tradition, regarding the indigenous origin of the Khāroṣṭhī, that originally it was written from left to right, then, under foreign influence, it changed its direction and in its last phase it tries to reassert its original position. On account of its long exotic use, however, the Khāroṣṭhī ceased to appeal to the Indians and ultimately dwindled and disappeared.

3. Line.

Though in the early stage of writing in India letters had no head-lines, the Indians had developed a sense of straight writing and to ensure it they conformed to an imaginary, temporary or dim line. In doing so all the letters were written in a horizontal straight line, and the medial signs (Matrikās) of equal height were placed above the line. Even the undeciphered Indus Valley signs are, more or less, arranged in a straight horizontal line.1 We find a marked attempt at the formation of a straight line in the Brāhmī inscriptions of the Mauryan period. It should be observed, however, that the engravers of Aśoka were not a complete success in this respect. Both in the rock and in the pillar inscriptions many letters are undulating. The irregularities are generally noticeable in the

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1 G. R. Hunter: The Script of Harappa and Mohenjodaro etc., plates I-XXXVII.
2 Hultsch: Corpus Ins. Ind., Vol. I.
rock edicts of Girnar, Dhauli and Jaugada\(^2\) perhaps due to the nature of the surface of the rocks used for engraving. Some of the contemporary inscriptions strictly follow the principle of lining. For instance, in the Ghasundi Stone Inscription\(^1\) all the letters are arranged in a straight line and only the medial signs and the superscribed *ra* run above the line in a regular formation. In subsequent periods the principle of forming lines is regularly adhered to. The devices used for following the principle were, as already said, the making of temporary or dim lines with chalk or char-coal or by simple marking faintly with a pointed instrument.

The writers of MSS were more particular, than masons, in forming straight lines. This fact is evident from the oldest specimens of MSS. In the Dhamma-pada MS from Khotan lines were made with the help of a ruler. The palm-leaf MSS also followed the same principle. To make the writing more artistic the ends of horizontal lines on MSS (both palm-leaf and paper of later times) were marked by double vertical lines running across the whole breadth of the leaves.

In the stone inscriptions as well as the MSS the lines were always formed horizontally and they were arranged from the top to the bottom, running almost parallel to each other. There are, however, a few exceptions to the latter arrangement. For example, in a Kharosti inscription from Swat the arrangement is from the bottom to the top and one has to read it from below. We can mention a few exceptions to the former arrangement also. On the coins of the Kuśāṇas and the Guptas vertical lines are formed due to, as already indicated, the paucity of space.\(^2\) No specimen of vertical lines are found in inscriptions and MSS.

4. **Grouping of Letters and Words.**

In ancient India writers did not pay much attention to the grouping of the letter of one word and the grouping of

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\(^1\) Bühler: *Indian Palæography*, Plate II, Col. XVI.

the words of one phrase, clause and sentence. In early times they did not use regularly even signs to demarcate the one sentence from the other. They used to write letters continuously without a stop up to the end of a line, of a verse, or other divisions. This indifference towards grouping was due to grammatical precision which the Indian languages attained; grammatical formation of words left little scope for confusion even if letters and words were written closely or without demarcation. We come across, however, some attempts at forming the groups of words. The basis of this grouping was either the sense-demarcation in a sentence or the method of reading adopted by the scribe. The pillar edicts of Aśoka (except Kauśāmbī) and the Kalsi version of his R. E. (Nos. I-XI) indicate clearly that the conscious attempt was made at the grouping of words. Similar instances can be found in some of the prose inscriptions of the Andhras and the Western Kṣatrapas at Nasik. Later on in metrical inscriptions, where stops became essential for recitation, the ādhyātmas (half-verses) are often separated by blank spaces. There is another device for grouping also. One line contains either a full verse or only a half verse. In the inscriptions a Maṅgala (an auspicious formula) forms a group by itself and stands separately in the beginning on the margin.

In MSS. which are later in date than the inscriptions, the same arrangement of grouping is found as in the case of metrical inscriptions. In the Kharoṣṭhī Dhammapada Ms. from Khotan each line contains one Gāthā and the ādhyātmas (half-verses) are separated by blanks. A better instance of grouping is found in the Bower Ms. in which single words and the groups of words are often written separately, though it is evident that no fixed principles are followed in grouping.

2 Compare Nos. 5, 11, A, B and 13.
3 Fleet: *Gupta Ins.* (Cl. Vol. III) No. 50, pl. XXXI B.
4 Ibid. Nos. 1, 2, 6 pl. IVA and 10, pl. V.
5 Ibid. Nos. 6 pl. IVA and 15 pl. IXA.
5. Punctuation and Interpunctuation.

Ancient Indian writers did not realise the absolute necessity of punctuation or interpunctuation up to very late times and, even when the need of punctuation dawned upon their mind, they remained indifferent to its proper use. It is impossible to trace the use of punctuation in the Indus Valley script, firstly because it is not deciphered as yet and secondly all the inscriptions in this script are fragmentary and hardly involving any necessity of a punctuation. There are a few signs which occur very frequently at the end of inscriptions, but they do not seem like stops; they look more like suffixes. When we reach the age of deciphered inscriptions from the fifth century B.C. up to the beginning of the Christian era we find some attempt at punctuation. Only one sign—a stroke, either straight or curved [ ]—was used for denoting different types of pauses. From the first century A.D. up to the fifth century A.D. a number of complex signs for punctuation developed, but they were not regularly used. From the fifth century A.D. onwards, in the metrical inscriptions, specially in the Pratistis engraved on stone, the system of interpunctuation became more regular. The first document showing the regular use of punctuation is the Mandasor Pratist, dated 473-74 A.D., in which a single vertical stroke after a half-verse and two such strokes at the end of a verse is found. It should be noticed, however, that the copper-plates and the stone inscriptions, specially from the South, do not conform to this rule. From an observation of different types of inscriptions it can be inferred that the development of the system of punctuation was due to the conscious attempt on the part of Brahmanical schoolmen and literary writers; clerks in the state offices and professional writers were very careless about punctuations. Much also depended upon individual education and efficiency of writers. This is evident from the fact that in the same age

1 Fleet: Gupta Ins. (Cl, Vol. III) No. 18, pl. XI.
2 Ind. Ant. Vol. VI, 88; VII, 163; X, 63-64.
of the documents and also in the same type of them—the use of punctuations differed in frequency and correctness.

(1) The use of Punctuation in the Brāhmi Inscriptions.

In the documents written in the Brāhmi script different kinds of punctuation marks were used for various types of stops. They are classified as follows:

(i) *A single vertical line or danda* (1). It is used for the following purposes:

(a) separation of single words,
(b) separation of groups,
(c) separation of prose from verse,
(d) marking the end of the portions of sentences,
(e) marking the end of sentences,
(f) marking the end of half-verses,
(g) marking the end of verses, and
(h) marking the end of documents.

(ii) *A vertical line with a small horizontal top-bar (T)*. It is not very common. In northern India no specimen has so far been discovered. It is found in a few inscriptions of the Eastern Chālukyas.

(iii) *Two vertical lines or dandas* (II). It occurs

(a) after numerals,
(b) after the names of donors,
(c) at the end of sentences,
(d) at the end of half-verses.

1. Atokan RE. (Kalsi, XII, XIII; Sahasram).
2. Ibid.
3. Fleet: *Gupta Ins.* (C.IJ. 3), No. 21, line 16.
4. Ibid. No. 80, pl. 44.
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid. No. 42, pl. 28.
7. Ibid. No. 38, pl. 24, line 35.
8. Ibid. No. 19, pl. 12A.
9. *Indian Antiquary*. XII. 92; XIII. 213.
11. Ibid.
12. *Amaravati Ins.* No. 28; Ind. Ant. VI, 23, 1. 9.
(e) at the end of verses, 1
(f) at the end of big prose sections, 2 and (g) at the end of documents. 3

(iv) Two vertical lines with a hook added to the top of the first one (נ). It appears to be a later development, as its specimens are found only after the fifth century A.D. 4

(v) Two vertical lines with hooks added one each to their tops (ננ). 5

(vi) Two vertical lines with curves and hooks added to the foot of one or of the both (נל). 6

(vii) Two vertical lines with a bar attached on the left to the middle of the first line (ננ). This feature appears from the end of the eighth century A.D.

(viii) Two vertical lines with bar added to the top of the both (תת). Inscriptions of the Eastern Chālukyas contain such specimens. 8

(ix) Two vertical lines with a hook added to the top of the left and with a bar attached to the top of the right (נת). An instance of this type of punctuation is found in one of the Kalinga inscriptions. 9

(x) Three vertical lines (ןן). They occasionally mark the end of documents. 10

(xi) A single short horizontal stroke, placed on the left below the first sign of the last line (••••••) marks the end of documents. 11

1 Ibid. No. 17 pl. 10; No. 18 pl. 11.
2 Ibid. No. 26, pl. 16, 1.24; No. 33, pl. 21B, 1. 9.
3 Ibid.
4 Ibid. No. 17, pl. 10, 1. 32, 38; No. 35 pl. 22, last line.
5 Nepal Ins. No. 4, Ind. Ant. IX, 168, last line.
6 Indian Antiquary, IX, 100, last line.
7 Ibid. XII. 202, 1. 1ff.; XIII, 68.
8 Indian Antiquary, XII, 92; XIII. 213.
9 Ep. Ind. III, 128, last line.
10 Indian Antiquary, VII, 79.
11 Asokan R.E. (Dhauli and Jaugada versions).
(xii) A curved or hooked short horizontal stroke (_curved or hooked short horizontal stroke). From the second century B.C., to the seventh century A.D. this sign serves the same purpose as the single vertical line.¹

(xiii) Two horizontal strokes often bent (__) They are used in the place of two vertical lines from the first century A.D. to the eighth century A.D.²

(xiv) Two vertical dots (.:) In the Kushana and some subsequent inscriptions this sign is used in the place of two horizontal lines.³

(xv) Two vertical lines followed by a short horizontal line (II-). Some time this sign marks the end of documents.⁴

(xvi) A semi-circular stroke facing left (⊇) It also appears at the end of inscriptions.⁵

(xvii) A semi-circular stroke facing left with a bar in the middle (♀). In the Kushana inscriptions it stands after the auspicious formula siddham.⁶

(xviii) Numeral figures and auspicious symbols. Besides the signs of punctuation mentioned above, numeral figures and auspicious symbols were also used for the purposes of punctuation. The former were employed to mark the end of verses and the latter to mark the end of inscriptions and the sections of the text in the MSS.⁹

¹ Nanaghat Ins., Bühler; Arch. Sur. Report West. India, V., pl. 51, line 6 after vāno; Nasik Ins. No. 11A, B; Fleet: Gupta Ins. (C.II. Vol. III), No. 1 (end; No. 3, pl. 2B.
² Ep. Ind. I, 389, No. 14; Fleet: Gupta Ins. (C.II. Vol. III), No. 3, pl. 2B, No. 40 pl. 26, No. 41, pl. 27. No. 55, pl. 34.
⁴ Ind. Ant. VI. 76; Ep. Ind. III. 260.
⁵ Asokan Edicts (Kalsi RE. No. I-IX).
⁷ Fleet: Gupta Ins. (C.II., Vol. III), Nos. 1, 2.
⁸ Asokan Edicts (Jaugad RE.).
⁹ Cf. Bower MS.
6. **Pagination.**

Numbering of pages was necessary to ensure the sequence of the contents of documents. There was hardly any need of it in stone inscriptions and other single-page documents. The ancient Hindus, however, practised pagination in their MSS. and copper-plates, which very often numbered more than one. It should be noted that the Indian system was to number only the leaves (pattra) and not the pages (prśtha) of MSS. In the major part of India the second page of the leaf called sāṅka-prśtha was numbered,\(^1\) while in the south the figure of pagination stood on the first page of the leaf. The same system was followed in the case of copper-plates also, though they were not regularly numbered.

7. **Corrections.**

Various devices were used for correcting errors in the inscriptions on stones and metals and also in the MSS. Some of them were as follows:

(i) **The scoring out of the erroneous words and passages.** Examples of this device are found in the Aśokan inscriptions.\(^3\)

(ii) **The placing of short strokes above or below the line containing errors.** This sign was used later and is found both in inscriptions and MSS.

(iii) **The covering of delenda with turmeric or yellow paste.** This was applied in the case of MSS. only.

(iv) **The beating out of erroneous words and passages and then engraving of corrections on the smoothed spot.** This was mostly done on copper-plate. Some times the entire writing space was beaten smooth and prepared for fresh documents. A few specimens of complete palimpsests are available.\(^4\)

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\(^{1}\) There are a few exceptions also. See Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes (the *Vienna Oriental Journal*).

\(^{2}\) Burnell: *South Indian Palæography*, pl. XXIV.

\(^{3}\) Kalsi R.E. No. XII. 1. 31.

\(^{4}\) *Ind. Ant.* VII, 351, No. 47; XIII. 84; *Ep. Ind.* III. 41, note 6.
8. Omissions.

The available cases of omissions are less in number than those of corrections and the process of completing the sentences or passages was simpler.

(i) The adding of omitted words or phrases above or below the line without any sign indicating the place to which they belong. Examples of this type are found in the Asokan inscriptions. This represents the stage of indefiniteness and indifference.

(ii) The inserting of the omitted words in the interstices between the letters.

(iii) The adding of omitted words in the margin or between the lines with a small upright or inclined cross, called kākapada or hanisapada, indicating the spot of omission. This is a later phase found in the inscriptions and MSS.

(iv) The use of a Svastika (ॐ) instead of a cross for denoting the place of omission.

(v) The use of a cross for indicating intentional omission. This device is found in the South Indian MSS. containing Sūtras with commentaries.

(vi) The use of dots on the line or short strokes above the line for marking intentional omissions or omissions caused by defects in the original of the copy. It is generally found in Kashmir MSS.

(vii) The use of the mark Avagraha (ॐ) to mark the elision of a (ॐ) after e (े) and o (ॐ). It first appears in the Baroda Copper-plate of the Rāṣṭrakūta king Dhruva, dated A.D. 834-35.

(viii) The use of a Svastika (ॐ) or a Kundala (ॐ) to mark unintelligible passages. These signs were mostly employed in MSS.

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1 Kalsi R.E. XIII, 2, 1. II; Ep. Ind. III., 314, 1. 5.
2 Ep. Ind. III. 52, pl. 2, line 1; Ep. Ind. III, 276, line 11.
3 Ind. Ant. VI., 32, pl. 3.
4 Āpastamba-Dharmasūtra, p. 11 (10).
5 Ind. Ant. VI. 19, note, line 33; 20, note, line 11.
6 Ind. Ant. XIV, 193; Ep. Ind. III, 329; IV. 244, note 7.
7 Kashmir Report, 71; Keilhorn, Mahabharāya, 2, 10 note.
9. **Abbreviations**

Tendency for abbreviation is natural when the same words or phrases occur either in the same document or similar documents for the sake of economy in space and for increase in speed. This tendency is visible sufficiently early in Indian palæography. The inscriptions of the Andhra kings\(^1\) and the Kuśana period\(^2\) furnish a large number of specimens of abbreviations. Later inscriptions and MSS. also contain abbreviations. They may be grouped as follows:

**Words**
- Sanivatsara (year)  ...  Saniva, Savva, Sani or Sa.
- Grīśma or Gimhaṇa (summer)  ...  Gr, Gai, or Gi.
- Hemanta  ...  He
- Divasa  ...  Di
- Śuddha or  (date of the bright)  ...  Su, Su di or Su ti.
- Sukla-pakṣa-dina  (half of the month)  ...  Ba, Va di or ba ti.\(^3\)
- Bahula or Bahula  (date of the dark)  ...  Ba, Va di or ba ti.\(^3\)
- pakṣa-dina  (half of the month)

**Abbreviations.**
- Dvitya (second)  ...  Dvi\(^4\)
- Dūtaka (Messenger or Representative)  ...  Dūk\(^5\)
- Gathā  ...  Ga\(^6\)
- Ślaka  ...  Śla\(^7\)
- Pāda  ...  Pa\(^8\)
- Thakkura  ...  Tha (\(z^0\))\(^9\)

10. **Auspicious Symbols (Maṅgalas) and Ornamentation.**

Auspicious symbols were associated with documents for adding sanctity to, and for insuring the successful completion

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\(^1\) *Nasik Ins.* of Shri Pulumāyi, No. 15; *Kanheri Ins.* of Sirisena or Sakasena Mādhariṃputa, No. 14.

\(^2\) *Sarnath Buddhist Image Inscription of Kaniska*, Ep. Ind. VIII, 173ff; *Ara Stone Inscription of Kaniska II*, Ep. Ind. XIV, 143.

\(^3\) The forms *su ti* and *ba ti* in place of *su di* and *ba di* are found in Kashmir.

\(^4\) *The Khotan Dhammapada MSS.*

\(^5\) and *The Bower MSS.*, pl. II.

\(^6\) *The MS of the Mālavikāgnimitra*, p. V, ed. by S. P. Paṇḍit.
of the deeds contained in them. It was done in consonance with an ancient Indian literary custom which required that at the beginning, in the middle, and at the end of every composition, there should be a benedictory or auspicious word, e.g., Siddham, Om, Sri, Svasti etc.¹ In epigraphical records, however we find mostly symbols in place of words. In ancient Indian paleography the specimens of auspicious symbols are available from the time of Asokan edicts.² In different periods, different types of symbols had predominance and currency. The most important of them are mentioned below:³

(i) Svastika (the widely current auspicious symbol)
(ii) Triratna (an ornamented trident, representing the Three Jewels of Buddhism and Jainism and the trinity of Brahmanism)
(iii) Triratna resting on Dharmanchakra (a trident resting on the Wheel of Religion)
(iiiia) Budha-mangala (a crown-like thing)³a
(iv) Chatiya (representation of a shrine)
(v) Bodhi-Vrikṣa (Bo-tree)⁴
(vi) A large circle with a smaller concentric circle or with one or several dots within it. This sign may be either a conventional representation of Dharma-Chakra or of a lotus.⁵ The use of this sign is found in the text at the end of larger sections and at the end of documents or literary works.

¹ प्रणवप्रासादः निविधतार्थ द्वितार्थपरिप्रासादैं प्रणवादी प्रणवमाये प्रणवादे स मुखः।
² See the facsimiles, Jaugada R.E., Ind. Ant., VI, 88; VII, 163.
⁴ a Háthigumpha Cave Inscription of Khāravela, Ep. Ind. XX, p. 72ff.
⁵ These symbols were national in their character and they were used irrespective of sectarian affiliation.
(vii) The conventional or ornamental forms of letter O of the syllable Om. In later inscriptions they appear very frequently. They are put both at the beginning and at the end of inscriptions and sometimes on the margin of copper plates.¹

(viii) Sculptural pieces attached to inscriptions. Among these the ornamental motifs mainly used are Śaṅkha (conch-shell), Padma (lotus), Nandi (the sacred bull of Śiva Matsya (fish), Suryachakra (sun-wheel), Tārā (star) etc.² Conch-shell and lotus are symbols of prosperity, Nandi of protection, fish of fertility and sun-wheel and star of longevity.

(ix) The royal coat of arms. The use of this sign is rather rare. It is found on the copper-plates, perhaps, in place of a royal seal which was generally provided separately. Some-times such devices are found on stone inscriptions also.³

(x) The Buddhist MSS of Nepal, the Jain MSS of Gujrat and the Brahmanical MSS of Rajasthan, Kashmir, Kangra are highly ornamental and profusely illustrated. They contain religious symbols and floral and mural decorative designs.

11. Seals (Aṅka)

Though the use of seals on royal and official orders, political documents and diplomatic correspondence may have been common in ancient times, they do not seem to have been regarded a legal requisite to grants in the early days of Indian inscriptions. The earliest law-books do not insist on the use of seals on any charter of grants. As a matter of fact the practice of using seals is of a later origin. The first legal authority, which require the use of a seal on a grant-charter is

¹ Fleet: Gupta Ins. (C.I.I., Vol. III, No. 11, pl. 6A; No. 20, pl. 12B, No. 26, pl. 16; Ind. Ant. VI, 32; Ep. Ind. III, 52; the Bower MS., pl. I, pl. 1; Al-Beruni’s India (Sachau), I, 173.
² Bhagwan Lal’s Nepal Ins., Indian Ant. IX, 163 ff.
³ Ep. Ind. III, 307; III, 14; Ind. Ant., VI, 49 ff., 162.
the Vājiravalkya-smṛti (1st or 2nd century A.D.), though the first positive evidence of this type belongs to the fourth century A.D. From the early mediaeval period the use of seals for royal authentication to grants became fairly common. This, however, was true in the case of copper-plates only; stone records had no marks of royal authentication. The absence of authentication marks on stone-charters was, perhaps, due to the fact that the stone-charters had their duplicates on copper-plates to which official seals were attached.

The attachment of seals to the charters followed certain methods and, besides royal authentication, had a certain purpose in view. The majority of grants were incised on more than one coper-plates. In order to keep the plates of a grand together a ring of the same metal was prepared. A hole was made through the proper right side of the plates and then the ring was passed through holes. Ultimately the seal was attached to the ring. The two ends of the ring were riveted or welded together through some process and the seal was cast over the joint. This process of attaching the seal to the charters provided a safeguard against any attempt at forging, additions or substitutes to the original grants, as the original plates could not be separated without breaking the seal, the manufacture of which was an official monopoly.

The royal seals are of various types. The majority of them contain the royal coat of arms, generally the effigies of animals and birds—sacred or symbolic—and of deities worshipped in the royal dynasty concerned. Some of the seals, in addition to such emblems, have a long or a short inscription containing the name of the king or the founder of the dynasty or the whole genealogy of the dynasty. A few of the seals have merely an inscription of some significance. Some important specimens of seals are classified as follows:

(1) The seal of the Guptas. It bore an effigy of the Garuḍa bird, the conveyance of Viṣṇu, and was called 'Garuḍamadanka'. This seal is mentioned in the

1 I. 318.
Allahabad Stone Pillar Inscription of Samudragupta.\(^1\) The spurious Nalanda Copper-plate inscriptions of Samudragupta, dated years 5 and 9, contain this seal which must have been forged on the basis of the original model.\(^2\)

The Bhitari Seal of Kumāragupta II (III?) also possesses an effigy of Garuda, and a legend below it, containing the genealogy of the family.\(^3\) A number of Gupta seals of this type were discovered at Nalanda.\(^4\)

(2) *The seal of the Pusyabhūtis:* No separate seal was attached to the copper-plates, but the autograph of the king was incised at the end of the document. The autograph of Harṣa reads, ‘Svahasto mama Mhīrājādhirāja-Śri Harṣasya’.\(^5\)

(3) *The seal of the Chedis.* It was a circular seal and contained the following: Gajalakṣmī, that is, an effigy of the goddess Lākṣmī with two elephants on two sides, pouring water on her; legend, ‘Śrimatkarṇadevali’; and Nandi (bull)\(^6\)

(4) *The seal of the Paramāras.* On their seal figured the effigy of a Garuda.\(^7\)

(5) *The seals of the Vākāṭakas.*

(i) a round seal with a metrical legend but without any device.\(^8\)

(ii) a seal, bearing the figures of the sun, the moon and a flower at the bottom and with a metrical legend, ‘Vākāṭaka laḷāmasya Kramapraḍaptanpaśriyah Jananyā yuvarājasya śāsanam ripu-śāsanam’\(^9\).

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\(^4\) Memoirs of the Archaeological Survey of India No. 66.
\(^6\) The Goharwa Plates of Karnadeva, Ep. Ind. XI, 139.
\(^7\) Indian Antiquary VI, pp. 48ff.
\(^9\) The Poona Plate of Prabhāvatigupta, Ep. Ind. XV, 41.
(6) The seal of the Traikutakas and the Kaṭaccūris. Their seal is round with a legend containing the name of the ruler, for instance ‘Alla-Sakti’.¹

(7) The seals of the Chālukyas of Badami.
   (i) circular or oval seal bearing the representation of a boar (varāha), without any legend.²
   (ii) the seals of the governors and feudatories of the Chālukyas contain the figure of a boar and a legend both.³

(8) The seals of the Raṭṭakūtas.
   (i) a seal with a figure of winged and cross-legged Garuḍa.⁴
   (ii) a seal with a figure of Garuḍa and floral designs.⁵
   (iii) a seal with the figure of a Garuḍa with a snake in each of its paws, figures of Gaṇapati and Pārvati and representations of chaūri, lamp, svas-lika, liṅga and ankuṣa.⁶

(9) The seals of the Chālukyas of Kalyāṇa.
   (i) a seal of the type of the early Chālukyas of Badami,
   (ii) a circular seal, bearing the effigy of a boar, with a legend in the Nāgri characters, ‘Srimad-Ariketarinali’.⁷

(10). The seals of the feudatories of the Chālukyas.⁸
   (i) The Kadambas of Goa had a seal, bearing the device of the lion.
   (ii) The Raṭṭas of Saundatti had the effigy of an elephant on their seal.
   (iii) The Raṭṭas of Sindas adopted a seal on which a tiger or a tiger with a deer figured.

¹ QBISM, XX.
² Lüders, H., A List of Brāhma Ins. etc. Nos. 12, 17, 39, 48.
³ Ibid. Nos. 11, 32.
⁴ Ibid. Nos. 92, 133.
⁵ Ibid. Nos. 97, 107.
⁶ Ibid. Nos. 133, 147.
⁷ Ibid. No. 369.
⁸ B.G., 1. 2. 299 note 4.
(iv) The Gupta of Guttal preferred a lion on their seal.

(11) The seal of the Yadavas and the Silaharas. They followed the pattern of the Rashtrakutas and had the device of a Garuda on their seal and banner.¹

(12) The seal of the Pallavas. It bore the effigy of a tiger couchant and facing to the right.²

(13) The seal of the Eastern Chalukyas. It had the device of a boar; below it the legend—'Trihuvanāṅkusa'; in upper portion of the seal the devices of the crescent, the sun and a goad; below the representation of a flower.³

(14) The seal of the Cholas. In the centre of the seal figures the device of a boar; above the device there was the legend; above the legend the devices of the moon and a goad; below the boar two lamps on right and left with a lotus flower in between; on the sides of the boar flowers and a conch-shell.⁴

¹ List. Nos. 198, 200, 232.
² Indian Antiquary, V. plate opposite p. 50.
³ Ibid. Vol. VI, pp. 48 ff.
⁴ Burnell, S.I.P. Pl. XXXIII facing p. 106.
CHAPTER VIII

TYPES OF RECORDS.

1. Main Types.

Broadly speaking there were two types of records or documents—(1) royal or official and (2) private or individual. The ancient inscriptions of India can be grouped under these heads. The later treatises on Dharmaśāstra also corroborate this classification. For instance, Vasiṣṭha quoted in the Smṛti-
chandrikā says, “Records are of two varieties, Lankikāṁ (belong-
ing to the people) and Rājakīyāṁ (royal or official).”¹ Some
writers quoted as Saṅgrahakārās agree with Vasiṣṭha and divide
records under two heads—(1) Rājakīyāṁ (royal or official) and
Jānapadām (pertaining to the people).² Royal records were
issued either by kings themselves or by their vassals, provin-
cial governors and high ministers, who had necessary authority
to do so. For private records common people were responsi-
ble, though in many respect they imitated the royal records.
Royal records were further divided into four classes:³

1. Śasanāṁ (writ, edict or instruction; in mediaeval times
   it was used in the sense of a land-grant),
2. Jayapatram (legal decision)
3. Ājñāpatram (order) and
4. Prajñāpanam (proclamation).

2. Types on the Basis of the Dharmaśāstras.

On the basis of the Dharmaśāstra literature these four
classes can be defined and explained as follows:

¹ लोकिक राजकीय च लेख्यं विचारु विक्ष्यात हि च फैस्लनामण् । Vyavahāra, I. 14.
² राजकीयं जानवदं लिखितं विविधं स्मृतम् । Ibid.
³ शासनं प्रथमं लेख्यं जयकर्ते तथा परम् ।
   वाजावस्थापनं राजकीयं चतुर्विषयम् ॥
   Vasiṣṭha, Smṛti-chandrikā, Vyavahāra, I. 14
(1) Sāsanam. In the Yājñavalkya Smṛti we get the following definition of a Sāsanam:

"Having given a plot of land or made a permanent edowment the king should cause a record to be prepared for the information of the future good kings. The king should further cause a permanent writ to be made on a piece of cloth or copper-plate impressed with his seal and autograph and containing his genealogy, personal eulogy, the name of the donee, the quantity of the gift, the boundaries of the plot and the date of the deed."\(^1\)

(2) Jayapatram. It is explained: "Having himself gone through the legal procedure and listened to the expounder of law, the king should issue a legal decision for public information."\(^2\)

(3) Ajñāpatram. Vasiṣṭha defines it as "That is Ajñāpatram through which order is sent to Sāmantas (vassals), high officials of the state, e.g. provincial governors etc."\(^3\)

(4) Prajñāpanam. The same authority defines it as "That is Prajñāpanam through which a deed is proclaimed to the Rtvik (sacrificial priest), the Purohita (minister in charge of the religious department of the state, the Āchārya (preceptor), the Mānyas (respectable persons), and the Abhyārhitas (persons entitled or concerned)."\(^4\)

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1 दत्तो भूमि निबत्ते वा हृद्वा शेषं तु कारवेत् ।
   आगामेनुपतिपरिज्ञानाय पार्थिवः ॥
   पदे वा लामपदे वा स्वमूद्रपरिविष्टतम् ॥
   अभिलेखयात्मानो बंस्यानात्मान च महीपति: ॥
   प्रतिप्रहुर्परिणामं दानस्थितेपवर्णनम् ॥
   स्वहस्तकलासम्पन्न सासान कार्येत् सिद्धाम् ॥ I. 317-19.

2 व्यवहारानुं स्वयं दृष्ट्वा शुल्का आद्विवाकत: ।
   जयमण्ड ततौ द्याति परिज्ञानाय पार्थिवः ॥ Vyāsa,Smṛti-Chandrika, Vyavahāra, I. 14.

3 सामान्यवाच भूमेयु प्राच्यवाचविवद्धेव् वा ।
   कार्यमार्गिते येन तदायकम्युक्ते ॥ ibid.

4 अविविवेदनाहारायामार्यायाम्यबः ।
   कार्य निबेद्यात् येन पवं निरापदाय तत् ॥ ibid.
Under royal or official records Brhaspati includes Prasādalekhyā (document recording something given by the king out of satisfaction with a person). It is defined as “where the king, having been satisfied with the service or heroic deed of a person, makes territorial or some other kind of gift through writing, that is Prasādalekhyā.”

The Jānapadaṁ (private) records are described by Vyāsa in the following words: “The writer of a well-known place should write a private document, mentioning royal genealogy, year, month, fortnight and day.” It was this type of prescription which made the private documents of political importance and helpful in the reconstruction of dynastic history. Private documents were concerned with various types of transactions. The Smṛti authorities required fixed forms specially for contractual and monetary transactions. Yājñavalkya lays down: “Whatever matter is decided by mutual consent that should be recorded with the names of the witnesses and that of the Dhanika (lender of money)”.

It should be observed here that the available specimens of ancient Indian inscriptions in their earlier period helped the evolution of the Smṛtic rules regarding the forms of documents and later on where influenced by these rules. It can be verified, to a great extent, by comparing the styles and contents of the existing inscriptions with rules given in the Smṛtis.

3. Types on the Basis of the Contents of Inscriptions.

If we analyse the contents of inscriptions they are capable of grouping under the following heads:

(i) Commercial
(ii) Magical

1 देशादित्वं यथ राजा लिखितेन प्रयज्जति।
   सेवाशीर्षाविना तुष्टः प्रसादलितं हि तत्। ibid.

2 निलाला जान्यं नेत्यान्य प्रसिद्धमणलेखकः।
   राजवेशांनमुं वर्षामार्गवासेः। ibid.

3 य: कवित्वंदेव निष्णात: स्वर्ण्या पर्याप्तम्।
   लेखते तु साक्षिमत् कार्य तस्माद धनिकपूर्वकम्। Vyavahāra, VI. 84.
(iii) Religious and Didactic
(iv) Administrative
(v) Eulogistic
(vi) Votive or Dedicative
(vii) Donative
(viii) Commemorative
(ix) Literary.

(1) Commercial. The earliest specimens of this type are found on seals discovered in the Indus Valley at Harappa and Mohenjodaro. Some of the seals were evidently used for stamping the bales of merchandise and individual mercantile commodities like potteries. It is possible that the shorter inscriptions (on the seals) are simply the owner’s name and the longer ones include titles that the owner of the seal happen to possess. It seems that these seals were used by sea-faring traders engaged in foreign trades. The periods of Indian history subsequent to the Indus Valley Civilization have not yielded so far specimens of commercial seals or any extensive record of commercial nature. It should be observed in this connection that the Nigamas and the Srenis (commercial corporations) had the power of minting their coins and they must have possessed their seals also, and must have an extensive use of writing for their commercial purposes, though such commercial records on perishable materials could not survive and they were, perhaps, not regarded worthy of preservation for a long time. Accidentally some records of commercial nature can be found embedded in the inscriptions of other types. For instance, a few lines of commercial intent find their place in the Mandasore Stone Inscription of the time of Kumāragupta and Bandhu-varman, dated Malava Era 529. These lines can be translated as follows: "A woman, though endowed with youth and beauty (and) adorned with the arrangement of golden necklaces and betel-leaves and flowers, does not go to

2 Ibid., p. 381.
3 Cf. The tribal coinage of the Punjab, Rajasthana and Madhya Bharāta, Allan, British Museum Catalogues, Ancient India.
meet her lover in a secret place, until she has put on a pair of coloured silken cloths. So, the whole of this region of the earth is adorned through them, as if with a silken garment, agreeable to touch, variegated with divisions of different colours and pleasing to the eyeses."¹ They contain an elegant and attractive piece of advertisement.

(2) *Magical.* The Indus Valley furnishes the earliest specimens of this type also. Many of the so-called seals were really speaking amulets containing magical formulae on them. "That the impressions on baked clay and faience were regarded as talismatic seems likely, though they also have been ex-votos. One tablet stamped with a seal impression is pierced with a very roughly made holes (Pl. CXVI,1), with evident purpose of securing it to something, possibly to the clothing. Moreover, all of the tablets which are stamped on one side only have smooth backs, which shows that they had never adhered to any thing and, therefore, were not labels for merchandise. Again, many of the objects impressed with seal-impressions were inscribed on more than one side, which would be suitable in an amulet but could serve no other purpose. Also some were coated with a red slip, which is never present and would be useless on sealings."² As the seals are not deciphered as yet, it is difficult to be sure about the contents of the inscriptions. The inscriptions very likely contain the names of, and invocations to, the deities represented by the animals peculiar to their sects, on the seals. The following animals generally figure on the amulets and they may represent deities mentioned against them;³

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Antelope</th>
<th>Moon</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Buffalo</td>
<td>Yama</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

¹ ताराज्यांकान्तुपणतिकोपि सुवर्णहरतामूलकुण्डाविभिन्नसम्भंकुतोषिः।
| तारींको व्रीमापूर्वीति न तावद्वया यायस्य पद्धवियस्यस्य निबंधते।
| स्पर्शता वर्णालरविभाविकिणिः नेत्रसमुदगेऽ।
| ये: सक्तकिंद्र विनिर्लकालिकहि पद्धवियस्य॥ Fleet C.I.L. Vol III, No. 18
| Verses 20-21.


³ Ibid., p. 399.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Animal</th>
<th>Symbol</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brahmi-bull</td>
<td>Siva</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Composit animal</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elephant</td>
<td>Indra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goat</td>
<td>Brahmana (?)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hare</td>
<td>Moon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human figure</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monkey</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rhinoceros</td>
<td>River</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short-horned bull</td>
<td>Siva</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tiger</td>
<td>Goddess Durgā (?) (= Mother-goddess)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Two-headed animal | X

Magical formulae continued to be written on metals as well as on birch-bark (Bhrujapatra) and other perishable materials.

(3) Religious and Didactic. This type includes all those inscriptions, which deal with the statement, the position and the preaching of religion or morality. It is very likely that some of the so-called seals and tablets discovered in the Indus valley at Harappa and Mohenjodaro were objects of worship, containing religious formulae of various sects, and they were not used as amulets carried with person. The next set of inscriptions of this type are found in the religious edicts (Dhamma-lipi) of Asoka belonging to the third century B.C. In the edicts of Asoka these inscriptions are definitely called ‘Dhamma-lipi’ or religious records. The religious and didactic nature of Asoka’s edicts will be borne out by the following extract from his Rock Edict No. IV: "As has not happened for many hundred years before, have now increased, through king Priyadarshi, Beloved of the gods, instruction in Dhamma (religion), abstention from the slaughter of animate beings, abstention from injury to creatures, seemly behaviour to relatives, seemly behaviour to the Brāhmaṇas and the Śramaṇas, hearkening to father and mother, hearkening to the elders.

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The practice of Dhamma of this and other manifold kinds has grown, and king Priyadarśi, Beloved of the gods, will (still more) cause this practice of Dhamma to grow. The sons, grandsons, and great-grandsons of king Priyadarśi will cause the practice of Dhamma to grow until the aeon of destruction (and) abiding in Dhamma and virtuous conduct, will give instruction in Dhamma and virtuous conduct; for the most excellent act is instruction in Dhamma...  

The Besanagar Garuḍa-Pillar Inscriptions of the time of Bhāgabhadra, one of the later Śunga kings, though votive in character, contains a moral precept in the second part of it: "There are three immortal paths (and), if properly followed here, they lead to the heaven; (these are) self-control, renunciation and freedom from carelessness."  

In the subsequent periods of Indian history we find very few inscriptions of pure religious and moral character; religious and moral contents are found mixed up with votive or donative materials. For instance, in the Mandasore Stone Inscription of the time of Kumāragupta II, dated Mālava Era 493 and 529, a didactic and philosophical note is struck in the following lines: "Having reflected that the world is very unsteady, like the moving by wind of the charming sprout and ear ornaments, of the Vidyādhāris; and similarly the life of a man and also the vast stores of wealth, their mind became steady and inclined towards virtue."  

(4) Administrative: The first set of inscriptions belonging to this type are found among the edicts of Asoka, though they...
were written under the influence of religion and morality. A few extracts will suffice to illustrate it:

"Everywhere in my dominions the Yuktas, the Rajjukas and the Prádeśikas shall proceed on circuit every five years as well for this purpose (for the instruction of Dhamma) as for other business...." \(^1\)

"Now, for a long time past previously, there were no Dhamma Mahámátras. They were created by me when I had been consecrated thirteen years. They have been set to work among all sects for the establishment of Dhamma, promotion of Dhamma, and for the welfare and happiness of the righteous." \(^2\)

"This, therefore, I have done, namely, that at all hours and in all place,—whether I am eating or am in the closed (female) apartments, in the inner chamber, in the royal stables, on horseback or in pleasure orchards, the Reporters may report peoples' business to me. Peoples' business I do at all places. And when in respect of any thing that I personally order by word of mouth for being issued or proclaimed, or, again, (if) in respect of any emergent work that may superimpose itself on the Mahámátras, there is any division or rejection in the council, I have so commanded that it shall be forthwith communicated to me at all places and at all hours." \(^3\)

"By command of the Beloved of gods, the Mahámátras of Tosal (or Samāpa) who are the City Judiciaries should be addressed thus: Whatever I perceive (with the mind), I desire—what?—that I put it into action; and I initiate it through the proper means. And I deem this to be the principal means to the end, namely, instructions to you.

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\(^1\) मया इर्द्व आन्विकः—सत्तं विजिते मम युता च राजुके च प्रादेशिके च पंचसु पंचसु बारासु अनुसारावन निर्गातु | \textit{Aṣokan R.E. III.}

\(^2\) अतिकर्त्तं अन्तर्र न भूमूर्खं चंतंमहामात्रा नाम | त मया तैदसवासाभिषित्व मधुप्रभु खाणां भागाचिन्तनाय चंतं प्रभु महामात्रा कवल। ते सत्यसंहीत्या भाष्यते धामाचिन्तनाय चंतंबंडिया हिंदु सुलाय चा चंतंयतुसा। \textit{Aṣokan R.E. V.}

\(^3\) त मया एवं कदाति। सवः काले मूखमात्र मे—पत्रिबेदका सिद्धता अथे मे जनस परिवेदेय इति | \textit{Aṣokan R.E. VI.}
You have indeed been set over many thousands of lives in order that we may gain the affection of good men."¹

An example of pure administrative inscriptions is found in the Sohagaura Copper-plate Inscription of the third century B.C.:

"The order of the Mahamatras of Sravasti from Mānavāśitikātu (a place name). In the auspicious village of Usāgrāma two granaries have been established. During famines and other adverse circumstances grains (from these) should be distributed in the villages, namely, Trikavāṇi, Māthura, Chañchu, Mayudāma and Bhallaka. This (distribution) should not be obstructed."²

Another instance of this type may be found in the Junagarh Rock Inscription of Rudradāman I, dated 150 A.D., though it is highly overlaid with eulogistic and commemorative elements. It deals with the restoration of the bund of a lake called Sudarsana, which was breached by a violent cyclone accompanied with a huge flood.³ The Junagrah Rock Inscription of Skandagupta, dated 455-56 and 457-58 A.D.⁴, also belongs to this type and resembles the inscription of Rudradāman in details. Its main theme is the restoration of the Sudarsana lake, which was breached for the second time by excessive rains. The relevant portions of this inscription read as follows:

"Now when in course of time the season of clouds set in, tearing up the hot season by means of clouds, vast quantity of water rained down unceasingly for a long time, by reason of which the lake Sudarsana suddenly burst on the sixth day, at night of the month Prausthapada in a century of years increased by thirty and also six

¹ द्वारा रूप सच्चन तीसरी समागम महामात नागलियोहवाल्कम हैं बक बिव...
Separate Kalinga Edicts Asoka, No. 1.

² सच्चन महामात नागर्म रवियासवति-हड़। सिलिमोत-उसमे व एते कोठागान्नि।
वियमों-मायुल-तचु-मोदम-सिलिम वटकिय यति ब्रह्मायापिकाय। नो महितवय।

³ सच्चन कोषान महाद धरीश्वन अन्तिमहता च कोजन्... मुदवंतरे कलिमिति।

more according to the calculation of the Gupta era.” verses 26-27.

“...Acting in a respectable way and making an immeasurable expenditure of wealth, built after great efforts in a period of two months on the first day of the first half of the month of Vaisākha in the year 137, the celebrated lake Sudarsāna, not contaminated by nature, hundred cubits in length, sixty-eight cubits in breadth and seven puruṣas (man’s height) in depth and two hundred cubits (in diametre?) with well set stones so that it may last for eternal time.”—verses 35-37.

Besides, there is a large number of subsequent copper-plate inscriptions, found in the north and the south and donative in purpose, which are called Sātanās (royal writs) and contain substantial administrative materials. For instance, the following relevant portion from the Banskhera Copper-plate Inscription of Harṣa will corroborate this statement:

“Harṣa...issues commands to the vassal kings, police officers, officer in charge of land survey, the representative of the king, the prince councellor, the overseer, the district magistrate and the collector, the regular and the irregular soldiery, servants and others and the inhabitants that have assembled at Markatāsāgara, situated in the western Pathaka of the Angadīya district in the Abhichhatra province:

Be it know to you that...there is granted by me the above mentioned village with its own boundaries, land tax, all taxes accruing to the royal family,immunites; with its area separated from the district; to be enjoyed by sons and grand-sons; lasting as long as the moon, the sun and the earth do; in accordance with the custom

1 अयो कोभयाकार्ण अगले निर्देशकलाल प्रविलायार्थ तौसये: ।
बवर्य तौसय वहृतात्य चिरे गुण्यवते धन विभेद चालवायु ॥
सम्बुसीत्रानात्यानिते शाले तु विशदि दव्यरिणः पतितिरेष ।
रायो हिन्दु प्रदृश्यमय तद्तो गुणप्रकार्लु गणनार्थ विभाग ॥ Ibid.

8 Ibid.
known as Bhumichhidra-nyāya to Bhaṭṭa Bālachandra and Bhadracīvāmi in consonance with the rules of formal acceptance and complete gift; It should be respected by you, and by the residents (of the village), in an obedient manner, should be paid to them all revenue arising from weighing, measuring, regular taxation, taxation for the personal enjoyment of the king, gold etc.: They should also serve and honour them.”

Similarly the Basīm Copper-plate Inscription of Vindhyasakti II, the Poona Copper-plate Inscription of Prabhāvatiguptā, the Hirahaḍagallī Copper-plate Inscriptions of Śivaskandavarman possess a sufficient amount of administrative details.

(5) Eulogistic. Inscriptions dealing with eulogy (Praśasti) form the most important type from the political point of view, as generally they furnish the following items of information:

(i) The name and the genealogy of the ruler concerned
(ii) The early career of the king.
(iii) His military, political and administrative achievements.
(iv) The existence of contemporary states coming into contact with him and the inter-state relation.
(v) Political ideal and practices; administrative system.
(vi) The personal accomplishments of the king.
(vii) His patronage, munificence and charity.
(viii) Mythological or Puranic allusions by way of comparison and similes.

1 Śriharat...Samputatāmahāśāmaṇaḥ...Madaraja...Dīśasvarṣa...Śārīrakṣa...Pradāvatā...Mamāpatiḥ-Praśasti...Śrīharṣa...Samputatāmahāśa...Śārīrakṣa...Pradāvatā...Mamāpatiḥ
2 Ep. Ind. IV, p. 208.
3 Indian Hist. Quart. XVI, p. 182 ff.
5 Ep. Ind., 1, p. 5 ff.
The one common defect, from which eulogistic inscriptions suffer, is their tendency to exaggerate the achievements of the king. Exaggeration are, however, found mostly in the general statements; specific statements are comparatively sober and realistic.

Eulogistic inscriptions can further be sub-divided into two groups—(1) pure eulogy and (2) mixed with other types. The edicts of Aśoka, which describe his Dhamma-vijaya (conquest through piety), form a category by themselves. They have all the important elements of an eulogy, but they lack in motive, style and vigour necessary for it. Here the motive is not self-glorification but the vindication and statement of piety to be understood and followed by others; style is a matter of fact, very often prosaic and sometimes dull; calmness of temper eliminates vigour which marks the later eulogy of militant kings. The Thirteenth Rock Edict of Aśoka¹ will fully illustrate this point:

“The country of Kalinga was conquered when king Priyadarśin, Beloved of the gods, had been anointed eight years. One hundred and fifty thousand were therefrom captured, one hundred thousand were there slain, and many times as many died...This is the remorse of the Beloved of the gods on having conquered Kalinga...But this conquest is considered to be the chiefest by the Beloved of the gods, which is conquest through Dhamma. And that again has been achieved by the Beloved of the gods here and in the bordering dominions even as far as six hundred yojanas...And this edict of Dhamma has been recorded for this purpose.—Why?—in order that my sons and grandsons, whoever they may be, may not think of a new conquest as worth achieving,...they may observe forbearance and lightness of punishment, and that they may regard that to be the real conquest which is a conquest through Dhamma. That is good for this world and the next. May all their strong attachment be attachment to exertion. That is good for this world and the next”.

¹ Hultzsch, C. I. I. Vol. I.
The first specimen of a pure eulogy is found in the Hathigumpha inscription of Khāravela. It is a unique document, which describes exhaustively and in glowing terms the achievements of Khāravela in a perfect chronological order. The following analysis of this inscription will reveal what an eulogy (prāasti) intended to be:

(i) The auspicious symbols—Buddhamangala and Svastika—on the upper left corner of the inscription.

(ii) Salutation to the arhatas and the siddhas.

(iii) The original stock of Khāravela, Aīla; his royal title, mahārāja; his epithet, mahāmeghavāhana; his dynastic epithet, chetirāja-vasa-vardhana; his territorial sovereign title, Kalingadhipati; his personal name Śrī Khāravela.

(iv) The early career of Khāravela up to the fifteenth year of his age, full of games and sports.

(v) His education in different branches of learning lasting for the next nine years.

(vi) The coronation of Khāravela in the twenty-fourth year of his age.

(vii) In the first year of his reign, he undertook restoration of damaged buildings, constructions of ponds and lakes, plantation of gardens and recreation of the subjects.

(viii) In the second year of his reign Kharavela sent a huge army towards the west in defiance of Sātakarnī and threatened Asikanagara on the bank of the Kṛṣṇā river.

(ix) In the third year of his reign, he arranged for social festivities for the recreation of the citizens of his capital.

(x) In the fourth year of his reign, he entered the old royal palace of Kaliṅga, Vidyādharādhivāsa and subdued the Rathikas and the Bhojakas.

(xi) In the fifth year he caused an aqueduct enter the city, which was originally constructed in 300 Nanda Era.

(xii) In the sixth year he performed the Rājasūya sacrifice followed by charity and beneficence to the people.
(xiii) In the seventh year he controlled certain potentates.
(viv) In the eighth year, having captured Goratha-giri, he attacked Rājagṛha and forced the Greek king Diynmeta to fall back upon Mathura. To celebrate his victory he offered sumptuous gifts to the Brāhmaṇas.
(xv) In the ninth year he built the palace, Mahāvijaya-prāṣada at the cost of thirty-eight lacs of coins.
(xvi) In the tenth year he launched upon the conquest of Bhārata-varṣa.
(xvii) In the eleventh year he took away the riches of the subdued kings and raised the palace of Pithunda to the ground. He also broke the confederacy of the Tramira (Dravida) country.
(xviii) In the twelfth year, frightening the kings of Uttarāpatha (northern India) and causing great fear to the Magadhās he made his elephants drink the waters of the Gaṅgā. He compelled the Magadha king Bahasatimittra to bow down at his feet, took back the Jina-image which had been carried away by Nandarāja and looted the wealth of Aṅga and Magadha. He also subdued the Pāṇḍya king.
(xix) In the thirteenth year for the residence of the Jain ascetics he excavated cave-dwellings at Kumāri-parvata and decorated them gorgeously.
(xx) Śri Kharavela was the king of auspiciousness, the king of prosperity, the king among the Bhikṣus, the king of piety, the seer, listener and realiser of good, endowed with special virtues, the worshipper of all religious sects, the respecter of all religious shrines, the possessor of army which was never daunted, the wielder of discus, whose dominions were well-protected, whose reign was fully established, who was born in the family of the royal sages and who was the performer of great victories.
(xxı) Kālpa-taru on the right-hand lower corner.
Another specimen of a pure eulogy is the Allahabad Pillar Inscription of Samudragupta, which set a model for the subsequent eulogies of the great rulers in ancient India. Its contents can be analysed as follows:

(i) Some early military exploits of Samudragupta.
(ii) The literary attainments of the king.
(iii) The selection of Samudragupta as the crown-prince to succeed his father.
(iv) The heroic and superhuman activities—military and political—of Samudragupta, which induced and compelled other kings to submit.
(v) The victory of Samudragupta over the Nāga princes Achyuta, Nāgasena, Gaṇapatināga etc. in the first war of Aryāvarta.
(vi) The capture of Pātaliputra and the uprooting of the Kota family by Samudragupta.
(vii) The religious and literary activities of the king.
(viii) The viruda (epithet) of the king, Parākramānka.
(ix) The military qualities of the king.
(x) The conquest of Daksināpatha and the policy of a Dharma-vijaya (subjugationist) followed by Samudragupta.
(xi) The second war of Aryāvarta and the policy of an Asura-vijaya (annexationist) followed by Samudragupta.
(xii) The subjugation of the kings of the forest regions (in the Vindhya ranges).
(xiii) The subjugation of the frontier kings toward N. E.
(xiv) The subjugation of the frontier republican peoples towards S.W.
(xv) The re-instatement of the fallen dynasties.
(xvi) The subordinate alliance of the Saka-Kuṣāṇas in the extreme N.W. of India with Samudragupta.

(xvii) The subordinate alliance of the peoples of Ceylon and other islands in the Indian ocean with Samudragupta.

(xviii) The unrivalled paramountcy of Samudragupta.

(xix) The virtuous deeds of Samudragupta.

(xx) His functional comparison with gods—Dhanada, Varma, Indra and Antaka (Yama).

(xxi) His efficient administration through his officers.

(xxii) His excellence in the art of music.

(xxiii) His high literary attainments and his title Kaviraja.

(xxiv) Samudragupta as the shelter of the world.

(xxv) The genealogy of the Gupta dynasty from Sri-Gupta to Samudragupta. The royal title Maharatudhiraja for Samudragupta.

(xxvi) The erection of Victory Pillar which is compared with an arm of the earth proclaiming the fame of Samudragupta.

(xxvii) The fame of Samudragupta spread over the three worlds.

(xxviii) The prasasti (eulogy) is called a Kanya (poetic composition).

(xxix) The author of eulogy Harišena, who was Sāndhivigrha-hika (Minister for Peace and War), Kumāramātya (an official enjoying the status of a prince) and Mahādaṇḍanāyaka (Commander-in-chief of Army) and the son of Mahādaṇḍanāyaka Dhruvabhuti.

(XXX) Tilabhattra, the executor of the document.

(XXXI) The wish that the prasasti (eulogy) may be for the happiness and welfare of all beings.

The number of mixed eulogies is legion. Every possible occasion for writing a permanent document was used for immortalising the glories of the contemporary rulers and their ancestors. Every official record—donative, dedicative or commemorative—and almost every private record of the same types contained the eulogy of the reigning sovereign. The latter also contained
the eulogy of persons responsible for documents and deeds. The most important specimens of mixed eulogy are found in the Nasik cave Inscription of Uṣavadāta, the Junagarh Rock Inscription of Rudradāman I, the Nasik Cave Inscription of Gautamī Balaśrī, the Nagarjunikonda Inscriptions of Vira- puruṣadatta, the Mehrauli Iron Pillar Inscription of Chandra, the Mandasor Stone Inscription of the time of Kumāragupta II and Bandhuvarman, the Junagarh Rock Inscription of Skandagupta, the Bhitari Stone Pillar Inscription of Skandagupta, the Mandasor Stone Pillar Inscription of Yaśodharman, the Harha Stone Inscription of Iśānavarman, the Aihole Stone Inscription of the time of Pulikeśin II, the Talagunda Stone Pillar Inscription of the time of Sāntivarman etc.

(6) Votive or Dedicative. Indian palæography is as rich in the votive or dedicative type of inscriptions as in eulogy. It is not unlikely that some of the tablets found at Harappa and Mohenjodaro contain votive inscriptions. The first deciphered example of this type is found in the short Piprahwa Buddhist Vase Inscription which records the dedication of the relic casket of Lord Buddha:

"This relic-casket of Lord Buddha dedicated by the Sākya brethren of the Famed One, with their sisters, sons and wives."

3 Ibid. Vol. VIII, p. 60ff.
6 Ibid. No. 14.
7 Ibid. No. 14.
9 Ibid. No. 33.
14 मुक्तिकरणम् समगिनिकन् सनुषदलन्।
ि प्र सलिलनिधने वृषस भगवते सकियान।। Ind. Ant., XXXVI, 117ff.
A more evolved specimen of this type is the Besnagar Garuda Pillar Inscription of Heliodoros. All the rudiments of a full-fledged dedicative or votive inscription are present in it. The following analysis of its contents will bear it out:

(i) The name and epithet of the deity (devadevasa Vāśudevasa) to whom the pillar was dedicated.

(ii) The type (garuda-dhruja) and the erection of the pillar.

(iii) The person responsible for it (Heliodoros), with his epithet (Bhāgavata), with the name of his father (Dion), with his residence (Takṣasīla), his status and designation (Yavana-duta = Greek ambassador) and the name of the king (Antialkidos) whom he represented.

(iv) The name of the king (Bhāgabhadrā) ruling over the area, with his mother’s name (Kautsi), with his royal title (mahārajā) and epithet (trātā = protector).

(v) The regnal year of the victorious reign 14 (Vasena chatudasa rajen vathamānasa).

(vi) A moral saying.

Dedicative inscriptions mainly deal with the installation of images and the erection of temples. One of the most developed form of the dedicative type is to be found in the Mandasor Inscription of the time of Kumāragupta II and Bandhuvarman. Its contents are as follows:

(i) The first three invocatory stanzas in salutation to the god Sun.

1. devadevas vāśudevasa gurudevaḥ aparā kaśitarat ēva ṛjetṛīyo vīrāroṣeṇa bhag—

vaset eva visvapuruṣeṇa tavarṣaśilakence

yonaḥṣen bhagten maharajṣa

abhradikṣeṇa upatyā sakaśaṁ raṁ

kṣiṣipuruṣa bhagbhṛtṛ śataśas

vaset eva yonaḥṣen raṇeṇa ṛṣapameṇa II

śrīnī muniṣupadavi ṛṣeṇu mū ṛṣ ṛṣṭiṣṭam

nemānti śvaro ṛṣeṇa caṇā bṛhatmatha II


(ii) The description of the country Lāṭa where the guild of weavers migrated from.

(iii) The attraction of the town Daśapūra where the guild came from Lāṭa.

(iv) The description of the town Daśapūra under (a) the town as the crest-jewel of the world, (b) its lakes, (c) its gardens, (d) its houses and (e) inhabitants, belonging to various professions and of excellent characters.

(v) The eulogy of the members of the guild.

(vi) Advertisment of the cloth manufactured by the guild.

(vii) The realisation of the transitoriness of the world and its manifold possessions.

(viii) Reference to the reigning king Kumāragupta ruling over the earth.

(ix) Reference to the provincial governors Viśvavarman and his son Bandhuvarman.

(x) The eulogies of the two.

(xi) The erection of the sun temple by the guild of the weavers at the cost of a huge sum.

(xii) The appreciation of the temple.

(xiii) The description of the season (hemanta=winter) when the temple was erected.

(xiv) The era (Mālava), the year (493), season (saryaghana-
stane=winter), month (sahasya=pauṣa), fortnight (bright) and the date (thirteenth).

(xv) The consecration of the temple through proper ceremonies (mangalāchāra-vidhinā).

(xvi) The delapidation of one portion of the temple.

(xvii) The restoration of the temple.

(xviii) The description of the restored temple.

(xix) The year, the month, the fortnight and the date of restoration.

(xx) The description of the season (vasanta=spring) of restoration.

(xxi) The beautification of the town by the temple.
The wish for the long life of the temple.
The composition of the document by Vatsabhatti.
Wishing auspiciousness to the engraver, the writer and the reader.
The auspicious formula 'Siddhirastu'.

There is a very large number of dedicatory inscriptions discovered from the different parts of the country. The most of them follow the style set up by the above detailed inscription. Some of them, however, contain more detailed genealogy and political achievements of the reigning sovereigns, verging on almost eulogy. The best specimens of the latter variety are the Bhitari Pillar Inscription of Skandagupta\(^1\) and the Aihole Inscription of the time of Pulikeśin II\(^2\).

(7) Donative. The largest number of inscriptions belong to this type. The performance of sacrifices (\(iṣṭa=\text{yajna}\)) and the distribution of charity (\(pūrta\)) were regarded essential for a householder in ancient India. Hence rulers and subjects all vied with one another in giving donations and in recording them, if they were of permanent nature. On the basis of objects donated the inscriptions of this type can be classified under the following heads:

(a) Inscriptions recording the donation of caves or any of its parts for residential and other purposes of monks and ascetics.

(i) Excavation of full caves which were called \(kūbhā = (\text{guhā}), \text{lena} (= \text{layana})\) and \(\text{selaghara} (= \text{tailagrha})\). The earliest specimens of cave-donating inscriptions are those of Aśoka found in Barabar Hills of Bihar. The first of them reads as follows:

"The Banyan Cave was given to the Ājīvikas by king Priyadarsī when he had been anointed twelve years\(^3\)."

\(^3\) लाजिना पियदरिषिना हुवाहसवसाभिसिनेनाः।
हयं निगोहकुष्ठा दिना आजीविकेषिहि॥ Hultzsch, C.I.I. Vol. I.
TYPES OF RECORDS

It is a very simple document recording the mere fact of donation. The Nagarjuni Cave Inscriptions of Daśaratha, the grand-son of Aśoka, are a bit bigger and contain some additional elements of donative inscriptions:

"Vāhiyaka caves were formally donated by Daśaratha, the Beloved of gods, after he was consecrated to the throne, to the respectable Ājivikas for residence to last as long as the moon and the sun."1

The Western Deccan is very rich in cave-donative inscriptions belonging to the Kṣaharātā and the Āndhra-Sātavāhana dynasties. The caves at the Udayagiri and the Khandagiri in Orissa and at Ajanta and Elora near Aurangabad have also preserved donative inscriptions of different varieties and dimensions dealing with:

(ii) Excavation of two or more residential cells called bigabha (two-celled), chatugabha (four-celled), panchagabha (five-celled) etc.2

(iii) Donations of Chaitya-caves or worship-halls known as Chetlya-ghara, chaitya, chetia-kothi etc.3

(iv) Donations of assembly-halls (metapas = maṇḍapas), dining-halls (bhujana-sālās or bhujana-maṭapas), reception halls (Upathāna = upasthāna-sālās) etc.4

(v) Donations of water-eisterns, tanks, wells etc. called pāniyaka, pāniya-bhājana, vāpi, taḍāka etc.5

(vi) Donations of the frontages of caves (ghara-mukha, gabhadāra etc.)6

1 वाहियका कुमा दपस्लेयक देवार पियेना आन्तलियै अभिविलेन आजीविकेहि मयेतेहि बापमिडियै नियि आर्थमूलियै। Hultsch, C.I.I., Vol. p.
3 Ibid. Nos. 1058, 1068, 1070, 1072, 1140, 1153, etc.
4 Ibid. Nos. 988, 1000, 1174, 1181, 1182 etc.
5 Ibid. Nos. 968-1180.
6 Ibid. Nos. 1090, 1092, 1156, 1197.
(vii) Donations of paths or passages called *chakamapatha*.¹

(viii) Donations of stūpas in the form of memorials.²

(ix) Donations of images (*bhagavat-pratima*), ³ figures of elephants (*hathin*), *Yaksa* (*Yakha*),⁴ stone-benches and seats (*āsana, pedhika*), rail (*veikā, veyikā*) etc.⁵

(b) Inscriptions recording monetary donations either to meet the entire or partial cost of some religious or pious construction or in the form of permanent endowments (*akṣaya-nīvi*) for various purposes, maintaining monks, feasting Brāhmaṇas or feeding the needy etc. Of the first variety a large number of inscriptions are found in the Western Ghats. The typical specimen of the second variety is the Mathura Inscription of the time of Huvīśka:

"Accomplished (symbol). In the year 28, month Gurpiya (≡Gorpaios≡*Bhādrapada*), date 1, this meritorious rest-house was given a permanent endowment by Prāchānka, the son of Sarukamaṇ, the lord of Kharāsalera and Vakana. Out of the interest (on the deposit), every month, on the fourteenth day of the bright fort-night, one hundred Brāhmaṇas should be entertained in the rest-house. Every day at the gate of the rest-house should be kept three ādhakas of the powdered fried corn (sathu), one *prastha* of salt, one *prastha* of chatani, three water-jars and five earthen cups. These should be given to orphans, the hungry and the thirsty. Merits arising from it will go to Devaputa (the son of gods) Sāhi Huvīśka, to those persons who love him and to the entire

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¹ Ibid. Nos. 998, 1032, 1033, 1072.
² Ibid. 993-1110.
³ Ibid. 1042-71.
⁴ Ibid. 1089, 1143.
⁵ Ibid. 985, 1143.
earth. The permanent endowment was deposited with two śrenis (guilds) 550 purāṇas (coins) each".¹

(c) Inscriptions recording donations of miscellaneous objects.
The most important example of this type is the Nasika Inscription of Uśavadāta which runs: “By Uśavadāta, the son of Dīnīk, the son-in-law of Kaṭrapa Nahapāna, the Ksaharāṭa king, the giver of three hundred-thousand cows, the maker of gold-gifts and tīrthas on the river Barnāśa, the giver of sixteen villages to the gods and Brāhmaṇas, the feaster of one hundred-thousand brahmaṇas every year, the presenter of eight wives to brahmaṇas at the meritorious tīrtha of Prabhāsa, the giver of the shelter of quadangular rest-houses at Bharukachcha, Daśapura, Govardhana and Šorparaga, the planter of gardens, and the constructor of tanks and wells, the establisher of free ferries by boats on the rivers Ibā, Pārada, Damāṇa, Tāpi, Karabenā and Dahamikā, the erector on both banks of these rivers assembly-halls and water-reservoirs for gratuitous distribution of water, and the giver of thirty two thousand roots of cocoanut trees at the village of Nanaṅgolā to the congregation of Charakas . . . . . . .”²

1. सिद्धां ॥ सबसे रंग + पुष्प—
2. भाला प्राचीनकाल सहकुमारपूर्व लगायते
3. र-पतिव बननपतिना अवय-नीति दिशा । तुतो वृद्धि—
4. तो माननवां सदस्य चदनचित्त पुष्पबाला—
5. ये ब्राह्मणासं परिविचयम । दिवसे दिवसे
6. च पुष्पबालाये दारामुळे पारिवे साह-सतना आ—
7. भका ३ लङ्क-प्रस्थी ३ शत-प्रस्थी ३ होकी-कलापक—
8. घटका ३ मलका ५ । एतं अनाधानं द्वैते वालय
9. वर्षस्तित्व प्रिविचयम । य च च पुष्प हें देव गुप्तस्य
10. चाइमृत्यु हिरिक्षस् । वेशय च देवपुष्पो सिद्ध: तेपायंदिव पुष्प
11. भक्तु सर्विं च पुष्पविंये पुष्प भक्तु । अध्यनित्वं दिचा
12. ...[रक-अनेकाये पुराण शत ५००+५० समिकरण-अनेकी—
13. ये च पुष्प शत ५००+५०।

(d) Inscriptions recording donations of lands and villages. The specimens of this type are rare among early inscriptions. From the late Gupta period and onwards a large number of inscriptions are concerned with the donations of fields and villages to monasteries and the Brāhmaṇas. The earliest instance of the type is found in Nasik Inscription of Vāsiṣṭhiputra Pulumāvi appended to that of Gautami Balaśri, which runs as follows:

".....the lord of Daksināpatha, desirous of serving and doing dear to the great queen, makes the gift of the village Pisājipadaka, situated on the lower-south slopes of the mountain Triratmi, with all taxes accruing to it, for the comforts and prosperity of this cave-dwelling, leading to the propitiation of the Fathers and constructing, as if, a bridge of piety (for crossing the ocean of mortality)".\(^1\)

The full-fledged specimens of this type are the copper-plates, called sāsanas. Some of the most important of them are:

(i) The Paharpur Copper-plate Inscription of the G.E. 159 = 479 A.D.\(^2\)

(ii) The Damodarpur Copper-plate Inscription of the time of......Gupta, dated G.E. 224 = 543 A.D.\(^3\)

(iii) The Khoh Copper-plate Inscription of Śarvasnātha, G.E. 193 = 513 A.D.\(^4\)

(iv) The Poona Copper-plate Inscription of Prabhāvati-Guptā.\(^5\)

(v) Hirahadagalli Copper-plate Inscription of Śivaskanda-varman.\(^6\)

\(^1\) एसुत केर्नास विलक्षण निमित्त महाप्रेमी अववाल के स्वारका मिलकारे द्विप्रकारय बिकारु च जना.....


\(^3\) Ebid Vol. XV, p. 142ff.


(vi) Penukoṇḍa Copper-plate Inscription of Mādhava.1
(vii) The Banskhera Copper-plate Inscription of Harṣa, dated regnal year 22=628 A.D.2
(viii) The Ragim Copper-plate Inscription of Tivaradeva, dated regnal year 7 (=the last quarter of the eighth century).3
(ix) The Copper-plate Inscriptions of the Vākāṭaka dynasty.4
(x) The Copper-plate Inscriptions of the Chāṇukyas of Badami.5
(xi) The Copper-plate Inscriptions of the Rāṣṭrakūtās of Manyakhed and their successors.6
(xii) The Copper-plate Inscriptions of the Valabhi kings.7
(xiii) The donative inscriptions of the Pratihāras, the Gahaḍavālas, the Chedis etc.

An analysis of the copper-plate inscriptions dealing with donations of land and villages reveal the following scheme with some modifications and changes in order of items contained therein:

(i) Seal with or without a legend (not found in all inscriptions).
(ii) Some auspicious word or maṅgala.
(iii) The name of the place from which the order was issued.
(iv) The genealogy of the king.
(v) The details of order (Śāsana):
   (a) the list of officers and other persons to whom the order was addressed,
   (b) the object (hetu) of donation, e.g., merits accruing to the donor, his parents and ancestors and to the entire world,

6 Kielhorn's List, Ep. Ind. VII. Appendix.
(c) the names of donees with their parentage, gotras, sākhās, pravaras etc.,
(d) the administrative situation of fields and villages donated,
(e) their legal separation from government revenue areas,
(f) revenue accruing to the village,
(g) exemptions to be enjoyed by the village,
(h) punishment prescribed for the violation of donation,
(vi) The wish for the everlasting career of donation,
(vii) Benedictory formula,
(viii) Laudatory formula,
(x) The details of date on which the Śāsana was executed,
(xi) The name of the dutaka or the representative of the king,
(xii) The name of the officer responsible for the preparation of the document, generally sāndhi-vigrahika,
(xiii) The name of the engraver and
(xiv) The autograph (swahasta) of the king (not always found).

(8) Commemorative. The inscriptions of this type record the events—birth, any spectacular achievement or martyrdom—from the life of a saint or a hero. The earliest of this type is the Rummindei Inscription of Aśoka which runs as follows:

"King Priyadarśīn, Beloved of the gods, when he had been consecrated twenty years, came in the person and did worship. Because here the Śakya sage, Buddha was born, he caused a huge stone wall to be made and a stone pillar to be erected...." 

In this inscription the birth and the birth-place of Lord Buddha are commemorated. The record, however, as much commemorates the visit of the emperor Aśoka to the site of the

1 देवान पियेन पिय दशिन साजन वीसतिब्रह्मसाधितसिंहे अतन आगाच महापिलिते। हित कुष्ठ जाते सक्ष मृति

लिङ्गा बिणडमध्या कलापित सिलामे च उच्चापिलिते। Hultzsch C.II. Vol. I.
Lumbini Garden. Another Inscription of the time of Bhānugupta, dated G.E. 191 (= 510 A.D.) which records the martyrdom of Goparāja in a battle-field and the burning of his wife (sati) on the funeral pier of her husband. Its English rendering is:

"[An auspicious symbol representing the formula 'Siddham' (accomplished)]. In the year one hundred followed by ninety-one on the seventh day of the dark fortnight of the months of Srāvaka. Year 100 90 1, the first day of the dark fortnight of Srāvaka... born from the pure family... famous as a king. His son of great valour, by name Rājā Mādhava. His son became Goparāja, prosperous and of famous prowess. He was the daughter’s son of Šarabharāja and became crest-jewel of his family. Śrī Bhānugupta, (the reigning) king, was a famous hero in the world and as greatly valorous as Pārtha (Arjuna). With him Goparāja came here, following in accordance with the rules of freindship. After having fought a greatly brilliant battle he attained to the heaven, resembling Indra. His wife was devoted, attached, dear and beautiful. Following her husband, she mounted the heap of fire (funeral pyre), e.g., she became a suttee."

There is a large number of commemorative records belonging to the Silāhāras of Kolhapur and the Chālukyas of Kalyāna and there are a few belonging to the Rastrakūtas, the Yādavas and the Silāhāras of Konkan. These records are written in prose and they are generally very short. But there are inscriptions of this type coming from Kolhapur and Karnāpaka which are composed in verse and contain hyperbolic eulogies of the

1 श्रीभानुगुप्तो जगति प्रशोरो
   राजा महानाथस समोदित्सु:।
   तेनायः सार्वत्त्वह गोपराजोः
   मित्रनागयेन किलानयातः।।।
   कुव्या च युध नुसमकार्यं
   स्वयं गर्तो वित्सतमर्नकार्यं:।
   भक्तानुरक्षता च प्रिया च कान्ता
   भार्याचिन्मानानुगतामिनिराक्षिय:।।।

dead heroes. The following is the analysis of a typical commemorative inscription:

(i) The date of the inscription with its details.
(ii) The genealogy of the hero commemorated.
(iii) The eulogies of the hero and his ancestors.
(iv) The reference to the reigning sovereign.
(v) The achievements of the hero.
(vi) Events commemorated—births, deaths etc.

(9) Literary. Some inscriptions of ancient India record pieces of poetic compositions and dramatic works and their purpose is purely literary. We have, however, some instances of religious literature also engraved for religious purposes. For example, from the Mahanitrāṇa stūpa at Kusinagara (Deoria district of U.P.) was discovered a copper-plate, containing thirteen lines and recording the Udāna-sutta of Buddha. The most important specimens of dramatic works engraved on stones are found at Ajmer in the mosque known as Adhai Dinka Jhopra. One of the inscriptions consists of seventy-five lines of writing. It contains large portions of the drama Lalitavigrāharāja composed by the Mahākavi Somadeva in honour of the Chāhamāṇa king Vigrāharāja of Ajmer. Another inscription consists of eighty-one lines of writing and contains portions of the drama Harakeli-nāṭaka composed by Vigrāharājadeva of Ajmera (the same as the patron of Somadeva).
CHAPTER IX

PALEOGRAPHICAL FORMULÆ

The earliest records on stone and copper discovered in India were spontaneous and characterised by simplicity. They had no set phraseology, style, form and contents. In course of time, however, Indian Paleography developed certain formulæ which governed its form and contents. The formulæ so evolved were generally followed by writers and engravers. Literary, religious and legal requirements were responsible for this development. The most common formulæ are given below:

1. Initiation.

The Piprahwa Buddhist vase inscription, the edicts of Aśoka, the Sohagura Copper-plate inscription and even as late as the Besnagar Garuda-pillar inscriptions of the time of the Śrīga king Bhāgabhādra do not contain an initiatory or any opening formula. They start directly with their contents. Some auspicious symbols, Svāstikā, Baddhamahāga and Taurus appear for the first time in the Nasik Cave inscription of the time of Kṛṣṇa, the Sātavāhana king and in the Hathigumpha inscription of Khāravela, belonging to the last quarter of the first century B.C. and the beginning of the first century A.D. They are placed, in the latter document, at the very beginning and they may be regarded to represent some kind of opening formula. The opening formula proper, consisting of a word [siddham (Prakrit) = siddham (Sanskrit) = accomplished] makes its first appearance in the inscriptions of the Sātavāhanas and

1 Indian Antiquary, Vol. XXXVI, p. 117ff.
2 Hultzsch, C.I.I., Vol. III.
6 Ibid. Vol. XX, p. 72 ff.
the Kṣaharātas found at Junnar,1 Mahāda,2 Kud,3 Karle,4 Shelarwadi,5 and Nasik.6 Stein was rightly of the opinion that the original home of this formula was the cave-area of Mahārastra and its development was associated with the evolution of the official style in the Sātavāhana inscriptions.7 The use of this formula spread from Mahārastra and Andhra during the first three centuries A.D. Even the foreign powers like the Kuśānas and the W. Kuśtrapa adopted this auspicious formula which was believed to ensure success and perfection. Mathura became a good centre of this formula and the Guptas found and adopted it here. With the expansion of the Gupta empire the currency of, ‘siddham’, extended over the North and the East of India. A new development in the use of this formula originated at Mathura: The word ‘siddham’ had an equivalent symbol ॐ and both the word and the symbol were used together.8 Elsewhere they were used either together or optionally. The Vākāṭaka records offer another variety of this formula. The Basim grant9 has ‘Drṣṭa-siddham’, the second part of the formula put below the first in the upper left corner of the First Plate. Regarding the significance of the words ‘Drṣṭa’ Fleet was of the opinion that it was an abbreviation of ‘Drṣṭaṁ Bhagavatā’ [= seen by Lord (= God)]. The use of the phrase ‘Jitam Bhagavatā’ [=conquered by Lord (= God)] just after ‘Drṣṭaṁ-Siddham’ renders the suggestion of Fleet untenable.10 The possible meaning of the word ‘Drṣṭa’ appears to be ‘seen’, implying the examination and sanction of the record. This formula (‘siddham’) became so respectable and widely

1 Lüder’s List No. 1172
2 Ibid. No. 1072.
3 Ibid. Nos. 1040, 1041.
4 Ibid. No. 408.
5 Ibid. No. 1121.
6 Ibid. Nos. 1127, 1137-1140, 1148, 1149.
7 Indian Historical Quarterly, IX, 225-226.
current that it still survives in the orthodox style of even private letters addressed to a superior.

Another opening formula, which developed later but became equally popular, was ‘Svasti’ (auspiciousness) or ‘Om Svasti’ (the mystic formula ‘Om,’ symbolising the Ultimate Reality preceding ‘Svasti’ or auspiciousness). Some of the earliest instance of the use of ‘Svasti’ are found in the Baiagram Copper-plate Inscription (G.E.,) 128 = 448 A.D.\(^1\) the Paharpur Copper-plate Inscription (G.E., 159 = 479 A.D.\(^2\)) and the Gunaiyghar Copper-plate Inscription\(^3\) of Vainyagupta. Later records of Harṣavarṇadha, the Banskhera Copper-plate\(^4\) and the Madhuban Copper-plate\(^5\) also start with the formula. When we pass on to the Deccan and the South the inscriptions of the Vākāṭakas,\(^6\) the Traikūṭakas,\(^7\) the Kāṭachchuris,\(^8\) the Pallavas,\(^9\) and the Gangas,\(^10\) belonging to the period between the fifth and the seventh centuries A.D. open with the formula ‘Om Svasti’ or mere ‘Svasti,’ ‘Om’ being mostly represented by the sign ‘Om’.

In the early mediaeval period of Indian history the following opening formulae were generally used:

(i) Om\(^11\)
(ii) Om Svasti\(^12\)
(iii) Svasti\(^13\)
(iv) Svasti Śrīmān\(^14\)

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\(^1\) Ep. Ind. Vol. XXI, p, 81f.
\(^2\) Ibid. Vol. XX, p. 61ff.
\(^3\) Ind. Hist. Quart. Vol. VI, p. 53f.
\(^6\) Ibid., XIX, 267.
\(^7\) Ibid. X, 51.
\(^8\) Ibid. IX, 296; XII, 30.
\(^9\) Ibid. XV, 254ff.
\(^10\) Ibid. XIV, p. 334ff.
\(^12\) Ibid. 11, 31, 39, 92.
\(^13\) Ibid. 7, 10, 12, 25, 28, 32, 36.
\(^14\) Ibid. 7, 10, 28, 32.
2. Invocation.

Just after the opening formula in an epigraph invocations were addressed to God, deities, Tirthankaras, Buddhas, Arhatas, Siddhas, saints etc. in order to seek their presence as a witness

1 Ibid. 25, 36, 37, 38.
2 Ibid. 11.
3 Ibid. 31.
4 Ibid. 39.
5 Ibid. 12.
6 Kar. Ins. No. 1.
7 Lüder's List No. 200.
8 Ibid. No. 310, 349.
9 Ibid. No. 260.
10 Ibid. 333, 334.
11 Ibid. 278.
12 Ibid. 308.
13 Ibid. 198, 359.
14 Ibid. 339.
15 Ibid. 368.
16 Ibid. 279.
17 Ibid. 257.
to the deeds executed in the records and to pray for their help and blessings for the successful completion of the undertakings. This practice was, however, not current in the beginnings, unless we suppose that certain words, with which the inscriptions started, implied a sort of invocation for instance, *Sukrītī (=Buddha)* in the Piprahwa Vase inscription, *Devānamāpīya* in the Aśokan edicts and *Devadeva* (the Lord of gods = God) in the Besnagar *Garuda-pillar* inscription. With the development of the cults of devotion and the bifurcation of various religious sects—Jain, Buddhist, Bhāgavata, Vaiśnava, Śaiva, Śaktā etc.—the practice of invocation in inscriptions became more and more common and established.

The earliest invocation proper occurs in the Hathigumpha cave inscription of Khāravela in the following simple form: *Nama arhatānaṁ* (salutation to the *Arhatas*) and *namo savasiddhānāṁ* (salutation to all the *siddhas*). The Nānāghat Cave inscription of Nāganikā contain invocation to a number of deities *Dharmā, Indra, Sanikarṣana, Vāsudeva, Chandra, Sūrya*, those endowed with greatness (*mahimāvatānaṁ*), the Protectors of the worlds (*Lokapālas*), *Yama, Varuṇa, Kubera* and *Vāsava*. In the Śaka and the Kuśaṇa inscriptions invocations are very rare. One solitary instance is found in the Mathura Votive Tablet of the time of Śoḍāsa of the year 72 (era uncertain), which runs as ‘*Nama arhato vardhamānasāḥ*’ (salutation to *ārhat Vardhamāna = Mahāvīra*). The Nāgārjunikoṇḍa inscriptions of Virapurusadatta, discovered in the Guntūr district of the Madras Presidency and assigned to the later half of the 3rd century A.D., contain the following invocations to the Lord Buddha:

(i) “Salutation to the Lord (Buddha), worshipped by Indra, completely enlightened; omniscient, compassionate towards all living creatures, the conqueror of all attachments, defects and allurements, the Chief

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4 Ibid. XX, p. 16, 19 f.
among all Teachers, Perfect Buddha, and one who has attained Nirvāṇa.”

(ii) “Salutation to the Lord (Buddha), born in the family of Ikṣvakurāja, capable of producing hundred of seers, the Guide of the happiness and welfare of gods, human beings and all living creatures, the conqueror of desire, anger, fear, pleasure and hunger of the objects of the world, the suppressor of the power and pride of haughty Cupid, greatly powerful, the Promulgator of the Eightfold Path and the Mover of the Wheel of Religion, whose feet is decorated with all the good signs of great men, having glory like the mid-day sun, having pleasant audience like the moon of the autumn season and worshipped in the hearts of all living creatures.”

A few of the inscriptions have shorter invocations like ‘Namo Bhagavato Budhasa’ (Salutation to the Lord Buddha) and, ‘Namo Bhagavato Sama-Sambudhasa’ (salutation to the Lord Buddha, Perfectly Enlightened).

The early Gupta inscriptions up to the time of Chandra-gupta II Vikramādiyra do not record invocations to any deity. The Mandasor Stone Inscription of the time of Kumaragupta II (Mālava Era 493 and 529 = A.D. 436 and 473) contains a long and glowing invocation to the Sun, running into three stanzas. The first stanza runs as follows:

“May the Sun, the cause of the origin and destruction of the world, protect you—who is worshipped by the hosts of gods for the sake of their maintenance and by the Siddhas who wish for higher accomplishments (and)


3. Ibid.
by having the objects of their desire under their control as they long for liberation and by sages practising with devotion strict penances, who are able to curse or to offer blessings". ¹

The Junagadh Rock Inscription of Skandagupta opens with an invocation to Viṣṇu as follows:

"That Viṣṇu, the Great Conqueror, the Remover of Afflictions, becomes victorious, who for the sake of the happiness of gods took away the prosperity of Bali, capable of full and everlasting enjoyment, and who is the perpetual abode of the goddess Lakṣmī resting on the louts flower". ²

The Indor Copper-plate Inscription of Skandagupta ³ invokes Bhāskara (the Sun), the Eran Stone-pillar Inscription of Buddhagupta ⁴ Garudaketa (Viṣṇu), the Khoh Copper-plate Inscription of Saṁkṣobha ⁵ Vāsudeva (Krṣṇa) and the Ajanta Cave Inscription of Hariṣena Buddha. ⁶ The Mandasor Stone Inscription of Yāsodharman (Mālava Era 589 = A.D. 532) ⁷ and the Mandasor Stone-pillar Inscription ⁸ of the same king offer invocations to Śiva (as Piṅāki = Archer and Śulapāṇi = bearing a trident in his hand). The first of these inscriptions devotes three stanzas in the invocation to Śiva. The first stanza stands as:

"Victorious is he, (the god) Piṅākin, the Lord of all the worlds, the splendour of whose teeth (displayed) in

⁵ Ibid., p. 114 ff.
⁶ Indian Culture, VII, p. 372 ff.
⁸ Ibid. p. 146 ff.
smiles, talks and songs, and resembling the lustre of lightning, sparkling in the night, envelopes and brings into full view (all) this universe.\(^1\)

In the subsequent records, both official and private, specially eulogistic and dedicatory, invocations became a regular feature and they were offered to Viṣṇu, Śiva, Brahmā, and other gods to their various manifestations and to their consorts under their different forms. The Buddhist records invoke Lord Buddha\(^2\) and sometimes Buddhist goddess like Ārya-Vasudhārā.\(^3\) The Jain inscriptions, which are more numerous than the Buddhist ones, invoke one of the Tīrthaṅkaras, some Jaina saints or the Jain creed.\(^4\)


Benediction is an utterance of blessings or good wishes for the merits and happiness of the person responsible for a record or for the safety and longevity of his deeds, which indirectly blessed him or for the welfare of the world in general. In early inscriptions there are no regular benediction, as these records are mostly Buddhist and early pure ethical Buddhism inspired action without any idea of a reward. Yet some germs of benediction can be traced in the edicts of Aśoka:

"For this purpose, namely, that (my descendants, may enjoin the growth of this matter and that no diminution should be noticed, has this Dhanima-lipi been caused to be written"\(^5\).

"For this purpose this document of Dhanima has been engraved, namely, that it may long endure and that my progeny may follow me".\(^6\)

\(^1\) स ज्यति जगतां पति: पिनाकी सिंहतिरव-गीतिपु वर्ष दन्तकालिनः।
शुभातिव नित्या मिना स्तुनाय विनायति च स्वरूपमवदव विश्वम्।

Ibid., 152 ff.

\(^2\) The Nalanda Ins. of Yaśovarmadeva, Ep. Ind., Vol. XX.


\(^4\) Luder's List, No. 235, 237, 239, 340, etc.

\(^5\) एताय अभयाय इद्य लेखापितं हमस अयस्य विष्णु युजन्तु हृदिति च नो होऽचेतया।
Aśokau R. E. IV.

\(^6\) एतवे अभये अये नम्न-विश्वेषित विरुद्धिक हृतु तथा च मेवा प्रजा जनवत्तु।
Aśokan R. E. V.
"But if it achieves that object, both are here gained, to wit, that object of this world and the begetting of endless merit in the next through that Dhanima-manigalad".1

"May all (their) strong attachment be attachment to exertion. That is good for this world and the next".2

"For my desire is that even during the time of imprisonment, they may try to win the bliss of the next world and that manifold pious practices, self-restraint and liberality may grow among the people.3

When we pass on to the early centuries of the Christian era, when the cults of devotion—Vaiṣṇava and Mahāyāna—were developing, and the Puranic religion was just raising its head, benedictions became more and more pronounced. The Panjītar Stone Inscription of a Kuśāna king, recording the construction of a Śiva-temple, expresses the wish, "May this Śiva-temple become meritorious and eternal".4 The Taxila Silver Scroll Inscription of another Kuśāna king, recording the construction of a stupa, expresses the wish that it may lead to 'the health of the king; the worship of all the Buddhas, every Buddha, all living creatures, parents, friends, kith-and-kins and for his own health and final beatitude (nirvāṇa)'.5 The Sarnath Buddhist Image Inscription of Kanĩśka records the wish that the image may be for 'the happiness and welfare of all living creatures'.6 The Mathura Stone Inscription of the time of Huviṣka, recording a permanent endowment (akṣaya-nīvi) wishes, "Whatever merits may accrue from this donation should go to Devaputra (the son of gods) Śahi Huviṣka (and) to those to whom Devaputra is dear and should lead to the merits of the entire earth".7 It should be observed

1 हि व च ते अधृते पूर्व च अतंते पूर्णा प्रस्वबत वेन ध्रम-समधकेन || R. E. IX.
2 सरस्य चतुर्विंशति में ध्रमराजः य स हृ विश्वस्क फलोऽक्षकः || R. E. XIII.
3 इत्यद ये इत्यद्विश्वस्क च विश्वस्क च व शमस्ते अलापायव्रूपितः यवस्त व वहिति विविधे श्यं-चलने संस्मेदानसाविनिगमितः "Alaksa P.E. IV.
5 Ep. Ind. XIV, p. 265.
6 सर्वसत्तानां हिन्दुदीर्घम् Ep. Ind. VIII, p. 173 ff.
7 य च च च नु पुष्यम् देव पुष्यम् यथाशिष्यद्विभ्रस्त || अस्मातापि पुष्यम् च भवन्तु || सर्वविषये च पृथ्वीये पुष्यम् च भवन्तु || Ep. Ind. XXI p. 60,
that these benedictions are rudimentary and not full-fledged. So is the case with the inscriptions of the Sātavāhanas,¹ the Śakas of Mahārāṣṭra² and Ujjayini³ and the Ikṣvākus of the Krṣna- Guntur region⁴.

It is with the Guptas that the long and full-fledged benedictions start and they reach their climax in the records of the early mediaeval period of Indian history. The first Gupta record, the Allahabad Pillar Inscription of Samudragupta, contains the following benediction, though indirect and mixed with eulogy:

"Whose glory, which rises up in layers one above the other through the manifestation of his generosity, power of the arms and self-control, and his proficiency in the precepts of the scriptures and which spreads in more than one way, purifies the three worlds like white waters of the Gangā, which flows in higher and higher floods, follows more than one path and dashes forth rapidly by reason of being liberated from confinement in the cave in the form of the interior of the matted hair of (the god) Paśupati (Śiva)".⁵

In the closing part of the inscription we also find the earlier short formula of benediction: "May this poetic composition ...... be for the happiness and welfare of all living creatures".⁶

The Mandasor Inscription of Kumāragupta II and Bandhuvarman (Mālava Era 493 and 529—A.D. 463 and 473) contains a full stanza of pure benediction:

"As long as (the god) Iśā wears a mess of tawny matted locks, charming like the spotless rays of the moon (on his forehead); and (as long as) (the god) Śārṅgin (wears) a garland

¹ D. C. Sircar, Select Inscriptions. I, pp. 183-204.
² Ibid. pp. 157-166.
³ Ibid. pp. 167-182.
⁴ प्रदान-मुज-विकृतम प्रशमाश्चात्रवाक्योवेयस्यपरिसारयोहिं त्रितमनस्तमकरम् वशः।
पुरातित्व भुननमश्च नगरस्वेतान्तुहानिरोपयोमोक्षश्चैव विभग्ने गाजङ्गे पय:॥
⁵ एवतम काव्यम् सर्वभूत-हित-मुलायमस्तु। ibid.
of lovely lotuses on his shoulders;—so long may this stately temple endure for ever”\textsuperscript{1}.

The Junagadh Inscription of Skandagupta contains other instances of typical benedictions:

“The celebrated lake Sudarśana ...... should last for an eternal time. Now may the lake with the edges washed by the Chakravākas, Krauṅkhas, and swans spreading their beauty along the edges of the very firmly-built dam ......with pure water ...... (last) on the earth till the sun and the moon”\textsuperscript{2}.

“And may the city also become prosperous; full of inhabitants; cleansed from sin by prayers (of Brahman) sung by many hundreds of Brāhmaṇas, (free from) drought and famine for a hundred years”\textsuperscript{3}.

The Gangdhar Stone Inscription of Viśvavarman (Mālava Era 480 = 423 A.D.)\textsuperscript{4} and the Māndasor Stone Inscription of Yaśodharman alias Viṣṇuvardhana,\textsuperscript{5} the Gwalior Stone Inscription of Mihirakula (c. 515-35 A.D.), the Ajanta Cave Inscription of the time of Hariśena (c. 6th century A.D.)\textsuperscript{6} and the Talagunda Stone-Pillar Inscription of the time of Sāntivarman\textsuperscript{7} possess similar benedictions for the durability and prosperity of the deeds executed by the donors.

The inscriptions belonging to the period between the seventh and twelfth centuries A.D. in northern India and between the seventh and the thirteenth in the Deccan and the South follow

\textsuperscript{1} अमलेन-शापिः-खेत-दौरे पिंज़लानां परिवहति समृह्य काव्यीशो मदानां।

\textsuperscript{2} गुप्तों व शास्त्र-कल्पकालम्।

\textsuperscript{3} नगरमयि च भुवालभुगतोऽरुपति विजयवाहिनीः श्रवणमिनेनस्थापिप्पां।

\textsuperscript{4} Ibid. p. 74 ff.

\textsuperscript{5} Ibid. p. 152 ff.

\textsuperscript{6} Indian Culture, Vol. VII, p. 372 ff.

\textsuperscript{7} Ep. Ind. Vol. VIII, p. 31 ff.
the Gupta and the Vākataka styles of benedictions in their respective regions. One thing deserves observation: Whereas the copperplates, which are mostly land-grants, contain a short formula 'the grant lasting till the moon, the sun and the earth',¹ the stone inscriptions, which are generally eulogistic, dedicatory or donative, possess large benedictions for the donor and his donation or for the devotee and the object dedicated.² There are, however, some instances which show variations and exceptions also.

4. Laudation.

Laudatory formula contained the lauding or praise of the person responsible for the record or his deeds as an incentive for further good deeds. The germs of this formula can also be traced in the following edicts of Āśoka:

"......Meritorious is the hearkening to mother and father; meritorious is liberality to friends, acquaintances and relatives, to Brāhmaṇas and Śramaṇas; meritorious is the abstention from slaughter of animals; meritorious is small expense and small accumulation".³

"The rite, however, bears great fruit, which is Dhanima-maṅgala. There seemly behaviour towards the servile and menial classes and reverence towards preceptors is considered meritorious."⁴

"And it has been said: 'gift is a meritorious thing'. But there is no gift or favour comparable to the gift or favour of Dhanima. Therefore, a friend, a sympathiser, or a companion ought to exhort (one another) in various things, saying: 'this is a duty, this is meritorious; with this it is possible to attain heaven'. And what thing is

¹ चन्द्रार्कितितसमफालीनो । The Banskhera Copper-plate Ins. of Harṣa., Ep. Ind. Vol. IV, p. 208 ff;
² अचन्द्रार्कितितसमफाल्याँ तांतु । The Naihatti grant of Ballalasena, Ep. Ind. Vol. XIV, p. 159.
⁴ R. E. I. IX.
more worthy of achievement through this than the attainment of heaven?

“He, who does it in this manner, accomplishes the worldly life and obtains infinite spiritual merits through that gift of Dhamma.”

The Besnagar Garuda-pillar Inscription contains the following piece of laudation:

“Dama (self-control), chāga = tyāga (tenunciation) and apramāda (vigilance)—these are the three immortal steps and, if properly followed here, lead to the heaven.”

The above-quoted instances are the laudations of moral precepts or ethical virtues and they are simple and restrained. The Andhra, the Kṣaharā, the Kṣattrapa and the Kuṣana inscriptions, which generally dealt with the excavation of caves for monks, the excavation or construction of chaityas (shrines) or stupas, the installation of images, the dedication of temples and the institution of permanent endowments, did not evoke, like previous records, high-flown laudations but a simple praise in the form of the following expressions and even that not invariably:

“This image of the Lord Śākya-sage was installed...... for the removal of all afflictions and for the happiness and welfare of all living creatures.”

“This stone staff has been erected for the attainment of happiness available in the heaven.”

1 RE. IX (Girnar, Dhauli and Jaugada versions). The Kalsi, Shab-bazgadhi and Mansera versions also contain the laudation of Dhamma.

2 श्रोतः कलंकद स्तविकृतयाः च कस्य आक्षेपः होतिः पलते चा अर्नेन सूच्यते पश्चात् ब्योजनानां। RE. XI. See also second separate RE. Jaugada version, PE. II. III. IV, VI, VII.

3 विनिमय सुन्तते वादन से अनुचितानि।


5 भवेन योहसः प्रतिमा प्रतिलाभित। • • •

6 सर्वेऽन्न लोकमाय सर्वसत्सहिष्णुसः • Ep. Ind., Vol. X, p. 113 No. 6.

7 तज्जाभ्यः उत्तप्पित स्वमेवसः। Ep. Ind., Vol. XVI, p. 238.
“This pillar has been erected for the attainment of happiness and welfare in both the worlds, for securing the properties leading to one’s own nirvāṇa and for ensuring the happiness and welfare of all living creatures.”

Laudation became regular, eloquent and prolonged with the advent of the copper-plate grants during the Gupta-Vākāṭaka period of Indian history, involving the transfer and the donation of landed property to the Brāhmaṇas, who were householders and not ascetics who accepted alms and donations with calm and indifference. The Brāhmaṇa donees, who maintained educational and religious establishments, were interested in getting more and more permanent endowments for their institutions offered more praise upon their donors and lauded their donations with all possible heavenly blessings for the donors and their ancestors to serve as an incentive for more profuse future donations. It is also specifically stated that the laudatory stanzas are meant for future rulers and jurists. In the copper-plate grants laudatory stanzas are not individual expressions, but they consist of texts from the authentic Sūtras. A few of the instances are given below, which are repeated in every grant with some additions, omissions and variations:

“O Yudhiṣṭhira, protect the land-grant given to the twice-born by previous donors vigilantly. O best among the rulers of earth, it is better to protect the old grants than to give new ones. The earth has been given away by many and it will be given away repeatedly. The fruit of donation, if protected, will accrue to him, who will possess the earth.”

1 उसयोक्तिः-हितसुखावहितनास च अतनी च निषाधाण-संपति-संपादके।
2 तत्पुर्वमनस् समयमहारीभ: धर्मम्मवेश्यानुमानतया।।
4 तत्पुर्वस्य दिनाकालि पत्ताद्र्यत् युष्मिश्वसः।
5 महोभिष्येत (सता) श्रेणोध्यायोत्पालन (सच)।।
6 व (व) हुमिष्येयुष्णा दत्ता दीयते च पुरु: पुनः।।
7 वस्त्र वस्त्र वदा पूर्विलस्य तस्य तदा फलम्।।
“The earth has been given away by numerous kings Sagara etc. The fruit of donation, if protected, will accrue to him, who will possess the earth. The donor of land rejoices in the heaven for sixty-thousand years....”

“......The manes cry and the grand-parents (in the nether-world) that some donor of land born in our family will redeem us.”

“Kings generally do not attain to the happy (end of life. (But) those, who donate land, are always respected.”

“There is no higher gift than the gift of land, and the protection of a gift is superior to a new gift. All kings Nṛga etc., having protected the (old) grants of land, attained to heaven.”

“There has been no gift equal to the gift of land nor there will be any gift equal to it.”

“To give away grant oneself is much easier; to protect the grant made by others is much more difficult. If there is a choice between making a fresh grant

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1. कृष्णमर्गमुहा दत्ता राजभिस्मनारायणिः

2. यस्य मया यदा भूमिस्तंत्रं तथा प्राप्तम्

3. झट्टियर्पशस्यणम् स्वयं संतोत्तमिः


5. वासकोटपल्लि पितरं प्रबलमन्ति पितामहः

6. मुल्लन्दरस्मिन्स्कुलेज़ (असमकुले) जाते स्न: संतारपिश्चिति


8. प्रावण फ़ि नरेन्द्रायण विवेक न शुभा गति

9. प्रावण फ़ि नरेन्द्रायण विवेक न शुभा गति


12. भूमिदानसमस्तानां न भूमि न भक्तिः

and the protection of an old one, the latter should be regarded superior to the former."  

A sporadic instance of the construction of a temple lauded in the strain of a land-grant is found in the Gwalior Stone Inscriptions of *Mihirakula* (c. 515-35 A.D.):  

"Those, who build this excellent temple of the Sun, having glory similar to that of the rays of the moon, will have their abode in the heaven up to the end of a *kalpa.*"  

There is a welcome variation introduced in the Banskhera Copper-plate Inscription of Harṣavardhana (Harṣa Era 22 = 628 A.D.):  

"This gift should be assented to by those who follow the noble course of our family and also by others. Charity and the protection of the glory of others (is the) reward of the goddess of wealth,ickle like the lightning or the bubble in water. Men (lit. creatures) should do what is beneficial by action, by mind and by speech. This unequalled way of the acquisition of *Dharma* is related by Harṣa."

The laudatory passages in the inscriptions of the subsequent period of Indian history lack in originality and get stereo-typed. The only variations found in them is in quantity, phraseology and sequence. Some of the inscriptions paraphrase laudatory stanzas in prose and abbreviate their contents. A few of them do away with laudatory stanzas altogether and are content with for the augmentation of the merits and fame

1 सबंद्ध अमृतमम् श्रुतिकर्मान्यमध्यमम्।  
   दातन वा पालनं वैतं दातानां योगार्थमम्।  
   *Penukonda Copper-plate Ins.*  

2 यें कार्यान्ति भानोक्तंर्दशून्यसमन्म गृहश्वरम्।  
   तेन वाः स्वरूपान्तिमं सबिष्यान्।  

3 अस्मिनंत्सूक्तंत्श्रमुदारम् वारुं रूपेश्च दानबिनममणि नापोदनीयम्।  
   तद्यथा गृहस्त्विदितं भूवं बुधेण स्वावलयं दायं फलं परया: परिपालनं च।  
   कर्मणं मनसा वनं कर्त्तव्यं प्राणिभिन्नतम्।  
   यवंसेत्समाह्यातं सर्वार्थममुनृतम्।  
of the mother and the father and oneself and the grant lasting till the moon, the sun and the earth.”

5. **Imprecation.**

The literal meaning of ‘imprecation’ is to invoke or call down evil upon persons, deeds or objects. It was used as a deterrent against doing or committing an undesirable act oneself and against abbreviating or violating the good deeds done by others. The early moral, religious and dedicate inscriptions have no set imprecatory formula, though in their negative precepts they warn persons against doing something undesirable. Even donative inscriptions, up to the fourth century A.D., did not develop imprecatory formula, as the objects of donations were mostly cave-dwellings and the articles of daily use, which did not provoke persons to interfere with donations. Yet, the rudiments of imprecation are found in some of the early inscriptions. The edicts of Ashoka, again, furnish a few instances of imprecations:

“No animal should here be immolated and offered as a sacrifice; nor should any samāja be held-for king Priyadarśin, Beloved of the gods, sees much evil in a samāja.”

……and the fostering of the practice of Dhamma is not for a man devoid of virtuous conduct.”

“But that is parisrava which is apmaya (unrighteousness).”

“But whosoever breaks the Sangha, be it monk or nun, shall be clad in white raiment and compelled to live in what is not a residence (of the clergy).”

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1 मातापितेरात्मनस्तः पुण्ययोगोस्वरूपः आचार्यांकृ तितिकालीनम्।

2 इवं न किचि जीवं आरभित्वा प्रज्ञात्वयम् न क समाजोऽकारः।
   बढ़कर हि दौसं समाजः पसंदि देवान्त नियो प्रवर्तकी राजा।
   R.E. I.

3 शम्भवरणे दिन भवितं असीतस। R.E. IV.

4 एस तु पीयसूरे य अष्टं। R.E. X.

5 से केव दिन संघे भेते। एं चुं चो भिलू वा भिलुनया संघं भक्तिः से जोदातानि
   हुसानि संनातापिया भनवासर्वं भावासर्वं। Sarnath PE.
The regular imprecatory formula, like the laudatory one, appears in the last quarter of the 4th century A.D. and it is mostly found in the copper-plate land grants, side by side with the laudatory formula, though its sporadic uses are found in other types of inscriptions also. A few examples are reproduced below:

“Whosoever comes into conflict with this meritorious deed and violates above-written arrangements will meet with Five Great Sins and also with Five Secondary Sins.”

“Whosoever resumes or takes back the land gifted by himself or by someone else, having been born as a germ in the night-soil, suffers with his ancestors. The interferer and one who advises him to do so lives in the hell for that period of time.”

“Whosoever transgresses this religious gift properly constituted, should be considered as a murderer of a cow, a preceptor, and a Brāhmaṇa. Being attached with Five Great Sins and Five Secondary Sins, he goes to the neither-world.”

“Those, who resume religious gift, are born as black serpents, living in dried-up cavities in the (terrible) forests of the Vindhya ranges devoid of water.”

1. ब्रह्माह्यं सुरासाय में स्वरूपमणाम: ।
   महंति पार्ककणाष्टालसारस्वच पूर्वमूष् ।
   Manu. XI. 54.

2. सत्व कौमविभ्रोऽयुर्विश्वामिदिकितमुपवाचो वा स पंचविमहापारके रूपापकृति
   संयुक्तस्वाद। Mathura Pillar Ins. of Chandragupta II. (G.E. 61 = 380 A.D.)
   Ep. Ind., Vol. XXI, p. 8f.

3. स्वदल परदतां वा यो ह्वेति वजुर्वरां ।
   सं विषाणां किम्मूतमा पितुभ: सह पचयिते ॥
   बालेयवा चावमुत्वा च तान्वेय नरके कंतस्त ॥
   Dhanaidha Copper-plate Ins. of
   Kumārgupta I. (G.E. 113 = 432 A.D.)

4. यो व्यक्तिविश्वायमिदं निवदेण गोप्यो गुष्ठो दिव्यावतः: सः ।
   तेन पारसष्ट्: पाणिममर्नितोष्यास्वायत्वः सार्वसिद्धशः ॥

5. विन्यासविवन्ममहूः शुष्ककौटरवासिनः ।
   कुण्ठापिनो (हयो) हि जावले देवदायं द्वितिः ये ॥
   Ep. Ind., XX, p. 61.
“Whosoever interferes with this gift deserves a capital punishment and unités to Five Great Sins and Five Secondary Sins. Gods do not receive offerings from him nor manes pindas offered by him. He is born as a vetala with head cut off and falls down without honour...”

“Having regarded the wealth of the mortals as being constituted by the numerous waves of lightning, the religious establishments should not be violated by the wise in the world.”

“One, who takes back (gifted) land full of luxurious crops, having been born as a germ in the excreta of a dog, sinks with his ancestors.”

“Whosoever resumes the earth gifted by himself or by others, he attains to the sins of one, who kills one lac of cows.”

“Whosoever, disregarding this grant, commits slightest infringement or causes others to do so, he, reported against by the (donee) Brāhmaṇa, will be restrained with punishment...

“One, who resumes the earth gifted by him or by some one else, gets the sins of that person who steals away one lack of cows.”

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1. एवमवधुते यो यो चतुरस्य करोति स बच्च: पञ्चविमिहमहापातः सोपातः संयुक्तः स्यादपि च
2. नास्ते देवा न पितारू हुजुक: पियें जोमामपु: मल्लासरूल इंस. वीझयसेना,
3. एप. इंड., एक्सनेम, प. 159 ff. मल्लासरूल इंस. वीझयसेना,
4. एप. इंड., एक्सनेम, प. 159 ff. मल्लासरूल इंस. वीझयसेना,
5. इदिब. इदिब. इदिब. इदिब. इदिब. इदिब. इदिब. इदिब. इदिब. इदिब.
"The resumer (of this gift) unites to Five Great Sins.
×  ×  ×  ×  ×  ×
One, who takes back land given by him or by some
one else, remains in the pitch darkness (of the hell) for
sixty-thousand years." 1

The imprecatory stanzas, like the laudatory ones, get
hackneyed and stereotyped during the period between the sixth
and the thirteenth centuries A.D. The only changes noticeable
are in the number of stanzas reproduced, the terminology of
these stanzas and their order in which they are quoted.
Tendencies to paraphrase the imprecatory verses into prose,
some times in the vernacular of the region concerned, and to
abbreviate are also observed. Some of the Śilāhāra and the
Yādava records do not quote ancient imprecatory slokas but
give at the end a vulgar sentence called ‘ass-curse”; some-times
in place of such a sentence there is found a representation of
an ass on uninscribed hero-memorial stones (gaddhe-galas). 2

6. Conclusion.

Concluding formula was not fixed for long in the early
history of Indian palæography and even later on, when it
became customary to end a document with some formula there
was no uniformity about it. There was a large variety of
conclusion and the emphasis on ending varied with the religious,
moral or legal importance of the document or the similar
tendencies of the writer.

The Piprahwa Buddhist Vase Inscription, 3 the Mahasthana
Stone-plaque Inscription 4 and the Sohagaura Copper-plate Inscrip-
tion 5 are short documents and they do not contain indications

1 योजन युर्ति स प्रेममोहारतक संयुक्तो भवति ।
×  ×  ×  ×
स्वदलाम्परवत्ता यो हरित वरुणार ऽ।
पद्मेद वैरसंस्कृतय धौरे तमसि कति || Ep. Ind., XIV, p. 334 ff.
2 Lüder's List, No. 215; Burgess & Consens, Rev. List, No. II, 253,
324, 351.
3 Indian Ant, Vol. XXXVI., p. 117 ff.
5 Ibid., Vol. XXII, p. 2.
of conscious attempts at a set or finished ending. The Asokan edicts, however, contain the following concluding phrases, which appear to be conscious and are capable of classification:

(1) Benedictory—
   (i) "For the enjoyment of man and animal."
   (ii) "...it may long endure and that my progeny may follow me."
   (iii) "May all (their) strong attachment be attachment to exertion for Dhamma."

(2) Laudatory—
   (i) "Both are here gained, to wit that object of this world and the begetting of endless merit in the next through that Dhamma-maṅgula."
   (ii) "And this is its fruit—the exaltation of one's own sect and the illumination of Dhamma."

(3) Dating and Mentioning the Agent.
   (i) "This was caused to be written by king Priya-darsin, Beloved of gods, when he was consecrated twelve years."
   (ii) "Twenty-five jail deliveries have been effected by me who am consecrated twenty-six years, just in that period."
   (iii) "This Dhamma lipi was caused to be engraved by me when I had been anointed twenty-seven years."

(4) Naming the engraver.
   (i) "It has been written by Paḍa, the engraver."

1 प्रतिमोगाय पशुपनुसान। R.E. II.
2 विरङ्गितक होतु में पञ्चा जनुवत्तु। R.E.V; R.E. VI.
3 च तत सरित भादु य भ्रेमरति। R.E. XIII.
4 हिद च से अभु परत च जनत पुनं प्रभवति तेन ध्रममधन। R.E. IX.
5 इम्य से एतिम सम्बन्ध य अलम पासंड बड़ च होति ध्रंधस च दीप्ता। R.E. XII.
6 दादसरामसिंहके देवान पिये हीयतिवन राजन इं लेखातिर। R.E. IV.
7 सुदृढ़तिः ससामितिः स मे एतते अतिलकाये पानवितति खंडन मोहाना कटान। PE. V.
8 सतिबिस्वासिंहसिंहके से हि मुमलिति विख्यापिता ति। PE. VII.
9 पढने लिखित लिपिकरण। Brahmagiri Minor R.E.
(5) Proclamatory

(i) "The proclamation has been made."¹
(ii) "The Beloved of the gods proclaims like this."²

The system of conclusion in the Atokan inscriptions was not yet regular. But it can be seen from the above-quoted passages that the edicts of Ašoka contained the germs of some concluding formulæ which were developed later on.

The Besnagar Garuda-pillar Inscription of the Śunga period has for its conclusion a moral precept loosely connected with the contents of the inscription:

"These immortal steps—self-control, renunciation and vigilance-properly followed here, will lead to the heaven."³

The inscriptions of the Indo-Greeks, the Sakas and the Kusānas form a category by themselves. Their conclusion consists of the following:

(1) Name of the writer

(i) "Written by Viśpiḷena who was ordered (to do so.)"⁴
(ii) "Written by Mahipati."⁵
(iii) "Written by Madhu..."⁶

(2) Name of the Architect

(i) "Khaḷaśamuṣa, the architect."⁷
(ii) "By Budhila, the architect." ⁸

(3) Name of the Agents

(i) "Of Jihoniṣka, the ruler of Chukṣa."⁹

１ सावने कटे। Rupanath Minor RE.
² हेवे देवाने पिये आत्मसिद्धि। Yerrugudi Minor RE.
⁵ विविहु महिक्षितात। Ibid. Vol. XVIII, p. 15 ff
⁶ इमो च विविहो मधु। Ibid. XIV, p. 143.
⁷ क्षत्रियः (हिं गि नवकृमिकः) Ibid., IX, p. 141 ff.
⁹ जिहोधिकस चुस्लस लक्षणं। Ibid., p. 82.
(ii) "By Mahāksatrapa Kharapallāna with Kṣatrapa Vanaśpara."1

(4) Benediction

(i) "For the welfare of the majority."2
(ii) "May it be for the honour of the mother and the father."3
(iii) "May it be for the attainment of Nirvāṇa,"4
(iv) "May complete renunciation be obtained."5
(v) "May it be for the welfare and happiness of all creatures."6

(5) Dedication

(i) "Dedicated to the teachers of the sarvāstivādi sects."7
(ii) "Religious gift by Madhurikā."8
(iii) "Dedicated to the teachers of the Mahāsāṅghika sect."9

The concluding formulæ applied in the records Kṣaharātas of Māhārāṣṭra, the Kṣattrapas of Ujjaiyinī, the Sātavāhanas, the Ailas of Kalinga and the Ikṣvākus of Andhradeśa fall under the following groups:

(1) Dedication and Date.

(i) "By him, again, was given in the year 41, bright half of the month of Kartika, fifteen day...for the gods and the Brahmanas."10
(ii) "This religious gift...was made in the year 46."11

1 महाक्षत्रेन खरपल्लाणेन सहा क्षत्रेन काश्यपरेन । Ep. Ind., Vol. VIII, p. 173 ff.
4 भविष्यान प्रतिष्णये होतु । Ibid., Vol. XXI, p. 259.
5 होतु अवदे सम परिष्णजो । Ibid. XIV, p. 295.
7 ब्राह्मणान सर्वास्तिवादिनिम परिष्णम । Ep. Ind. Vol. IX, p. 29.
10 मूर्योनेन दत्तं वसे ४० + १ कालिक-शैष्पनरस-देवान्य ब्राह्मणान्म च । Ep. Ind. Vol. VIII, p. 82 f.
11 देवयमीतं वसे ४० + ६ कतो । Arch. Surv. W. India, Vol. IV, p. 103.
(iii) "This pāṭṭikā was given in the year 18, in the second fortnight of rainy (Srāvana) month, on the first day."1

(2) Benediction and Date.

(i) "Year 200+1. May there be auspiciousness."2
(ii) "For the attainment of the welfare and happiness of the entire world this pillar was erected. In the year 6 of Śrī-Virapuruṣadatta, in the rainy fortnight 6 (= bright fortnight of Aśvina), on the tenth day."3

(iii) "In the year 18 of Śrī-Virapuruṣadatta, 6 the fortnight of Hemanta, date 5. May it be for the welfare and happiness of all creatures."4

(3) Dedication.

(i) "(Income) from this will form the main source of the maintenance of the order of the monks living in the cave constructed by me and coming from the four direction."5

(ii) "The religious gift of Dakṣamitrā, this cave-dwelling."6

(iii) "The village named Karjika has been donated for the maintenance of all who live (in this cave) during the rainy season."7

1 दता पाटिका सबबः १० + ८ वासपले २ दिवसे १।


3 सव-शोक-हित-पुशाक्षरुषनाय च इम सबैं पतिषपिति ति।
रंजो सिरिव बीर पुरसदत्स सब ६ वा प ६ दिव १०।

Ep. Ind., Vol. XX, p. 16.

4 रंजो सिरिव बीर पुरसदत्स सबबः अटर सं १० + ४ हेमन्त पषं च चढ़ ६ दिवसे
पंचम ५। सब नजारन हिताय सूताय होतु ति।
Ibid. p. 21.

5 एतो सम केने वसातान चालुव्यस्तिस मिलुसच्चर मुलाहारो भविष्यती।


7 नामो कर्त्तिको दतो सवान वास-सासितान।

(iv) “To the order of the Buddhist monks, coming from all the four directions, this residence has been given.”

(4) Benediction
(i) “Increasing the piety, good deeds and fame of his master, it has been accomplished by him.”
(ii) “This pond has been dug and constructed for the welfare and happiness of all living creatures.”
(iii) “This pillar...has been raised for the attainment of the happiness of the heaven.”

(5) Eulogy and Benediction
(i) “The great victorious king Śrī-Khāravela, born in the family of the royal sage Vasu is (may become) the king of auspiciousness and prosperity, the prince among the monks, the prince of piety and he, experiencing, seeing and hearing the good, may become endowed with special qualities, the worshipper of all religious sects, the respecter of all religious shrines; may possess chariots, conveyance and army undaunted; may his rule be protected and well established”

(6) Date
(i) “In the year 6th of Śrī-Virapuruṣadatta, sixth fortnight of the rainy season (bright fortnight of Āśvina) on the 10th day”
(ii) “In the second year of king Śrī-Ehubula Śantamūla, the son of Vāsiṣṭhi and born in the family
of the *Ikṣvākus*, sixth fortnight of the summer season, on the tenth day.”

(7) *The Name of the Agent, Engraver or Architect.*
(i) “By Madana, the son of Simhila—this stone-staff was erected.”
(ii) “By Treṣṭadatta, the Śrāmaṇera (an apprentice for becoming a full-fledged Bhikṣu), the stone-staff was erected.”
(iii) “It was engraved by Tāpasa.”
(iv) “This construction was planned by the architects Chaṇḍmukha-thera, Dhamma-nandi-thera and Naya—thera. It was the work of stone-cutter Vidhika.”

Between the Mauryan and the Gupta periods of Indian history the conclusion of a document was not an haphazard ending; it assumed a form and a finish which were later on followed and further evolved and expanded. Of all the concluding formulae *svastyāstu*, (May there be auspiciousness!) was very promising, because it became very popular in the subsequent periods of Indian history. It was a kind of benediction; but it gathered a mystic significance about it. It was used both as an intiatory and a concluding formula.

The palaeographic records assigned to the period between the fourth and the sixth centuries A.D, and mostly belonging to the *Gupta*, the *Vākaṭaka*, the *Pallava*, the *Kadamba*, the *Ganga* and some other minor dynasties, betray as many varieties of conclusion as the records of the previous period, with the difference that they show greater hold of *Dharmāśāstra* and law, and the Puranic and Epic literature on the form of

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1 रंजी वासिस्ती-पुत्रस्य कार्याकृत चिरित एव चंत्तमलय संयुक्त चित्रित श्रीम-पक्षं क्रम ६ दिनसं दसमे १०१ *Ep. Ind. XXI*, p. 62.
3 ब्रह्मदेवं भाग्याश्रयं चरितं उपासितः *Ibid.*, No. 4.
5 इम्न नन्दके भागिनिः नन्दके भागिनिः नन्दके भागिनिः कारिताः चंद्रमुख्यार्णं व धर्मशास्त्र-प्रेमं नूर्यस श्रेष्ठाक्षण विचित्रकं स्तं ति *Ep. Ind. Vol. XX*, p. 22.
conclusion. They also indicate growing influence of Hinduism in comparison with Buddhism and Jainism. It may also be pointed out that the mention of the date, the composer or writer, the executor, the engraver, the agent etc. becomes more frequent than in the previous period. The following is the classification of the varieties of conclusion:

(1) *The Name of the Composer, the Executor, the Engraver, the Agent etc.*

(i) Now may this poetical composition of Hariṣena *Sāndhi-vigvahika, Kumāramātya and Mahadandavanāyaka* ... and it is executed by *Mahadandavanāyaka Tilabhattachaka*, who meditates on the feet of the emperor.”¹

(ii) “It was engraved by Īśvaradāsa.”²

(iii) “Dūtaka (representative of the king) Subhadatta. Written by Bhogachandra, the *Sāndhi-vigvahika*. It was heated by Jayadāsa, the *Pustapāla*.³

(iv) “These verses were composed by Vāsula, the son of Kakka. (They were) engraved by Govinda.”⁴

(v) “It was incised by Chakradāsa.”⁵

(vi) “Dūtaka Devanandavāmī. Written by Prabhusimha.”⁶

(vii) “This copper-plate was engraved by Apāpa, the noble son of a goldsmith.”⁷

¹ एवच काव्यः साविचिविग्वहिकुकुमारामात्य महादंदवनायक हरिशेनः...अनुभूर्तं च परमबट्टारक-पावानुवाहितेन महादंद नायक तिलभट्टाचकः।


³ दूतकः चुम्बवत्ति लिखित साविचिविग्वहिक-भोगचित्रणः। तापित पुस्तपालवासनः।


⁴ वासुलेन्परिचिता: श्रीका: ककक्ष सुनुन। उक्तीणां मोचितः।


⁵ चन्द्रदासेनास्तिकितम्। *


⁶ तु (हु) तत्सुनन्दस्वामी। कीकिता। (कीकिता) प्रथमखु (सिन्हे) न।


⁷ मुर्धन्दकार आर्य गुरुने अपानेन लिखितेयताष्ठापितकः। *Ep. Ind.*, XIV, p. 334.
(viii) "This was written by Maharāja Sāndhi-vighika Devasimhadeva."1

(2) Date.
(i) "In the year 128 of the reign of Maharāja Śrī-Kumāragupta, the month of Jyeṣṭha, on the 18th day."2
(ii) "Year 100 + 80 + 8, the month of Pauṣa, on the 24th day."3
(iii) "Year 100 + 20 + 8, the month of Māgha, date 19."4
(iv) "In the (regnal) year 18 of Senāpati Chitravarman, the month of Māgha, the bright fortnight, date 13."5
(v) "In the prosperous year 39, the month of Vaiśakha date 21."6

(3) Benediction
(i) "This poetic composition pertaining to the restoration of the lake Sudarśana has been finished well."7
(ii) "May he, composed of pure body, with his mother, father, elders and ancestors, through this meritorious act (of erecting an image of the Buddha) obtain the desired peace."8

1 भिक्षितमिव भगवान शान्तिविप्रहीक-देवसियः देवेति। Ep. Ind., XXV, p. 286.
2 संवत् १०० + २० + ४ महाराज श्री कुमारगुप्तस्य राज्येण येष्ठमासं-दिन १० + ४
3 सं १०० + ५ + ४ पौश (पौश) दिन २० + ४। Ind. Hist. Quart., VI, 53 ff.
4 सं १०० + २० + ४ माघ. दिन २० + ९। Ep. Ind. XXI, p. 81 ff.
5 सेनापति चित्रमणी संवत्सरे यूनास्तादश रूपमास-शुक्लपत-योद्धयां
7 [शिल] [तुर] श्री-तराक-संस्कार-श्रवणम (न) माता।
8 माता पितृ-गुहा-पूर्वः पुनःगणनेर सत्कायोयम्।
कप्तमथिष्ठमृतमुथायम × × + न
(iii) “Whatever merits I have gained by having erected this image may accrue to my mother, father, elders and the world.”

(iv) “May it be auspicious to all creatures headed by the cows and the Brāhmaṇa.”

(v) “As long as the oceans are in possession of jewels; the earth full of various orchards, trees, forests and mountains; and as long as the moon shines in the sky variegated by the assembly of planets, so long there may be wide fame to Śrī-Mayūrākṣa. May there be accomplishment.”

(vi) “May the world, on account of the destruction of its entire afflictions and blemishes, attain to the status (nirvāṇa) free from sorrow and decay, calm and noble.”

(vii) “May auspiciousness accrue to cows, Brāhmaṇa, the writer, the reciter and the listener.”

(4) **Dedication**

(i) “...having, with devotion, fixed his mind upon (the god) Viṣṇu, this lofty standard of Lord Viṣṇu was set up on the hill (called) Viṣṇupada.”

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(ii) "This celestial gate (of the temple) was erected by the noble lady." ¹

(5) Laudation
(i) "The earth has been given by many and it will be given repeatedly in future. The merits of a land grant, if respected, accrues to one who possesses the earth (rules over it)." ²
(ii) "The wife, devoted to her husband, very much attached to him, dear and beautiful, clinging to his body and following him, mounted the funeral pyre of her husband." ³

(6) Imprecation
(i) "Whosoever takes back the land gifted by himself or by somebody else, having been born as a germ in the night-soil, will suffer (in the hell) with his ancestors." ⁴
(ii) Whosoever transgresses this religious gift properly constituted should be regarded as a killer of the cows and a murderer of the elders and the Brāhmaṇas... ⁵
(iii) "To that length of time the resumer of a land-grant and his adviser remain in the hell." ⁷

(7) The order of the king.
(i) "Personal Order." ⁷

¹ दत्ता अवाया देवदार । Ep. Ind., Vol. XVIII, p. 160.
² बहुमििेसुधा दत्ता दीये च पुनः पुनः ।
यस्य यस्य बदा मृत्ततस्य तत्स्य तदा फलम् ॥
³ भक्तानुसरका च निवाच च काण्डा ।
⁴ स्वदला त्तदला वा यो हृतेत बिमुखवाला ।
स कितियम् हिन्नमेव पितृसिद्ध प्रृतेष्ट ॥ Ep. Ind., Vol. XV, p. 130 f.
⁵ यो व्यवक्ष्मायामिम मिर्चद गोपालो गुल्मो दिव्यातकः सः ।
⁶ आझेपता चानुसागरा च तात्येव नस्रे बसेदिते ।
⁷ स्वयमाणा । Ep. Ind., Vol. XVI, p. 18 f.
(ii) "Personal Order."¹
(iii) "Order."²

From the seventh century onward the copper-plates develop a conclusion consisting of 'my own hand' (—writing Maharajadhiraja Sri so and so.)³ The inscription of other types, however, follow the forms set by the Gupta and the Vakataka records. For instance one Chalukya record ends in benediction-cum-eulogy:

"May that Ravikirti be victorious, who full of discernment has made use of the abode of the Jina, firmly built of stone, for a new treatment of his theme, and who by his poetic skill has attained to the fame of Kālidasa and of Bhāravi."⁴

In the inscriptions of early mediæval India, both in the North and in the South, we do not come across any new and important form of conclusion other than those already dealt with. The only innovations are the repetition of the formula ‘Sri’ (standing for goddess of prosperity)⁵ the emergence of the formulæ, ‘Mangala’,⁶ Mangalami Mahāśrī⁷ or Mangala Mahāśri⁸ and invocations and salutations to new sectarian deities e.g. ‘Salutation to Sri Gopinātha (Krṣṇa)’⁹ This was a period of imitation and compilation in pure, as well as in legal literature. This fact is reflected in palæographic accords also.

¹ आज्ञापितः स्वयम् | Ep. Ind., Vol. VI, p. 86 ff.
⁴ स विजयतां रशिकौतिषः कविताविरुक्तिविविक्तिः | Ep. Ind., Vol. VI, p. 1.
⁶ Ep. Ind., IX, p. 141.
⁷ Lüder's List, Nos. 151, 152, 162, 168, 175, etc.
⁹ श्री गोपीनाथाय नमः | Lüder's List. No. 332.
CHAPTER X

SYSTEM OF DATING AND ERAS USED.

A regular system of dating does not seem to be introduced in the early history of writing, as the earliest deciphered inscriptions discovered in India are generally undated. The system of dating was not widely current as late as the reign of Aśoka, as the majority of his edicts do not bear any date. Even after the introduction of this system, the dating of records in India did not become universal. The bulk of inscriptions was issued by private individuals and the majority of them is un-dated. The class of official documents is sufficiently extensive, but even for this class dating was not compulsory. The dating of documents became widely current from the second century A.D. and went on increasing with the use of regular eras started in India. A brief survey of the system of dating and the eras used is attempted below:

1. Pre-Mauryan Inscriptions

The Indus valley inscriptions on seals and tablets, which are still undeciphered, are not likely to be dated, because they are fragmentary. After a long gap we come across the Badli pillar inscription and the Piprahwa vase inscription, which are assigned to the pre-Mauryan times. Of these two only the former is dated. It consists of two lines. In the first line 'Virāya bhagavata' and in the second 'Chaturāsiti vasa' are engraved. Dating is done in the second line, which means 'year eighty-four'. According to Mm. Pr. Gaurishankar Hirā-Chand Ojha, this year should be referred to the Vīranirvāna-śaṅvat (era started from the death of the Jain Tirthanākara Mahāvīra).

1 Badli inscription is dated 84 Mahavira Era, which is exceptional. See Rajputana Museum; Ojha, Prāchīna-lipimāla, p. 2.
2 Ibid.
4 See Ojha, Prāchīna-lipimāla, pp. 2-3.
5 Ibid.
2. **Mahāvīra Era or Vīra-Nīrvāṇa Era.**

The *Vīra-nīrvāṇa-sāminī* or the Mahāvīra Era is mostly used in the Jaina MSS.; its use in the inscriptions is very rare. The Śvetāmbara writer Merutuṅga-Sūri, in his work *Vīcāraśrenī* writes that the difference between the Mahāvīra Era and the Vikrama Era is that of 470 years.¹ According to this statement the Mahāvīra Era was started in \[57 + 470 = 527\] B.C. This statement is corroborated by another Jain work *Mahāvīra-chariyam* of Nemichandrāchārya, which states, "Six hundred and five years and five months after my (Mahāvīra’s) nirvāṇa (demise) the Śaka king will be born."² On calculation we get the same date, \[527 (= 605 - 78)\] B.C., for the start of the Mahāvīra Era. The Digambara writer Nemichandra in his book *Trilokasāra* supports the above-mentioned tradition.³

Some of the Digambara traditions regarding the starting point of the Mahāvīra Era are, however, confused. Mādhavachandra, commenting upon the *Trilokasāra* identified ‘Sogardāja’ (Śaka-king) with Vikramāṅka and started the Mahāvīra Era from \[57 + 605 = 662\] B.C.⁴ This identification is totally wrong; but the majority of the later Jain writers of this sect followed it. The subsequent Digambara traditions regarding the starting point of the *Vīra-Nīrvāṇa* Era are entirely untrustworthy, because they give the difference between the *nirvāṇa* of Mahāvīra and the Śaka Era as 461 years, 9795 years and sometimes as 14793 years.⁵ The last two are obviously absurd and no reliance can be placed on these traditions.

3. **Mauryan Inscriptions.**

So far no inscriptions of Chandragupta and Bindusāra, the first two kings of the Mauryan dynasty, has been discovered.

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¹ विक्रमरजार्जिपूर विक्रमबीरनिर्वानभाषिण एव।
मुष्मूँणी अवजागो विक्रमकालः विचारस्त्रेन।

² छह वर्षां स एङ्घिं पर्चिं वसिः विनचिं पर्च मस्तिः
मम निःवण धरस्य उ उपपशिःससु सोराया।

³ प्रतिबन्दद्वहनसं प्रवभासपुत्रमार्ग वीरिणिवृद्धी।
Verse No. 848.

⁴ श्रीवीरभरस्यविशेष: सकाशात।
पञ्चोद्धरपरेषध्वजायणि पञ्चभासायुतिः गम्भृतः
पश्चातं प्रतिव्रद्धु सरकराजोंजयत।
Comment on the verse No. 848.

The third ruler of the dynasty, Aśoka, under his religious inspiration, issued a large number of edicts. His grandson Daśarath also issued some dated inscriptions. In the dated inscriptions the following extracts indicate the system or the arrangement of dating:¹

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reference</th>
<th>Pali Texts</th>
<th>English Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(i) RE. III</td>
<td>द्वादसमसाधिनेन मया इदं आम्सि</td>
<td>This ordered was issued by me, who had been consecrated twelve years.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(ii) RE. IV</td>
<td>द्वादस सस्माधिनेन देवान्त पियो राजा इदं लेखाणि</td>
<td>This was caused to be written by king Priyadarśin, Beloved of the gods, who had been consecrated for twelve years.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(iii) RE. V</td>
<td>द्वादस सस्माधिनेन मया धम महम्मब कट</td>
<td>Dharma-mahamatra were created by me, who had been consecrated for thirteen years.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(iv) R.E. VIII</td>
<td>देवान्त पियो पियदिति राजा दस्माधिनेति संतो अयान संरोधि</td>
<td>King Priyadarśi, Beloved of the gods, repaired to Sambodhi (Bodha-Gaya) who had been consecrated for twelve years.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(v) RE. XIII</td>
<td>अक्ष-सस्माधितया देवान्त पियां पियदिति लाजि कलिया बिजिता</td>
<td>Kalinga was conquered by king Priyadarśin, Beloved of the gods, who had been consecrated for eight years.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(vi) PE. I&amp;IV</td>
<td>सहु-वीससति-सस्माधिनेन मे इदं धम्मलिपि लिखाणि</td>
<td>This Dhammalipi was caused to be written by me, who had been consecrated for twenty-six years.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(vii) PE. V</td>
<td>सहु-वीससति-सस्माधिनेन मे हमानि पि जातानि अवध्यान फतानि</td>
<td>These animals were declared unworthy of slaughter by me, who had been consecrated for twenty-six years.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

¹ Vide Hultzsch, Corp. Ins. Ind., Vol I.

(1) No regular and continuous era already founded is used; there is no reference to the Buddha Era or the Mahāvira Era.

(2) The inscriptions are dated in the regnal years of Aśoka. There is no reference to the Maurya Era supposed to be founded by Chandragupta Maurya.

(3) Dating is not independent; it is used as an adjectival phrase qualifying the agent, e. g., Aśoka.
(4) Only the number of regnal year is mentioned; no further details regarding season, month, fort-night date and day are given.

5. Śunaga Inscriptions.

There are two representative inscriptions of the Śunaga period—(1) the Barhut Buddhist Pillar Inscription and (2) the Besnagar Gareṇḍa Pillar Inscription of the reign of Bhāga-bhadra.2 In the first document only the reign of the Śunagas is mentioned:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prakrit Text</th>
<th>English Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(i) सुनगं रघु।</td>
<td>During the reign of the Śunagas</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the second document dating is more developed:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prakrit Text</th>
<th>English Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(ii) कोसीपुरसं भागभद्रसः बासरसि मरीण बलुदेवेन राजेन वधानस।</td>
<td>In the fourteenth (regnal) years of prosperous Bhagabhodra, the Protector, the son of Kautsi (his mother).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the first record the idea of dating is vague and inaccurate; it is confined to a period which spread over about one hundred and twelve years. The second record is more precise in dating. It went a step further than the Mauryan system of dating; here dating is independent, not an adjunct of the name of the king. But the system is still regnal; there is no use of a regular and continuous era.

6. Andhra-Śatavāhana Inscriptions:

Some of the most important inscriptions issued under the Andhra-Śatavāhana regime contain the following devices of dating:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prakrit Texts</th>
<th>English Translations.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(i) सन्त्तरे, १० + ८ वास-पले २ दिनसे।</td>
<td>On the first day of the second fortnight of the season Varṣā (rains) in the year eighteenth (of Gautamiputra Śri-Śatakarni).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Prākrit Texts

(ii) सवष्टे २० + ४ गिन्ना पर्से २ दिबसे १०।

On the tenth day of the second fortnight of the season Griśma (summer) in the year twenty-fourth (of Gautamiputra Śatakarnī).

(iii) रजोवासितिवुगस-सामिसिरि-[पुलमायिस] सवष्टे सतमे ७ गिन्ना-पसे पचमे ५ दिबसे प्रथमे १।

On the first day of the fifth fort-night of the season Griśma summer) [= Jyeṣṭha -Krśna], in the year seventh of king Vāsiṣṭhiputra Svāmi Śri Pulumāvi.

(iv) ......सिरि--पुलमायिस सवष्टे एकुनवीसे १० + ९ गीत्तायण-पसे वित्तमे २ दिवसे तेरसे १० + ३।

On the thirteenth day of the second fortnight of the season Griśma in the year nineteenth of Śri Pulumāvi.

(v) सिरि-पुलमायिस सवष्टे बुधविसे २० + ४ हृदमान पसे तत्तमे ३ दिबसे वित्तमे २।

On the second day of the third fortnight of the season Hemanta (winter) [= Pausa Krśna, 2], in the year twenty-fourth of Śri Pulumāvi.

(vi) सिरि-पृष्ठ सातककनिस सवष्टे सतमें ७ हेम-तात चं पसे तत्तमे ३ दिबसे प्रथमे ।

On the first day of the third fortnight of the season Hemanta (winter) [= Pauṣa Krśna, 1] in the year seventh of Śri Yajña Śatakarnī.

(vii) रजो सातवाहानाम सिरि-[पुलमायिस सव ८ हेम २ दिब १।

On the first day of the second fortnight of the season Hemanta (winter) [= Agraḥāyaṇa Śukla, 1] in the year eighth of the king Śatavāhana Śri Pulumāvi.

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1 Senart, Ep. Ind., Vol. VIII, p. 73.
7. The Characteristic of the System of Dating under the Āndhra-Sātavāhanas:

(1) The regnal character of dating as prevailed during the Maurya and the Sunga periods continued during the Āndhra Sātavāhana period also.

(2) The Āndhra-Sātavāhanas did not adopt or start any regular and continuous era.1 Nowhere in their inscriptions the Saka-Śālivāhana Era is used.

(3) The early Sātavāhana inscriptions are undated; dating started from the time of Gautamiputra Satakarni, perhaps, due to the great importance of his reign.

(4) The word ‘savachhara’ (sāparota) is used for ‘year’, which later on became very popular; hitherto the word ‘varṣa’ for ‘year’ was commonly used.

(5) Besides the regnal year of the ruler, the name of the season, the order of the pākṣa (fortnight) and the number of date are given in the details of dating.

(6) Numbers are very often given both in words and figures (see No. 5).

(7) The following abbreviations are used in some of the inscriptions:

(i) सव for सव्याचार (year)
(ii) मि for मिस्त्र (summar)
(iii) प for पक्ष (fortnight)
(iv) दित for दिवस (day)
(v) हेम for हेमन्त (winter)

8. The Hathigumpha Cave. Inscription of Kāravela.2

The following regnal years of Khāravela are used in this inscriptions:

(1) पधमे वसे In the first year.
(2) दुतिये च वसे And in the second year.
(3) तततिये पुन वसे Again in the third year.
(4) तथा चचुचे वसे And in the fourth year.
(5) पंचमे च दानी वसे Now in the fifth year.

1 They all used regnal years for dating their documents.
2 See Ep. Ind., Vol. XX, p. 72 ff.

In 1. 16 of the Hathigumpha inscriptions Pandit Bhaganwanlal Indraji and Sten Konow read 'पारंतरिय सत सत हर हर राज मुरिय काहे' and translated it as 'in the year 165 of the Maurya Era' and propounded a theory that Chandragupta Maurya founded an Era which was current in Kaling during the time of Khāravela. This view was criticised by fleet who maintained that there was no reference to any era in this inscription and he suggested that the text referred to the restoration of some Jain works fallen into oblivion. Lüder and Smith followed Fleet and rejected the reading proposed by Indraji and Konow. D.C. Sircar reads the passage in question, 'पारंतरिय सत-सहस्रहि मुखिय-कल-वोचित्तं [= वैदिकमान् सतमान् प्रतिष्ठापिति पद्मोत्सर-सतसहस्रि: (मुखिया) । मुखिययकलवोचित्तं (= मीतम्यायितमिति)]'. There does not appear any reference to an era in this passage. Palaeographically also the Hathigumpha inscription cannot be placed in [321 B.C. (the starting point of the so-called Maurya Era) – 165 – ] 156 B.C.; rather it belongs to the last quarter of the first century B.C. or to the beginning of the first century A.D. Moreover, no other instance of the epigraphical or literary use of the Maurya Era is found. Under the circumstances, there is no justification for holding the view that the Mauryas founded an era which was used after them.

1 Hathigumpha and three other inscriptions.
3 Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society, 1910, pp. 243-244.
5 Early History of India, p. 207, n. 2.
7 R. D. Banerjee stuck to the reading of Indraji and Konow.
10. The Inscriptions of the Śakas of South-West India (the Kṣaharātatas of Mahārāṣṭra and the Mahākṣatrapas of Ujjainī).

The following are a few illustrative specimens:

**Texts**

(i) वसे ४० + २ वेसाल मासे।

(ii) वसे ४० + ६ कती।

(iii) वषेक्षिताष्रो ५० + २ वॷ४ जहुलस शिरिय-वारे।

(iv) महाभारतयथा...श्रवणब्धि।

(v) श्रीसहस्र्य वषेक्षिताष्रो वषेक्षिताष्रो १०० + २ बेसाल-बुधे गंगम-रणियाथी रोहिणि नवना मृत्तें।

(vi) वषेक्षिताष्रो १०० + २० + ७ भाद्रावण-जहुलस।

**English Translation**

In the month of Vaišākha in the year fortysecond (of the Śaka Era).

(This pious gift was) made in the year fortieth (of the Śaka Era).

On the second day of the dark fortnight of the month Phālguṇa in the year fifty-second (of the Śaka Era).

On the first day of the dark half of Mārgaśirṣa in the seventy-second year (of the Śaka Era) during the reign of Mahākṣatrapa Rudradāman...

In the moment of the constellation Rohini on the fifth day of the bright fortnight of the month Vaišākha in the one-hundred and third year (of the Saka Era) during the reign of Rudrasimha.

This Stone-pillar of Rudrasena (was erected) on the fifth (day) of the dark fortnight of the month Bhādrapada in the one hundred and twenty-seventh year (of the Śaka Era).

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The Main Features of Dating.

1. The inscriptions are dated in a regular and continuous era, beginning from the year 42 to the year 201 of the same era.

2. In the earlier inscriptions the system of dating is rather simple; in no. (i) only the year and the month are mentioned and in no. (ii) only the year is given.

3. From the inscription no. (iii) dating is detailed. Instead of seasons mentioned in the Andhra-Sattavahana inscriptions we get the names of months, Phālguna, Mārgaśīrṣa, Vaṭāśāka, Bhādrapada, Śrāvana etc.

4. Instead of the numbers of fortnight in a particular season, as given in the Andhra-Sattavahana Inscriptions, two fortights—(i) bahula (dark) and (2) Śuddha (bright) are mentioned in these inscriptions.

5. A new word ‘Vāra’ for ‘day’ is used in some of the inscriptions.

6. In some of the inscriptions nakṣatra (constellation) and muhūrta (moment) are also given.

7. In some of the inscriptions the continuous era used for dating is vaguely linked up with the reign of the rulers.

8. In the inscription No. (vii) both regnal era with its adjuncts (which were carried on to the Gupta period) and the continuous era are given.


Now the question is: what is the era used in these inscriptions? Obviously it was not an Indian era. The contemporaries of the Kṣaharātās and the Kṣattrapas, the Āndhra-Śatavāhanas, dated their inscriptions in their regnal years; they did not use any regular and continuous era. They would not use the Kṛta Era founded by the Mālavas of Avanti whom they defeated and replaced for the same reason as the Muslims would not use the Vikrama Era or the Śaka Era in India. Under the circumstances, the conclusion is irresistible that the Śakas of Mahārāṣṭra, Khatiawar, and Avanti adopted their own era, though they followed the details of the system of Indian dating. Now the next question is: who was responsible for the foundation of the Śaka Era? On this point the Jain tradition in India is quite clear. In the Kālakāchārya-Kathā given in the Prabhāvakacarita it is distinctly stated that the Śakas founded their own era, having killed a descendant of that Rāia (Vikrāmaditya), one hundred and thirty-five years after Vikramāditya accession to power.¹ By calculation this event took place in (57 B.C. + 135 =) 78 A.D. As the era was founded at Avanti Chāṣṭana was evidently the founder of this era. According to the Junagadh Rock Inscription of Rudradāman,² his grandfather Chāṣṭana was the first Mahākṣatrapa of his dynasty and he had every justification for starting a new era. As the Śaka dynasty of Avanti was the most powerful and famous in S.W. India, the neighbouring Śaka dynasty of Mahārāṣṭra adopted the era started by the former.

During the early centuries of this era the word ‘Śaka’ is not found associated, with it. The words used are, generally *varte* and, rarely *samavatsare* both meaning ‘in the year’. In the inscriptions ranging from Śaka Era 500 to 1262 we get the following phrases to indicate its connection with the Śakas:

¹ शकानां वसयुज्ज्वलः कालेन कित्वारापि हि ।
राजा धी विक्रमादित्यः सावे भौमोऽमोऽभवत् ।
ततो वर्षवते पर्याविशता साधिके पुनः ।
तस्य राजे अन्यथा हल्ता वत्सरः स्यापितः सर्वेः ।

SYSTEM OF DATING AND ERAS USED

(i) शकनूपतिराज्याभिषेक (the era of the coronation of the शाκका राजा)
(ii) शकनूपतिराजस्वर (The era of the Šaka king)
(iii) शकनूपस्वर (the era of the Šaka king)
(iv) शकनूपकाल (the time [= era] of the Šaka king)
(v) शा्क-संबत् (the Šaka era)
(vi) शा्क (the Šaka [era])
(vii) शा्क (the era [derived from the Šaka king])

From the above-quoted extracts it is evident that up to the twelfth century A.D. the Šaka Era was regarded as founded by some Šaka king and the word ‘Sālivāhana’ was not associated with it. It was only later that the era came to be called Sālivāhana-Šaka or Šaka-Sālivāhana. The earliest documents-literary and epigraphical—with the dating of which the name of Sālivāhana is associated, belong to the fourteenth century. 

The reason why the name of Sālivāhana was associated with the Šaka era appears to be this. In northern India the era, which was originally called ‘Krta’ and subsequently ‘Mālava’, came to be called ‘Vikrama Era’ due to the changes in the political psychology of the people. In the South the word ‘Šaka’, which

1 शकनूपतिराज्याभिषेकसंवत्सरेण् शालिवाहिनेऽपि पञ्चमु सत्तेऽण्

2 शकनूपतिराजस्वरो उत्तरस्वरायवाचिकेऽपि पञ्चस्वतीतेऽण्
  Ind., Ant. Vol. VI, p. 73.

3 शकनूप-संवत्सरस्वरो उत्तर-विश्व-मृत्तिको व्यतीतेऽण्
  Ind., Ant., Vol. XII, p. 16.

4 शकनूपकालसंवत्सरस्वरस्तीतेऽण् शालिवाहिनेऽपि मुखोत्तिरेऽण्


8 The Kalpa-pradipa of Jinaprabhasuri. The work is assignable to C. 1300 A.D. The author says that Sātāvāhana (Sālivāhana) of Prati-

sthana, after defeating Vikramaditya of Ujjayini, started his own era. See J.A.S.B.B., Vol. X, p. 132-33; नुपुलाला लिखण्ड शा्क १२७६; The Harihara gaon inscription of the Yādava king Bukkara of Vijayanagara (Keilhorn, Literary Inscription of South India, p. 78, No. 455),
was an adjective of 'era' in the phrases. 'Saka-nerpatrai-jayabhisekasa-
manvatsara', 'Saka-nerpa-kala', 'Saka-sanvats', 'Saka-kala' etc.; in
course of time came to denote 'year' itself and the political
consciousness that once one part of India was dominated by the
Sakas disappeared. From among historical personalities the
only name that survived in the Deccan was that of Śālivāhana
(equally applicable to Hāla or Gautamiputra Śatakarni) which
could catch the imagination of the literate and the people.
Under the circumstances, on the pattern of the North, the name
of Śālivāhana came to be associated with the Śaka Era, which
made this era respectable not only in the south but all over India.


Very few inscriptions (except on coins) of the Indo-
Bactrians, have been discovered and seldom dated. Only two
specimens are given below:

**Texts**

(i) *****मनुष्यां महरजस
कर्टिका दिवस ५+५
+५+१ +११

(ii) वप्पयिं पंचपयिं ५+१
वेष्ष्वस भाजस दिवस
पंचविं यि

**English Translation.**

On the fourteenth day of the month Kārtika in the reign of the great
king Menander.

On the twenty-fifth day of the
month Vaisākha in the fifth year
(during the reign of Menander).

14. Era, whether Regnal or Continuous.

The year used in the above-mentioned inscription is
obviously regnal. Menander was Greek by nationality and
Buddhist by religion. But the year used by him cannot be
assigned either to the Seleucidian Era founded by Seleukos in
312 B.C. or to the Buddha Era which started from 483 B.C.,
even if the figures representing hundreds are dropped.
The months used here are purely Indian Kārtika and Vaisākha

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1 According to the Prabananadha-chintamāni (p. 28) 'Śālivāhana' is one
of the names of Hāla.

2 Shinkot Statute Casket Inscriptions of the reign of Menander, Ep. Ind.,
Vol. XXIV, p. 7; the year mentioned in the beginning has disappeared.

3 Ibid.
and not Macedonian, or Greek ones, some of which are used in the inscriptions issued under the reigns of the Śakas and the Kuśāṇas. This fact makes the possibility of the use of a Greek or Seleucidian Era all the more remote.

15. The Inscriptions of the Śaka-Pahlavas (Scytho-Parthians) of N. W. India:

Texts

(i) स्वामिस महासत्रपस On the ninth day of the second शोद्धारस संवत्सरे 70 + 2 month of the season Hemant (Panṣa) हेमंत मासे 2 दिवसे 9 1 in the year 72 during the reign of Svāmi Mahāśatrapa Śoḍāsā.

(ii) संवत्सरदेव अष्टसतर्दिवसये On the fifth day of the Greek 20 + 20 + 20 + 10 month Panemos during the reign of + 4 + 4 Mahārāja Mahan (the Greek king) तस मोगम पनेस्य समस Maues in the year 78.

(iii) महाराज गुठुवर्स वस On the meritorious first day of the 20 + 4 + 1 + 1 संव- dark fortnight of the month Vai- तर्दिवसये तिशतिर्दिवसये 100 + 8ākhā in the year 103 (of an un- 1 + 1 + 1 बेवसय समस known era) during the 26th regnal दिवसे ग्रहमे पृथ्वी वहले year of Gondophernes.

(iv) सो 1 × 100 + 20 On the first day of the month + 1 + 1 अवसय मसस Śrāvaṇa in the year 122 (of an व ग्रहमे 1 महाराज unknown era) during the reign of गुणस रजस 14 Mahārāja Kuśāṇa.

(v) संवत्सरदेव 1 × 100 On the twenty-third day of the + 20 + 10 + 4 अवस first Śrāvaṇa (or of the month अवसय मसस दिवसे Śrāvaṇa during the reign of Azes) देवबर्द 20 + 1 + 1 15 in the year 134 (of an unknown era).

2 Taxila Copper-plate Inscription of Paṭika, Konow, Corp. Ins. Ind., Vol. II, i, p. 28.
4 Panjtar Stone Inscription of a Kuśaṇa king, Sten Konow, Corp. Ins. Ind., II, i, p. 70.
(vi) स १ × १००+२०+ १०+४+२+१ अयस 1
अपडस मसस दिवसे 136 (of an unknown era).

(vii) स० १ × १००+२०+ २०+२०+२०+४+ १+१+१ महृजस
उविमिक्षु सस 12

(viii) क १ × १००+२०+ २०+२०+२०+१०+ १ महृजस………स
पुरस जिहोणिकस चुक्सस अत्रस 13

16. The System of Dating followed in the Scythio-Parthian Inscriptions:

(1) A regular era is used in these inscriptions from the year 724 to the year 191 of the same.

(2) With the regular and continuous era the reign of the king or governor is also mentioned, generally without mentioning the regnal year.

(3) In some cases the regnal year is also mentioned.

(4) The number of year and the number of days are ordinarily mentioned in figures, but very often in figures and words both. Generally the names of seasons and month are given. Sometimes we come across Macedonian months, obviously used by foreign donors, in place of Indian ones.

(5) Some times the fortnight of the month is also given.

(6) Some times only the number of year and the name of reigning king alone are mentioned; others details are dropped.

3 Taxila Silver Vase Inscription of Jihonika, Ibid, p. 82.
4 The earliest Kharoṣṭhi inscription is the Maiva inscription dated 58.
(7) Abbreviation स or सं for संवत्सर, दि for दिवस, क for काल are used.

(8) The order of the different constituents of dating is not fixed as yet.

(9) Obviously the system is earlier and less developed than the system followed by the Śātavāhanas and the Śakas of S. W. India.

17. *An Early Śaka Era.*

To which era should the years mentioned in the above quoted inscriptions be referred? Before answering this question one fact should be borne in mind. The entire group of these inscriptions, on the basis of palæography and style, can be assigned to the pre-Kuśana age and also to the period before the Kṣaharāta-Śakas of S.W. India and the imperial Āndhra-Śātavāhanas, whose inscriptions are found in the Western Ghats. These years cannot be referred to the Śaka Era started from 78 A.D. or to the era founded by Kaniṣṭha c. 120 A.D., because in both the cases the rule of the Scythian kings mentioned in these inscriptions will fall during the Kuśana and the post-Kuśana periods of Indian history, which is impossible. Nor these years can be referred to the Maurya (c. 321 B.C.), the Seleucidian (c. 312 B.C.), the old Śaka (c. 550 B.C.) or the old Parthian (c. 259 or 249 B.C.) era, because in this case the Śakas would become contemporary of the later Mauryas, the Śuṅgas and the Bactrians in India, which will militate against the well-established sequence in Indian history.

From the earliest date (58) used in the early Scythian inscriptions it can be inferred that the Scythians invaded India not long before that date. Obviously the era in question was founded by the Śakas to commemorate their first invasion of India. According to the Jain paṭṭāvalis and the Kālakāchārya-kathā given in the Prabhāvakacharita Vikramāditya drove the Śakas out of Avanti after they had ruled over the latter for fourteen or four years. Thus the first invasion of India by the Śakas can be assigned to c. 57 plus 14 or 4 = 71 or 61 B.C.
The victory of the Sakas in 71 or 61 B.C. occasioned the foundation of an area which can be called an Early Saka Era. In their first attempt of conquering India the Sakas lost their ground in Avanti but a branch of them survived in N.W. India and continued to use the Saka era founded in 71 or 61 B.C. The year 191 of this era marks the end of the reign of Wima Kadphises and the beginning of the reign of Kanishka in c. 71 B.C. + 191 = 120 A.D. When the Sakas, under the leadership of Chāṇḍana, occupied Avanti for the second time they founded the latest Saka Era in 78 A.D., which was used by the Sakas of S.W. India and later on adopted by the Indians.

18. The Kusana Inscriptions From the Reign of Kanishka.

Kanishka founded an era and this started an independent system of dating. A new specimens of inscriptions following this system are given below:

**Texts**

(i) महाराजस्य कांशिकस्य सं. ३ हे ३ दिवस २२।

(ii) महाराजस्य वेदुनस्य कांशिकस्य सवसरे १० घि. २ दि. ९।

(iii) महराजस्य रजितरजस्य देवुनस्य कांशिकस्य संवसरे एकदशे सं. १० १ व दिसकस्य मसा दिवसे अठारवते दि. २० + ४ + २।

**English Translation**

On the twenty-second day of the third fortnight of the season Hemanta in the year 3 of Mahārāja Kanishka.

On the ninth day of the second fortnight of the season Grīṣma (summer) in the year 10 of Mahārāja Devaputra Kanishka.

On the twenty-eighth day of the month Ddisios (—Isattha) in the year 11 of Kanishka, the great king, the lord of kings, the son of gods.

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3 Sri Vihar Copper-plate Inscription of Kaniska I, Steini Konow, Corp. Ins. Ind., Vol. II, i, p. 141.
On the twentieth day of the month \textit{Asādha} and the constellation \textit{Uttarāphālagnī} in the year 11 during the reign of Kaniska.

On the twentieth day of the month \textit{Kārtika} in the year 18 during the reign of Kaniska.

On the fifth day of the first fortnight of the season \textit{Homanta} in the year 28 of the Kaniska era during the reign of Sāhi Vasiška, the great king, the lord of kings, the son of gods.

On the first day of the (Great) month \textit{Gorpois} (=\textit{Bhādrapada}) in the year 28 of the Kaniska era (during the reign of Huviśka).

On the eighth day of the first fortnight of the season \textit{Grisma} (summer) in the year 33 of the Kaniska era during the reign of Huviśka, the great king, the son of gods.

On the first day of the month \textit{Jyaiśtha} in the year 41 of the Kaniska era during the reign of Kaniska (II), the son of Vaseška, the Kaiser, the great king, the lord of kings, the son of gods.

On the nineteenth day of the second month of the season Varṣa (=Bhadrapada) in the year 48 of the Kaniṣka era during the reign of Mahārāja Huviṣka.

On the twelfth day of the first dark fortnight of the season Hemanta (winter) in the year 80 of the Kaniṣka era during the reign of Mahārāja Vāsudeva.

19. The main features of dating in the Kaniṣka–group Kuśāna inscriptions:

(1) There is a continuous era used from the year 3 falling in the reign of Kaniṣka I up to the year 80 during the reign of Vāsudeva.

(2) It appears that Kaniṣka used his regnal years for dating, which was continued by his successors. This resulted into a regular era.

(3) In the majority of inscriptions dating consists of (i) the name of the reigning king, (ii) the number of year preceded by the word 'sainvatsara', (iii) the name of season or the month (sometimes Greek months are given) and (iv) the number of day in the month.

(4) In a few inscriptions constellations are also mentioned.

(5) In some inscriptions the name of the king with political titles comes after the details of dating.

(6) The System of dating is similar to that followed in the inscriptions of the Āndhra-Sātavāhanas and the Śakas of S. W. India.


The year third of the era falling in the reign of Kaniṣka suggests that he founded the era by replacing the Kadphises

group of kings and by establishing a new line of rulers in c. 120 A.D. In utter disregard of Indian traditions Western scholars identified the era founded by Kaniska first with the Vikrama Era founded in 57 B.C. and then with the Šaka Era started from 78 A.D. Now these identifications have been given up, specially in view of the fact that the era founded by Kaniska died in its own home in N.W. after brief career of about 100 years and it was again replaced by the Early Šaka Era founded in c. 71 B.C. in which were dated the inscriptions from 303 to 399. The Early Šaka Era in the North, however, was replaced by the Mālava and the Gupta Eras.

21. The Inscriptions of the Republics and other Peoples and Kingdoms of Rajasthana and Avanti-Ākara (Madhya-Bharata).

Some most representative instances are given below:

**Texts**

(i) कृतवर्त्तमाण-वर्षस्थमाणाचि
शीतवर्षि: २००+८०+
२ चैत्र पूर्णमासायम्. ¹¹

(ii) कस्ते हि (कुते) २००+
+८०+४ चैत्र शुक्ल
पवित्रय पञ्चदशी ²

(iii) कस्ते (कुते) हि २००+
९०+५ फाल्गुण (त)
शुक्लवर्ष पञ्चदशी ³

(iv) कस्ते हि २००+ १०+
५ जन (यूष्ट) शुद्धस्य
पञ्चदशी ⁴

(v) कस्ते च नागिन वर्षमाश्चि-
व्यापित्विनि ४००+
२०+८ फाल्गुण (त)
शुद्धस्य पञ्चदशायम्. ⁵

**English Translations.**

On the full moon day of the month Chaitra in the year 282 of the Kṛta Era.

On the fifteenth day of the bright half of the month Chaitra in the year 284 of the Kṛta Era.

On the fifth day of the bright half of the month Phālguna in the year 295 of the Kṛta Era.

On the fifteenth day of the bright half of the month Jyeṣṭha in the year 335 of the Kṛta Era.

On the fifteenth day of the dark fortnight of the month Phālguna in the year 428 of the Kṛta Era.

¹ Nandas Yupa Inscription, Ep. Ind., Vol. XXVII.
² Barnala Inscription.
⁴ Barnala Inscription.
⁵ Vijaigadha Inscription.
(vi) On the auspicious fifth day of the bright half of the month Āśvinī in the year 461 of the Kṛta Era traditionally used by the Mālavas.

(vii) On the thirteenth day of the bright half of the month Pauṣa when 493 years had elapsed from the foundation of the Mālavagana.

(viii) "Five hundred autumns, together with ninety less by one, having elapsed from the foundation of the Mālava-gaṇa (Mālava Republic), and being written down for the knowledge of time in the season Vasanta (spring)."

(ix) In the year 795 of the Mālava lords.

(x) Eight (vasu) hundred and ninety eight years according to the era known as Vikrama-kāla, on the second day of the bright half of the month Vaiśākha, falling on Sunday, when the moon was on the Rohini constellation and in the auspicious Simha-yoga.

1 Mandasor Inscription, Ep. Ind., Vol. XII, p. 320.
5 Dhaulapur Inscription of Chaṇḍamahāsenā.
When nine hundred years together with thirty-six, according to the Mālava-kāla (Era) had passed, in the season Madhu (spring).

When nine (nanda) hundred and seven (giri) ty-three (Rama) years of the Vikrama Era had elapsed, in the pure month (Jyeṣṭha or Āṣadhā).

On the third day of the bright half of the month Phalguna in the year 1103 of the Vikrama Era.


(1) There is a regular and continuous era used from the year 282 to the year 1103 and onwards.

(2) The same era is called Kṛta, Mālava and Vikrama in the successive periods.

(3) The three eras named above are co-eval and identical.

(4) In actual dating in early inscriptions first the name of the era, then the number of the year, next month fortnight and date are mentioned; in some of the later inscriptions week-days, constellations and yogas are also given.

(5) In some of the later and metrical inscriptions the above order is changed; first the number of year, then the name of the era and next date, month, season etc. are given.

(6) From the ninth century onwards in some of the inscriptions the number of year is represented by words symbolising numbers (see Nos. x, xii).

23. The Origin and Identity of the Kṛta, the Mālava and the Vikrama Eras.4

On the ground of astronomical calculation and regional considerations eminient scholars have come to the conclusion

1 Gyaraspur Inscription.
2 Bijapur Inscription of Rāṣṭrakūta Vidagdharāja.
3 Osia (Jodhpur State) Inscription.
4 This section has been adopted from the author’s another work, Vikramādiyā of Ujjayini, pp. 5-9.
that the Kṛta era, the Mālava era and the Vikrama era are coeval and identical, all the three starting from 57 B.C. when the identity of these eras is established, it becomes, quite clear that the era founded by Vikramāditya has been current during the past twenty centuries. But a very cogent question may be advanced: If the founder of the era was Vikramāditya, why is it not named after him during its early career and it is first called as the Kṛta era and then it is known as the era of the Mālava people or republic or Mālava lords and lately it is designated as Vikrama era? The question is, however, capable of an easy solution which can be explained as follows:

The Early Omission of the Name ‘Vikrama’ Explained.

Vikramāditya was the leader of a republic (gaṇamukhya) and not an absolute monarch. Though he was mainly instrumental in the foundation of the era, he could not claim the sole credit for it. In a republican type of state the gaṇa (the congregation of people) is more important than the individual leader howsoever influential he might be. Great achievements, like success in a war, were shared by the entire gaṇa (republic), as there was a fear of dissension, in case one single individual aspired to claim them. Under circumstances, the era was to be named after the Mālava-gaṇa (of which Vikramāditya was the leader). The era was started to commemorate the victory of the Mālava Republic against the barbarous Śakas whose expulsion from India freed the country from foreign invasion and inaugurated an era of peace and prosperity, which, figuratively, might be regarded as Kṛtyuga (Golden Age). So, the era was first significantly called as Kṛta. Kṛta is not only a chronological division of time in Hindu astronomy but also a conceptual term denoting a virtuous and happy age. This is borne out by a verse found in the Aitareya-Brāhmaṇa. The verse can be translated thus: ‘The sleeping is Kali; the yawning is Dvāpara; the standing is Tretā and the marching

1 Dr. A. S. Altekar, Sāhyādri, October, 1943; Nāgri-Prachārini Patrikā, Vikramāṇika, samvat 2000.

2 Raj Bali Pandey, Vikramāditya of Ujjayini, Chapters VI & VIII.
onward is *Kṛta*. The era, when the people of India under the leadership of the Mālava-gaṇa were up and marching in the defence of their country against their enemies and were enjoying the fruits of their success, can aptly be called *Kṛta*.

India, free from foreign invasion, enjoyed peace and prosperity for 135 years from 57 B.C. (when the era was founded) to 78 A.D. At the end of this period the Śakas again started their invasions and in the absence of an able leadership in the country they occupied the whole of Sindhu, Surāṣṭra and Avanti. But though the territories of Avanti were lost to the Mālavas, they survived the catastrophe as a people and cherished for a few centuries more the hope of regaining Avanti and re-establishing the *Kṛta-yuga* (Golden Age) once again. They shifted to the north-east of Avanti, carved out a new Mālava territory and the era founded in 57 B.C. was still called *Kṛta*. They continued their struggle with the Śakas, but owing to the disintegration of their power they were not able to restore their lost territories and prestige. This rendered a rude shock to their dream of the *Kṛtayuga*. The name *Kṛta* was dropped from the era. But, as the Mālava-gaṇa was alive, the era was still remembered as to commemorate the firm foundation of the Mālava republic in 57 B.C. when the Śakas were defeated. It came to be called the Mālava era the era of the Mālava-gaṇa, the Mālava people and the Mālava lords.

From the fourth and the fifth centuries of the Christian era there was a new development in Indian history, which was eventually responsible for the change of the name of the era from the Mālava era to the Vikrama era. When the Gupta power was rising in the first half of the fourth century the Mālavas were still a powerful republic beyond the west-south horizon of the Gupta kingdom. They head the list of a number of republics whom the great conqueror Samudragupta subjugated.
but spared them as subordinate allies. The next ambitious king Chandragupta Vikramāditya adopted a sterner attitude towards these republics. He annexed and finally exterminated them. They are no longer heard of from this time. The Gupta empire engulfed them and spread over Mālava, Rajputana and Central India. The Guptas had their own era starting from 319-20 A.D. But the ideal of freedom, for which the Mālavas stood still possessed the mind of people in Mālava, and Rajputana areas. They continued to use the Mālava era inspite of the Gupta rule and even the great Gupta emperor Kumāragupta was compelled to recognize the Mālava era in those areas. The Hūṇas destroyed the Gupta empire in the sixth century A.D. and the hope of the Kṛta-yuga was altogether lost by the Indians. The Guptas were soon forgotten by them, but the Mālavas lingered in their memory, as their history had a greater vitality of survival in their political ideal of freedom from foreign domination, their sacrifices and tribulation in this cause and in the towering personality of their leader Vikramāditya. The era of the Mālavas overlived Gupta imperialism and continued in the name of the Mālava-gaṇa, the Mālava people and the Mālava lords.

By the eighth and the ninth centuries A.D. absolute monarchy, with all its implications, became an established institution in India. The very conception of a republican state passed beyond the horizon of the mind of the Indians. In the last decade of the ninth century the Mālava-gaṇa was entirely merged into the luminous personality of Vikramāditya, whose memory was still enshrined in the popular mind, and the era was called after him. Vikramāditya himself came to be regarded as a king and the era was some times called the era of the king Vikrama or Vikramāditya. This transference from republicanism to monarchism in popular mind is not unique in India. Who, except a few learned scholars, knows to-day that Lord Krṣṇa was a republican leader and the father of Lord Buddha was the chief of a republic?

Fleet: Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum, Vol. III, No. 1, pp. 1-27,
The omission of the Vikrama era in the astronomical works is capable of an easy explanation. Though the Śakas were repelled in their first attempt of invading India, they renewed their invasion in about 78 A.D. They conquered Avanti and made Ujjayini their capital. We also know from the Jain work Prabhāvaka-Charita that they started the Śaka era in 78 A.D. In those days Ujjayini was a great seat of learning and a centre of astronomical researches. Astronomers, like other erudites, flocked to this city even under the Śakas. The Mālavas were dislodged from Avanti and pushed towards north-east and the city of Ujjayini was compelled to discontinue the era founded by the Mālavas and was forced to adopt the era started by the Śakas. During the long period of about three hundred years, when the Śakas were ruling over Avanti and Surāśṭra, the Mālava era had hardly any chance of revival at Ujjayini. The astronomers used the official Śaka era. In the beginning they did so under compulsion. Later on it became fashionable and habitual. Further, some sanctity was attached to the Śaka era when it came to be associated with Śālivāhana which made it more popular than before. The Guptas conquered and ruled over Avanti for about a century and a half. The official era of the Gupta was their own. But the astronomers who had became conservative by this time and were psychologically reconciled to the Śaka-Śālivāhana era, persisted in its use and would not adopt the Gupta era. When the power of the Guptas disappeared, the Mālava era was still current, but the astronomers would not change the mode of their dating. Such was the case not only in Central India and the Deccan where the Śaka era became widely current and popular, but also in northern India where the Vikrama era assumed its present name and became universal. Astronomers and astrologers date their compositions in the Śaka era as late as the nineteenth century A.D. It was mainly due to their reconciliation to the Śaka-Śālivāhana era and partly due to the lack of proper political perspective in them.¹

¹ For the history of individual Indian astronomers from Āryabhaṭṭa to Govinda Śaṅkara, see the Gaṇakataraṅgini of Sudhakara Dvivedi, Banaras.
The Starting Point of the Vikrama Era.

We can get the starting point of the Vikrama Era by collating the Kali, the Vikrama and the Christian eras. In the current year these eras have the following years:

Kali Era 5052
Vikrama Era 2008-9
Christian Era 1952

Thus the Vikrama Era started in (5052−2008=) 3044, Kali Era and (2009−1952=) 57 B.C. By adding 135 years to the Šaka Era we get the Vikrama Era (1873+135=) 2008. The year of the Vikrama Era starts in Northern India from the first day of the bright half of the month Chaitra, but in Gujrat and South from the first day of the bright half of the month Kartika. The Vikrama year in the north is pūrṇimānta (ending on full-moon day 15) while in the south it is aṃanta (ending on dark 30 of the month). The Vikrama Era is current all over Northern India except in Bengal where Fasli Era (a modified form of Hijri Era) has been adopted. The era is used in Surāṣṭra and Āndhra also.

24. The Inscriptions of the Guptas, their Contemporaries and their Successors.

Curiously enough the most important official-Gupta document, the Allahabad Pillar Inscription of Samudragupta, is not dated. The first three members of the Gupta dynasty did not leave any record, dated or undated. Two dated inscriptions of Samudragupta have been discovered, but they have been proved as spurious and they belong to a date much later than that of Samudragupta. Dated inscriptions are found from the reign of Chandragupta II.

Texts

(i) श्रीचन्द्रगुप्तवास्मिन् विजय-राज्य-संविद्यीं पांचमे ५
कालासूत्रमान-संविद्यीं एक बार्षिक (एक वर्षक्रमे)
[आग्रह माति] प्रथमे
शुल्कविद्वेस पंचमौँ १

English Translation.
On the fifth day of the bright half of the month first Āśādha in the year 61 of the era traditionally current during the fifth victorious regnal year of Śrī-Chandragupta.

On the eleventh day of the bright half of the month Āṣāḍha in the year 82 (of the Gupta Era).

On the fourth day of the month Bhādrapada, in the year 93 (of the Gupta Era).

.....in the year thirteenth added to one hundred (of the Gupta Era).

On the tenth day of the month Kārtika in the year seventeen added to one hundred (of the Gupta Era), during the victorious reign of Śri Kumāragupta.

On the seventh day of the month Phālguna in the year 124 (of the Gupta Era), when paramadaiva paramabhattāraka-mahārajājādhirāja Śri Kumāragupta was the lord of the earth.

When Kumāragupta was ruling over the earth and shining like the sun during one hundred together with sixteen (of the era) of the lords of the earth belonging to the Gupta dynasty.


5 Dumodarpur Copper-plate Inscription of the reign of Kumāragupta I, Ep. Ind., Vol. XV, p. 130 f.

On the sixth day, at night, of the month Prāṣṭhapada in the year one hundred increased by thirty and also six more according to the calculation of the Gupta Kāla (Era).

In the year one hundred increased by thirty and seven others also of the Gupta Era.....on the first day of the first half of the month Vaiśakha.

In the year 138 counted according to the Gupta Era.

In the month Phālguna in the year one hundred followed by forty six (of the Gupta Era) during the prosperous and victorious reign of Skandagupta.

On the second day of the month Jyeṣṭha in the year 154 of the Guptas (Gupta Era), when Kumāragupta was protecting the earth.

[On the seventh day of the month Vaiśākha, at the time of the constellation Mūla belonging to the dark fortnight] when Budhagupta was ruling over the earth and one hundred years together with fifty-seven of the Guptas (Gupta Era) had elapsed.

2 Ibid.
3 Ibid.
(xiv) सो १००+६०+१
अग्नि दि १०+२
परम देवन-परमभूतारक-
maharajajyviraj- śivabha-
gules prabha pata ॥¹

On the thirteenth day of the month Āṣāḍha, in the year 163 (of the Gupta Era), when parama-dai-
nataparamabhaṭṭāraka-mahārājādhirāja-
Śri Budhagupta was the lord of the earth.

(xv) वर्तमानादिग्रेर्वनस्य-
शत-मंकस्रे पौषमस्य
चतुविशालितम दिवसे ॥³

On the twenty-fourth day of the month Pauṣa in the year 188 cur-
rent (of the Gupta Era).

(xvi) संतसरः एकत्रयतुल्ये
अवन-हृदय-सप्तमां
संवत १००+९०+१
अवन- ६०  दि ७० ॥¹¹
श्रीमानमुलीजमर्गतिः प्रवीरेः
राजा महानर्वेषमोऽतिपुर ॥ ॥ Pārtha.

On the seventh day of the dark fortnight of the month Śravaṇa in
the year 191 (of the Gupta Era),
when king Śri-Bhānuguṇa was a
great hero in the world equal to
raja mahānāraveseśmōṭitpur ॥ ॥ Pārtha.

(xvii) सो १०० + ५०+९
माघ दि १० ज ॥⁴

On the seventh day of the month Māgha in the year 150 (of the Gupta Era).

(xviii) लिखित संवतसरः
तिनकल्पूले चाँचमास
दिवसे दशमे ॥⁵

Written on the tenth day of the month Chaitra in the year one
hundred together with ninety-three
(of the Gupta Era).

¹ Damodarpur Copper-plate Inscription of the reign of Budhagupta, Ep. Ind., Vol. XV, p. 135 f.
² Gunaighar Copper-plate Inscription of Vainyaguṇa, Indian Historical Quarterly, Vol. VI, p. 53 ff.
On the thirteenth day of the bright half of the month Chaitra; in the Mahā-Asvayuja-Samvatsara; in two centuries of years increased by nine; in the glorious augmenting and victorious reign; in the enjoyment of sovereignty by the Gupta kings, —on this (lunar day), (specified) as above by the year, month and day.

On the tenth day of the month Phālguna, in the first year, when the Mahārājādhīrāja Śrī-Tormāna of wide fame and glory was ruling over the earth.

The month of Kārτika, cool and fragrant with the perfume of the red lillies blossomed by the smile of the rays of the moon, having come, while the spotless moon was shining, in the fifteenth year of the augmenting reign of the bull among the kings, when that king, the remover of distress and possessed of large and pellucid eyes, was governing the earth.

On the fifteenth day of dark fortnight of the month Vaisakha in the year 252 (of the Gupta Valabhi Era).

On the fifth day of the bright
fortnight of the month Jyeṣṭha in
the year 447 (of the Gupta-Valabhi
Era).

25. The Main Features of Dating:

(1) A continuous and regular era is used in these inscriptions except those issued under the Hūṇas. In early years the word ‘Gupta’ is not associated with the era.

(2) In some of the inscriptions the year of the regular era and the regnal year of the reigning king both are given.

(3) The details of dating consist of year, season, month, fortnight, date and some time constellation.

(4) The dating in eulogistic and dedicative inscriptions is detailed, metrical and poetic; but in the copperplate grants shorter, simpler and in prose.

(5) The Hūṇa intruders Toramāṇa and Mihirakula used their own regnal years with other details of the Indian system of dating.

(6) There is no strict uniformity in the system of dating.

26. The Foundations and Currency of the Gupta Era:

The era in question has been called ‘Gupta-Kāla’, ‘Gupta-Prakāla’ and ‘Gupta-Vārṣa’. Evidently the era was founded by some early Gupta king. In the Allahabad pillar inscription of Samudragupta the first and the second Gupta kings Śrī Gupta and Ghatotkacha has been styled as mere ‘mahārāja’ indicating their subordinate position, whereas the third king Chandragupta has been given the title of ‘mahārājādhīraṇa’, showing his sovereign status. It is, therefore, inferred that the third king of the Gupta dynasty, Chandragupta I, founded the Gupta Era. The latest record of Chandragupta II, the grandson of Chandragupta I, is dated G.E. 93 and the earliest record of Kumāragupta I, the great grandson of Chandragupta

1 Alina Copper-plate Inscription of Śilāditya VII; Fleet: Corp. Ins. Ind., Vol. III, p. 171 ff.
I, is dated G.E. 96. Under the circumstances, it can be safely maintained that Chandragupta died c. G.E. 95. Thus for the reign-periods of three kings we get 95 years, in case we hold that the reign of Chandragupta I started from G.E. 1. To some 95 years appear a bit too long a period for three reigns. But they should be reminded that three Moghal rulers Akbar, Jahangir and Shahjahan ruled for 102 years (1556-1658 A.D.) This fact supports the inference that it was quite possible for Chandragupta 1 to found the Gupta Era.

What is the starting point of the Gupta Era? Here Alberuni comes to our help. He writes, "And as regards the Gupta era,—(the members of this dynasty), were, it is said, a race wicked and strong; and so after they became extinct people dated by them. And it seems as if Valabhi was the last of them. And so the beginning of their era also is later than the Śaka era (by) 241 (years).....So, then 1488 years of the era of Śri-Harsha are in correspondence with the year (of Yazdajird) that we have taken as a gauge; and 1088 of the Vikramāditya; and 953 of the Śaka era; and 712 of the era of Valabhi, which is also the Gupta era." According to the above-quoted statement the difference between the Śaka era and the Gupta era is that of 241 or (953—722) years. The Śaka was started in 78 A.D. Thus by calculation the initial year of the Gupta era was 241 plus 78=319 A.D. The year of the Gupta era starts from the first day of the bright half of the month Chaitra and ends on the full—moon day. In the inscriptions, the years of this era are past years; whenever they are mentioned 'vartamāna' (current) they mean one more additional year.

27. The Valabhi Era:

The Valabhi era was the same as the Gupta Era current in Surāśṭra. After the end of Gupta rule there, the kings of Valabhi (capital town) adopted the Gupta era but re-named it as Valabhi era. About this era Alberuni says, "And as regards,

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2 Ojha: *Prāchīna Līpimālā*, p. 175.
the era of Valabhi,—who was the ruler of the city of Valabhi which was south of the city of Anhilvada by nearly thirty *yojanas*,—its beginning was later than the Śaka era, and substract from it the sum of the cube of six and the square of five; and there remains (the year of) the Valabhi”.¹ By calculation the Valabhi era started from \(78 + 6^3 + 5^2 = 319\) A.D., the same year from which the Gupta Era started. Hence both the eras were identical.

28. The Inscriptions of the Vākāṭakas and their Contemporaries in the Deccan and the South.

(1) The Inscriptions of the Vākāṭakas; 

Texts

(i) सावःच्छरे १० + ७ 
हेमन्तपक्ष पदम दिवस 
\(5^{10}\)

(ii) संपत्ते श्रयोदये (से) 
शिष्यितमवं शासनम् \(3^{18}\)

(iii) सेनापति विनायकप्रिया 
संवत्सरोक्तादया १० + 
८ वेष्टभागमशुक्लमास- 
श्रयोदयां \(1^{14}\)

English Translation.

On the fifth day of the first fortnight of the season *Hemanta* (winter) in the regnal year 37 (of Vindhyāśakti II).

This grant was written in the thirteenth regnal year (of Prabhāvatiguptā).

On the thirteenth day of the bright half of the month *Jyesṭha* in the regnal year 18 (of Pravarasena II), when Chitravarma was the commander-in-chief.

(2) The Inscriptions of the Pallavas

(i) सवःच्छरे दसम् १० 
गिष्ट्वाप्यक्षो छठी ६ 
दिवसं पंचमम् \(5^{15}\)

On the fifth day of the sixth fortnight of the season *Grīṣma* (summer) in the regnal year 10 (of Śiva-skandavarman).


⁴ **Chammaka Copper-plate Inscription of Pravarasena II, Fleet: Corp. Ins. Ind.,** Vol. III, p. 236 ff.

⁵ **Mavidavolu Copper-plate Inscription of Sivaskandavarman, Ep. Ind.,** Vol. VI, p. 86 ff.
(ii) म (स्व) विजय-राज्य-
संवक्सरे चन्द्रयं वैशाख-
शृक पाचमया।।

On the fifth day of the bright
fortnight of the month Vaisakha in
the fourth (his own) victorious
regnal year of Śimhavarman.

(3) The Inscriptions of the Kadambas.
(Not dated)

(4) The Western Gaṅgas.
(Not dated)

(5) The Eastern Gaṅgas
(i) प्रवद्धमान-सं ३० + ९
वैशाख दि २० + १
On the twenty-first day of the
month Vaisākha in the augmenting
regnal year 39 (of Indravarman).

(ii) गा्स्स्यहस्स (वंश)
प्रवधमान विजयराय
संवं शर सतालिशि चन्द्रुरो-
तरा (संवस्मायिशि श्रीणि-
चन्द्रुरोतरा)।।
गा्स्स्यहस्स (वंश)
In the prosperous and victorious
year 304 of the Gaṅga dynasty.

29. The Main Features of the System of Dating:
(1) The dynasties of the Deccan and the south dated
their documents in the regnal years of their rulers;
there is no use of a regular continuous era either
Vikrama, Śaka or Gupta.

(2) In the details of dating they followed, naturally, the
Andhra-Śatavahana system.

(3) The Eastern Gaṅgas of Kalinga, who were more
allied to the North than to the Deccan and the South
were influenced by the Guptas in the style and the

2 Jirgini Copper-plate Inscription of Indravarman, Ep. Ind., Vol. XXV, p. 286 f.
details of dating. But they used their own Gāṅgeya Era.¹

30. The Inscriptions of the Maukharis and the Puṣyabhūtis.

(i) एकादशाबारिकस्येन पद्मस्य \[\text{When six hundred autumns, increased by eleven (of the Mālava-Vikrama Era) had elapsed, while the illustrious Iśānavarman, who had crushed his enemies, was the lord of the earth.}\]

(ii) संवत् २० + २ कालिक \[\text{On the first day of the dark fortnight of the month Kārtika in the regnal year 22 (of Śrī-Harṣa).}\]

(iii) संवत् २० + ५ मांसमीय \[\text{On the sixth day of the dark fortnight of the month Mārgaśīrśa in the year 25 (of Śrī-Harṣa).}\]

(iv) संवत् २० + ५ प्रवम \[\text{On the second day of the bright fortnight of the month first Pauṣa in the year 34 (of Śrī-Harṣa).}\]

31. The Main Features of the System of Dating:

(i) The Maukharis followed the metrical and poetic style of the Gupta system of dating.⁶

(ii) The Maukharis, however, did not adopt the Gupta Era. No name is associated with the year 611 mentioned in the Harha inscription of Iśānadeva.⁷ But obviously it is neither the Śaka Era nor the Gupta Era, because

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¹ The starting point of this era was 590 A.D. according to Barnet (Antiquities of India, p. 95) and c. 570 A.D. according to Ojha (Pra-china-Lipimāla, p. 176-177). But both the dates are conjectured. The style of the first of inscriptions of this dynasty quoted above indicates that the era was founded earlier.


⁵ Kielhorn: Inscription of Amāuvan of Nepal. The List of the Inscriptions of Northern India, p. 73, No. 530.

⁶ Only the Harha Stone Inscription of Iśānavarman (Ep. Ind., Vol., XIV, p. 115) is dated. Other inscriptions of the Maukharis so far discovered are undated.

in either case Iśanavarman will come after Harṣa, which is an impossibility. Under the circumstances the year 611 can only be referred to the Mālava Era. This is perhaps the first instance of the Mālava Era appearing almost in the once home-territory of the Guptas immediately after the end of their rule. The omission of the name Mālava is also significant. The omission marks the mysterious psychological process through which the term ‘Mālava’ was converted into Vikrama.

(iii) The Puṣyabhūtis were even more independent of the Guptas than the Maukharis in the matter of dating. Harṣa founded a regular era of his own; he changed the style from poetic to prosaic and cut down the combrous details of dating (see Nos. ii and iii) in his copper-plate inscriptions.

32. The Harṣa Era:
There is no doubt that the Harṣa Era was founded by Śrī Harṣa, the greatest king of the Puṣyabhūti dynasty and the last emperor of ancient India, though his name has never been found associated with this era. As regards the starting point of this era Alberuni throws a welcome light upon it. He writes that he saw in a Kashmiri calendar a statement according to which Harṣa flourished later than Vikramādiṭya by 664 years. We have no reason to doubt this statement. Thus the initial year of the Harṣa Era will be 664—57 = 606—7 A.D. The Harṣa Era was current in northern India and Nepal for about three hundred years before it was replaced by the Vikramā Era.

33. Early Medieval Inscriptions:

Texts

(i) संवत् १२२६(फळ्गुन संवत्) पठविते ग्रामवासेः गुरोपारे च हस्तके। बुधनामिनि योगेन्द्र करणे हैलिते तथा ॥

In the year 1226 (of the Vikrama Era), month Phālguna, dark fortnight, Thursday, constellation Hasta; yoga vṛddhi, karana taittīla.

1 Sachau. Alberum's India.
On Sunday, the 15th day of the dark fortnight of the month Pauṣa in the year 1166 (of the Vikrama Era).

On Monday, the 3rd day of the bright fortnight of the month Māgha in the year 1154 (of the Vikrama Era) in Banaras on the occasion of uttarāyana samkrānti.

On the fifth day of the month Chaitra in the year 8 (of the reign of Madanapāla).

On the sixteenth day of the month Vaiśakha in the year 11 (of the reign of Ballālasena).

On the 29th day of the month Bhādra in the year (past) 51 of the reign of Sri Lakṣmaṇasena.

On Thursday, the 12th day of the dark fortnight of the month Vaiśākha in the year (past) 74 of the reign of Śrī Lakṣmaṇasena.

On Thursday, the 7th day of the month Vaiśākha in the year 1223 (of the Vikrama Era).

2 Gahadavala Inscription.
5 *Ep. Ind.*, Vol. XII, p. 29.
On the auspicious occasion of Mahāviśākha, Sunday, Parigha-yoga. Viśākha constellation, the 15th full moon day of the bright half of the month Vaiśākha in the year 1256 (of the Vikrama Era) in number, (in words) when twelve hundred years increased by fifty-six of the Vikrama Era had passed.

During the reign of Raja Śrimat Prthvirdeva in the year 893 of the Kalachuri Era.

On Sunday, the first date in the bright half of the month Suchi (Jyeṣṭha or Asāḍha), in the year 902 of the Chedi Era during the reign of Śri Gayakarṇadeva.

When thirty and three thousand five years joined with seven hundred and years, have passed since the Bhārata war to now, and when fifty and six and five hundred years of the Śaka kings also have gone by in the Kali age.'

2 Ind. Ant., Vol. XX, p. 84.
3 Ibid., Vol. XVIII, p. 211.
4 Aihole Stone Inscription of the reign of Pulikesin II Chālukya of Badami, Ep. Ind., Vol. VI, p. 1 ff verses 33-34.
(xiii) शकनौकालेष्ट (६७) शते चतुर्थकालाकन्तरे समम्बगते दुधुभिनामगते वर्ष प्रतिदिनान्त स्वनातु रागोत्कर्ष ।

When the time of the Śaka king consisting of eight hundred and twentyfour years has gone by, while the year named duniṇubhi, which overflows with kindness to mankind, is current.

(xiv) शकनौकालातित संवतसर्वत्रे नबरु पदच्युरारितारितिकु अकृतः संवत्् ११०६ राजसी संवत्तरान्तरात बैशाली पीषयमास्यामाद्यवारे।

On Sunday, the full moon day of the month Vaiśākha in the year (namely Rākṣasī) 946 (of the Śaka Era) in figures, (in words) when nine hundred years increased by fortysix of the Śaka king had passed.

(xv) श्री मच्छालुक्वयविक्रमकालाय १२ नेव्य प्रयवसंवत्सराद०।

In the year 12, prabhava by name, of the Chalukyavikrama Era.

(xvi) श्री वीरविक्रमकालकालम संवतसर्वत्रेक वववाक्ति प्रमहानवत्सर्वत्रे वर्तमान बालु संवतसरे।

In the year 21, Kāla by name, of the Vira-Vikrama Era.

(xvii) काले (शकेक) १६०७ मांगिरवंदि अद्वैम मागस्यथेसंभोजनिः सोमदिनिः... नेपाल सम्बत्् २०६।

On Sunday, Maghā constellation, eighth day of the dark fortnight of the month Mārgaśīrṣa, in the year 1607 of the Śaka Era (equal to the year 806 of the Nepal Era.

34. The Main Features of the System of Dating:

(i) Gradually the Vikrama Era became current and popular in northern India mostly due to the expansion of the ruling dynasties from Madhya Bharata...

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1 Mulgund Ins. of Krṣṇa II, Ep. Ind., Vol. XII, p. 192.
and Rajasthan to that area; the Svetambara Jains carried it to Surashtra and popularised it elsewhere also; after the fall of the Sakas at Ujjayini, the Sakas lost its hold in the north and Krta-Malava Era renamed as the Vikrama Era regained its prestige and when it was adopted by the astronomers and astrologers it became almost universal in the north.

(ii) The Harsha Era, the Newar Era, the Traikutaka, the Kalachuri or the Chedi Era and the Laksmana-sena Era which were started or adopted during this period had almost local currency and could not survive long. The first three were replaced by the Vikrama Era and the last one by Fasli Era introduced by the Muslims in Bengal which later on was termed as Bengali Era (Vangabda).

(iii) The Sakas, the centre and home of which was Avanti, but which was once used by the Kshaharatas of Maharastra, travelled towards the Deccan and the South, though some of the dynasties still preferred their regnal years to any regular era; but slowly the Sakas gained ground through the astrologers of the Ujjayini school and also due to the association of the name of Saliwahana with it later on.

(iv) With the Sakas, the Kali Era was also in some cases used. The latter was counted from vernal equinox of 3101 B.C. The era was first made known by Aryabhatta Suryasiddhanta, iii, 10) in the fifth century A.D. The cycle of Bhaspati also came to be used.

1 See section 32 of this chapter.
2 The era was started from Oct. 20, 879 A.D.; see Kielhorn, Ind., Ant. Vol. XVII, p. 246 and Ojha, Prachina-lipimila, p. 181-182.
3 According to Kielhorn this era started from August 26, 249 A.D. (Ind. Ant., Vol. XVII, p. 299).
4 Various starting years of this era were used. Kielhorn worked out Oct. 7, 1179 A.D. as the initial point (Ind. Ant., Vol. XIX, p. 6).
(v) The Chālukya Vikrama Era\(^1\) and the Kollama Era\(^2\) were started in the Deccan and the South respectively but they did not gain currency and popularity.

(vi) There is no uniformity regarding the actual system of dating:

(a) Dating is both in verse and prose as required by the document.

(b) The years are mentioned often in words and figures both and sometimes in figures only.

(c) In elaborate dating year, month, fortnight, date, day, constellation, yoga etc. are given; in a few inscriptions parvas are also mentioned.

(d) In simpler dating only years are given.

(e) In many cases the dates are expressed not in figures or common words but through significant symbolic words; it was a peculiar device of Indian astrologers.

---

\(^1\) Vikramāditya VI, the later Chālukya ruler of Kalyani started this era in 1075-76 A.D. (Ojha: Prāchīna-lipimālā, p. 181-2). It lasted for about 100 years.

\(^2\) This era was started in 824-25 in order to commemorate some event connected with Kollama, a town on the western coast of Travancore. The era had a very restricted currency, but it is still persisting in Malabar. (Ind. Ant., Vol. XXV, p. 54).
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INDEX

A

‘A’, 17
Abbreviations, 110
Abhidhammapiṭaka, 79
Abhidharma-Vibhaṣā-sāstra, 79
Abhyarhitas, 118
Āchārya, 118
Achyuta, 131
Ādārśa, 27
Ādaṁśalipi, 23
Adhāi Din kā Jhoprā, 144
Āḍhakas, 138
Adhyāṭārinilipi, 24
Administration, 123-7
Agathocles, Indo-BAcctrian king, 60
Agrāyaṇa, 12
Ahichhatra, 126
Aila, 129
Aitareya-Brāhmaṇa, 198
Ajanta caves, 84
Ājñāpatram, 117-8
Akbar, 58, 208
Akhasale, 94
Akkhara, 8
Akharapiṭṭhiyā, 23
Akharapuṇṭṭhiyā, 23
Akkharikā, 6
Akṣaras, 12-3
Akṣāśālikā, 94
Alberuni, 5, 67, 208
Albright, his opinion on Hrozny’s work, 65
Alexander, 5, 6
Allāhabad Pillar Inscription of Samudragupta, 131-3
Alwis, D, 74
Amarakoṣa, 66
Amāṭya, 94
Āṅkaliikkha, 23
Āṅkaliivi, 23

Anantavarman, 59
Ancient Indian Script, history of, 586
Āṇḍhra, 157, 202
Āṅgalipi, 23, 26
Āṅguliyanlipi, 23, 26
Anhilvada, 209
Āṅkalipi, 27
Āṅkuṣa, 115
Antaka, 132
Antarikṣadevalipi, 27
Antarikṣalipi, 23
Antastha, 12
Antiquity of the art of writing in India, 1-21
Anudrutalipi, 24
Anulomalipi, 23
Anunāsika, 48
Anustubha, 13
Anusvāra, 48
Apara-Gauaḍ-ığı, 25
Apiśāli, 11
Appolodotos, coins of, 63
Aramaic, 45
Arbuda, 14
Arhatas, 129, 148
Arthaśastra, 9, 22
Āryabhāṭṭa, 216
Āryan, 1
Āryāvarta, 131
Ārva-vasudhārā, 152
Āśāthka, 214
Asiatic Society of Bengal, 58
Asikanagara, 129
Aśoka, 22, 46-7, 89, 100, 128, 142, 156, 165-6, 176, 178
Aśokan inscriptions, 8, 9, 17-8, 166
Aṣṭādhyāyī, 11-1, 22
Asuralipi, 23, 25
Asuravijayi, 131
Āśvina, 168-9
A 

Atharvaveda, 13 
Audumbarāyaṇa, 12 
Aṅgādiyā, 126 
Aurṇānābha, 12 
Aupamanyava, 12 
Auspicious Symbols, 110-1 
Avanti, 201, 216 
Āyasa-livi, 23, 27 
Ayaskara, 93 
Ayuta, 14 

B 

Babington, 59 
Badha-mangala, 29, 111, 145 
Baḍli inscription, 19 
Bahasatimitra, king, 130 
Bahula, 110 
Balādhikṛta, 94 
Ballālasena, 213 
Baribhi, 22 
Bāna, 81 
Bandhuvarman, 120, 134-5 
Barnāsa, 139 
Benediction, 152-6 
Benfey, 40, 83 
Bensagar Garuḍa Pillar Inscription, 145, 149, 166 
Bhādra, 213 
Bhādrapada, 138, 184 
Bhāgabhadrā, 123, 134, 145, 180 
Bhāgavata, 134, 149 
Bhagavatisūtra, 22 
Bhagavat-pratimā, 138 
Bhallaka, 125 
Bhānugupta, 143 
Bhāratavarṣa, 130 
Bhārata war, 214 
Bhāravi, 175 
Bhāradvāja, 11 
Bharukachha, 139 
Bhāskara, 151 
Bhāṭṭa Bālachandra, 127 
Bhattacharul, 18, 78 

Bhaumadevalipi, 23, 26 
Bhogachandra, 171 
Bhogavaiyā, 22 
Bhojakas, 129 
Bhojana-maṭapas (Maṇḍapas), 137 
Bhojana-śaḷās, 137 
Bhumichhidra-nyāya, 127 
Bhūrjapatra, 6, 66-7 
Bigabha, 137 
Bindusāra, 177 
Bodai, pillar inscription, 59 
Bodhi-vṛtkṣa, 111 
Bothling, 16 
Bothon, W. H., 60 
Bower, 68, 103, 145 
Brahmā, 3, 4, 38, 152 
Brāhmaṇas, 13, 26, 139, 140, 158, 173-4 
Brahmavallilipi, 23 
Brāhmī, 1, 2, 4, 16-19, 22-26, 29, 34-50, 59, 99 
Brahmanical literature, 8, 13-6 
Brass, 81 
Bṛhajjñanakoṣa, 71, 74 
Bṛhatvirāja, 13 
Bṛhaspati, 3, 216 
Bricks, 76 
Bronze, 82 
Buddha, 148, 200 
Buddhism, 171 
Buddhist Literature, 6, 19 
Budhagupta, 91, 204-05 
Bühler, W. G., 2, 6, 8, 9, 16-18, 35, 38-50, 62, 64, 72, 77, 95, 99-01, 105 
Burnell, 1, 95 
Burns, Sir Alexander, 63 

C 

Canon, his view on origin of Brāhmī script, 41 
Chāga, 157 
Chaitra, 213
INDEX

Chaitya, 111, 137, 157
Chanamapatha, 138
Chakradāsa, 171
Chakralipi, 23, 26
Chakravāka, 155
Chakravarman, 11
Chālukya Vikrama Era, 215, 217
Chālukyas, 115-6, 143, 175
Chanchu, 125
Chandamukha-thera, 170
Chandra, 149
Chandragupta, 177, 207
Charakas, 139
Charmāśiras, 12
Chāstana, 192
Chaturāṣītivasa, 176
Chatugabhā, 137
Chatuspada, 13
Chetirāja-vasa-vardhana, 129
Chetiya-ghara, 137
Chhandas, 12
Chedi Era, 214, 216
China, 41; encyclopedias of, 24; liptis of, 23, 25
Chitravarman, 209
Chitravarman Senapati, 172
Cholas, 116
Commensurate, 142-4
Corrections, 108
Copper, 78
Cotton, cloth, an ancient writing material, 71
Cunningham, 35, 46, 62, 64, 76-7
Cust, R. N., 43
Curtius, Q., 6, 66, 83

D

Dahamika, 139
Dakṣamitrā, 168
Dakṣinālipi, 23, 26
Dakṣināpatha, 131, 140
Dama, 157
Damana, 139
Dāmili, 23
Dānapattra, 78
Darada, 25
Daradalipi, 23, 25
Dāsakumāra-charita, 73-86
Dāśiratha, 137, 178-9
Dāsāpura, 135, 139
Dāsottarapada-Sandhilikhita-lipi, 24
David, Rhys, 88
Debir, 90
Deeke, his view on the origin of the Brāhmi script, 41
Devadeva, 149
Devadevasa Vāsudevasa, 134
Devalipi, 23, 27
Devānāṃpriya, 149
Devaputra, 138, 153
Devasiṅhadeva, (Mahārāja Sāndhi-Vighika), 172
Devir, 90
Dhamma, 122-24, 128, 152, 156-7, 161, 165
Dhaṁmalipi, 122, 152, 165
Dhaṁma Mahāmātras, 124
Dhaṁma-maṅgala, 153, 156, 165
Dhaṁma-nandi-thera, 170
Dhaṁmapada, 102
Dhaṁma-vijaya, 128
Dhānada, 132
Dhanika, 119
Dharaṇīprekṣaṇalipi, 24
Dharma, 149, 160
Dharma-chakra, 111
Dharmalekhin, 92
Dharmā-sama, 117, 170
Dharmavidhi, 72
Dharmavijaya, 131
Dhauili, 102
Digambara, 177
Dikṣhit, Shankara Balakrishna, 37
Dinik, 139
Dīp, 55
Dīpi, 22, 55
Dipikara, 89-90
Direction of Writing, 97-101
Diringer, David, 2, 32, 36, 38, 43
Divira, 89-90, 94
Divasa, 110
Divirapati, 89
Diviras, 89
Diyumeta, 130
Donative, 136-162
Dosapuriya, 22
Dowson, 35
Dravidalipi, 23, 26
Dravidian, 23, 29
Drśtaṁ, 146
Dundubhi, 215
Dūtaka, 110, 142, 171
Dūtaka Devanandavāmi, 171
Diviruttarapada-Sandhilikhita-lipi, 24
Gaṅaka, 14, 91
Gaṅamukhya, 198
Gaṅanā, 7
Gaṅapatī, 115
Gaṅapatīnāga, 131
Gaṅavartalipi, 24, 27
Gandhārapalipi, 23, 26
Gandharvas, 26
Gaṅga, 9
Gaṅga, 130, 170, 210
Gaṅgas, 147, 210
Gaṅgeya Era, 211
Gaṅitalivi, 23, 27
Gaṇiyalivi, 23
Gaṇjadivira, 90
Gārgya, 11, 12
Garuḍa, 113-16
Garuḍa-ketu, 151
Garuḍalipi, 23, 26
Garuḍamadaṅka, 113
Gāthā, 103, 110
Gauda, 26
Gayakarṇa Devasri, 214
Gāyatrī, 13
Ghara-mukha, 137
Ghatotkacha, 207
Ghoṣa, 13
Gīnihāṇa, 110
Gīrṇar, 102
Godfreys, 68
Gold, 77
Goldstücker, 16
Goratha-giri, 130
Govinda, 171
Grāhasthāpana, 72
Grantha, 11
Grhya, 10
Grhyasūtras, 82
Grierson, 62
Griṣma, 110, 209
Grouping of letters and words, 102-03
Gupta, 156, 175
Gupta, Era, 126, 209, 210, 211, 212
### INDEX

| Gupta-Vākāṣṭaka, | Guftas, 116 | Gwalior Stone Inscriptions of Mihira-kula, 160 |

| H | I | J | K | L | M | N | O | P | Q | R | S | T | U | V | W | X | Y | Z |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I’</th>
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<th>Z’</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Idānims, 14</td>
<td>Ikṣvākurāja, 150</td>
<td>Ikṣvākus, 154, 167, 170</td>
<td>Imprecation, 161-164</td>
<td>Indica, 5</td>
<td>Indra, 132, 149</td>
<td>Indrājī, Pr. Bhagavanlal, 183</td>
<td>Indravarman, 210</td>
<td>Indus Valley Script, 29-33, 97, 120-21, 206-21</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Initiation, 145-48 | Ink, as a material of writing, 82-84 | Īśānadeva, 211 | Īśānavarman, 212 | Instruments of writing, 85-6 | Invocation, 148-52 | Iran, 82 | Īśvaradāsa, 171 |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>J’</th>
<th>K’</th>
<th>L’</th>
<th>M’</th>
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<td>Karaṇa, 92, 212</td>
<td>Kumārāmātya, 132, 171</td>
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<td>Karaṇin, 92</td>
<td>Kuṇḍala, 109</td>
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<td>Karabana, 139</td>
<td>Kuṣaṇa, 157, 166</td>
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<td>Laksmānasena Era, 213, 216</td>
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<td>Kaśyapa, 11</td>
<td>Lalitavigharaṇāja, 144</td>
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<td>Kathāsaritsāgara, 85</td>
<td>Lalitavistara, 4, 7, 23, 73, 85</td>
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<td>Langdon, 64</td>
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<td>Kāṭyāyana-smṛti, 73</td>
<td>Lankāvatāra, 69</td>
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<td>Kautilya, 9, 22</td>
<td>Lassen, 35</td>
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<td>Kautsa, 12</td>
<td>Laudation, 156-61</td>
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<td>Kāyaṣṭha, 90-92</td>
<td>Leather, 73-74</td>
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<td>Kāvirāja, 132</td>
<td>Lekha, 7-9</td>
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<td>Kāvyā, 93, 132</td>
<td>Lekhaka, 7-9, 876-89</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kharāvela, 130, 169, 182, 183</td>
<td>Lekhani, 85</td>
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<td>Kharoṣṭhī, 16, 22-25, 29, 50-57, 62, 63, 77, 100-01</td>
<td>Lekhapāṇchāśikā, 95</td>
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<td>Kharoṣṭhī Dhammapada, 68, 103</td>
<td>Lekhapratilekhalipi, 24</td>
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<td>Libi, 21</td>
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<td>Khasyalipi, 23, 25</td>
<td>Libikara, 89</td>
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<td>Kia-lu, 24</td>
<td>Line, 101-02</td>
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<td>Kinnaralipi, 23, 26</td>
<td>Liṅgatobhadra, 72</td>
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<td>Kollama Era, 217</td>
<td>Lipi, 11, 21</td>
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<td>Kotivarṣa, 91</td>
<td>Lipikara, 11, 89</td>
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<td>Konow, Sten, 5-51, 183</td>
<td>Lipiśālā, 7, 93</td>
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<td>Krṣna, 154, 200</td>
<td>Lohakara, 93</td>
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<td>Krṣṇa-Mālava Era, 216</td>
<td>Lokaṇaprakāśa, 90, 91, 95</td>
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<td>Kṣaharātā, 137, 139, 146, 157, 167, 186, 216</td>
<td>Lüder, 183</td>
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<td>Kṣatrapa Nahapāna, 139</td>
<td>Ludwig, 51</td>
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<td>Kṣatrapas, 157, 167, 186</td>
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<td>Kṣatrapa Vanaspara, 167</td>
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<td>Kṣemendra, 90, 95</td>
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<td>Kumāragupta, 114, 120, 123, 172, 200, 202, 204</td>
<td>Macartna, 69</td>
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<td>Kumārasaṭṭhibhava, 66</td>
<td>Madana, 170</td>
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<td>Kumāri-parvata, 130</td>
<td>Madanapāla, 213</td>
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<td>Madhyakṣara-Vistaralipi, 23, 27</td>
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<td>Māgha, 172, 213, 215</td>
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<td>Magical, 121-22</td>
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<td>Mahā-Āsvayuja-Samvatsara, 206</td>
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<td>Mahābhārata, 9, 11, 87</td>
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<td>Mahādanaḍanāyaka, 132, 171</td>
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INDEX

Mahāmātrās, 124-25
Mahāmeghāvāhana, 129
Mahoragali, 23, 27
Mahāsāṅghika, 167
Mahāsāsari, 23
Mahasthāna Stone-plaque Ins., 19, 164
Mahāvagga, 7, 88
Mahāvijayapraśāda, 130
Mahāvīra, 176
Mahāviśākha, 214
Mahāyāna, 153
Mahesari, 23, 26
Mālava Era, 120, 123, 212
Mālavagaṇa, 196
Mālavas, 196, 201
Mālavas-Vikrama Era, 212
Mamallapuram, 59
Mānava Kalpasūtra, 16
Mānavaśītiṇa, 125
Maṇḍalas, 72
Mandasor Praśasti, 104
Mandasore Stone Inscription, 120, 123, 133-34
Maṇgalā, 103, 175
Mangala-Mahaśīri, 175
Maṅgayali, 23, 26
Maṅgalam Mahāśīrih, 175
Manuals, 95
Manu-smṛtiṣṭhāraṇāh, 92
Manuṣyali, 23, 26
Mārgasīrṣa, 211-215
Markaṭaṣaṅgara, 126
Marshall, John Sir, 30
Mathura, 125
Māṭrākāsthāpana, 72
Matsya, 112
Masi, 82-83
Masikupikā, 83
Masibhāṇḍa, 83
Masipātra, 83
Masson, Ch., 63
Maudagalya, 12
Maukharis, 211-12
Mauryas, 118
Mayūrakṣa, 173
Max Müller, 1, 9
Megasthenes, 5, 6
Melā, 83
Melananda, 83
Melanandayate, 83
Melandhuka, 83
Melandhu, 83
Mellet, Sir Charles, 60
Menander, 63, 188
Meringi, 64
Merutaṅga-sūri, 177
Mesopotamia, 31
Metals, 77-82
Mihirakula, 207
Mohenojodaro, 27, 29, 120, 122, 133
Mrgachakraṇa, 23, 26
Mueller, Otfried, 39
Muhūrtas, 14

N
Nāgalipī, 23, 26
Nagaradivira, 90
Nāgas, 26
Nālandā, 114
Namokāra Mantras, 78
Namgāla, 139
Nanda Era, 129
Nandi, 112, 114
Nandarāja, 130
Nārada-Smṛti, 3
Nasika, 139
Naya-thera, 170
Nearchos, 5, 70, 83
Nepal Era, 215
Newar Era, 216
Nigamās, 120
Nikṣepalipī, 24-27
Nirvāṇā, 150, 153, 158, 167
Niyuta, 14
Norris, L., 64
Nyarbuda, 14
O

Ojha, MM. Pt. Gaurishankar Hirachand, 176
Omissions, 109
Orientation (of individual signs and letters), 97

P

Pāda, 110, 165
Pādagālki-śālī, 112
Padma, 112
Pāharaiyā, 22, 25
Pahlavi-script, 63
Paśāchi, 58
Paṣa-dina, 110
Palaeographical Formulæ, 145-175
Pallavas, 116, 147, 170, 209
Panchagabha, 137
Pānḍavas, 58
Pānini, 10, 11, 12, 22
Paṇis, 31
Panjtar Stone Inscriptions, 153
Pāniya-bhājana, 137
Pāniyaka, 137
Paśkri, 13
Pannavāna Sūtra, 4, 22
Paper, its antiquity as a writing material, 70
Pārada, 139
Parākramāṅka, 131
Paramāras, 114
Parameśvaratantra, 69
Parisha-Yoga, 214
Pārśva, 78
Pagination, 108
Paśupati, 154
Paṭa, 71
Paṭalaputra, 5
Paṭhaka, 126
Paṭika, 71
Paṭṭopādhyāya, 95
Patra-maṇjarī, 95
Paṭṭika, 168

Pattra, 108
Paulindī, 23
Pauśa, 172, 211, 213
Pedhika, 138
Phālguna, 212
Phalaka, 72
Phoenician, 1, 33, 40
Pictographical scripts, 26
Pināki, 151
Piprahwa Buddhist Vase Inscription, 19, 133, 149, 164
Pisālipadaka, 140
Pithuṇḍa, 130
Poliṇḍi, 23, 26
Positive Evidence, 16-21
Pothaka, 88
Prabhāsa, 139
Prabhāvaka-Charita, 201
Prabhāvati Gupta, 209
Prabhusūrīha, 171
Prāchinika, 138
Prādeśikas, 124
Prakṛtis, 39
Prajāpānamah, 117, 118
Prajñā-pāramitā-hṛdayasūtra, 69
Prāṇas, 14
Pran Nath, 31
Prāḍa, 14
Prasādakehyā, 119
Prasāstis, 80, 93
Prasṭha, 108, 138
Prakṣepalipi, 24, 27
Prātiṣākhyas, 16
Pṛthvi Deva Raja Śrimat, 214
Prausthapada, 125
Pravaras, 142
Pravarasena II, 209
Prayuta, 14
Prinsep, James, 39, 60-3
Priyadarśī, king, 122, 123, 128, 136, 142, 161, 165
Profession of Writing, 87-96
Proto-Elamite, 31-2
INDEX

Provincial scripts, 25, 26
Pukkarasārīya, 22, 25
Pulikeśin II, 136
Pulindas, 23, 26
Pulumātv, 181
Punctuation, 104-07
Purāṇas, 33
Purohitā, 118
Purusamedha, 14
Purusās, 126
Puravvidechālipi, 23, 26
Puṣkara-sāri, 23
 Puṣkaraśārīya, 25
Puṣpalipi, 23, 26
Pusta, 67
Pustaka, 67
Pustapāla, 171
Pusyabhūtis, 211, 212
Puthi, 67

Rūpa, 7
Rupakara, 93

Rājagrha, 130
Rājakīyam, a type of documents, 117
Rājalipikara, 89
Rājasūya, 130
Rājatarangini, 90, 91, 95
Rajjukas, 124
Rākṣasi, 215
Rāmāyaṇa, 9, 37
Rāśi-manḍala-yantra, 78
Ṛṣitapastapa-lipi, 24
Ṛṣṭrakūṭas, 115, 116, 143
Raṭhikas, 129
Raṭtas, 115
Rekhāpaṭi, 86
Religious, records, 122-23
Ṛgveda, 13, 14
Rochette, Raoul de, 39
Rohini, 196
Roth, 16
Ṛtvik, 118
Rudradāman, 125
Rudrasena, 184
Rudrasinīha, 184

Sāgaralipi, 25
Sahasra, 14
Sahi Huviśka, 138
Śaiva, 149
Śaka-kāla, 188
Śaka kings, 214-15
Śākalya, 12
Śaka-Kusaṇas, 131
Śakapuri, 12
Śākārīlipi, 23
Śakas, 154, 166, 210-11, 215-16
Śaka-Samvat, 188
Śaka-nṛpa-kāla, 188
Śaka-nṛpati-rājyābhiseka-Samvatsara, 188
Śakaṭāyana, 11-2
Śākhās, 142
Śākta, 149
Śākyas, 19
Śalākās, 72
Śālivāhana, 188, 201, 216
Samāśapati, 86
Samavāyānga Sūtra, 4
Sambodhi, 178
Sāṃdhi, 13
Sāṅkarṣaṇa, 149
Sāṃgha, 161
Sāmāja, 161
Sāṅgrahakāras, 117
Sāṅkhya-lipi, 23
Samprāśaraṇa, 49
Samudra, 14
Samudragupta, 131-33, 154, 199
Samvatsara, 110
Sāmyuktaqaṇa, 68
Śaṅka-prśtha, 108
Sāndhivigrahādhiṃkṛta, 89
Sāndhivigrāhika, 94, 132, 142, 171
Śaṅkha, 112
Śāntamūla, Ehubula Śrī, 169
Sanskrit lexicons, 89
Śārīrīnī, 154
Sarasvatī, 4, 38
Sarukamāna, 138
Sarvabhutarudragrahāṇilipi, 24
Sarvarutsamgrahāṇilipi, 24
Sarvasārasamgrahāṇilipi, 24
Sarvāstivādī, 167
Sarvatoḥhadra, 72
Sarvausadha-niṣyandaliipi, 24
Śāsanam, 117-18
Śāsanas, 93, 126, 140, 142
Śāsni, 92
Śāstrāvartaliipi, 24, 27
Śata, 14
Śatabalākṣa, 12
Śataka, 86
Śatākarni, 129
Śatapaḍa, 13
Śataratha Brāhmaṇa, 14
Śatavāhanas, 145-154, 167
Śatavāhana, Andhra, 210
Śāvarṇi, king, 14
Seals, 112-16
Sectarian scripts, 26
Seleukos, 188
Semetic alphabet, 30, 40, 44
Senaka, 11
Senāpati,
Senart, 39, 62
Shahjahan, 208
Shamasastri, R., 36
Sharma, Radhakant, 59
Shorthand, 27
Siddhāhū, 111, 143, 145-46
Siddhas, 129, 148-50
Siddhirastu, 136
Śilāhāras, 116, 164, 143
Śilākūta, 93
Śilpin, 93, 94
Silver, 78
Śiṁhavarman, 210
Śiṁhā-yoga, 196
Śinhila, 170
Śīva, 112, 151-52, 154
Śīva-Skandavarman, 209
Skandagupta, inscriptions of, 59, 60,
125, 151, 155, 204
Skandagupta, 136
Skand-purāṇa, 69
Ślokas, 110, 164
Smith, V. A., 183
Śmrī-chandrikā, 117
Śmrī, 6, 8, 158
Sohgaura, copper-plate, 19, 114, 164
Somadeva, Mahākavi, 144
Sparśa, 12
Sphotāyana, 11
Śrāmaṇera, 170
Śrāuta, 10
Śrāvaṇa, 143, 168
Śrāvasti, 125
Śrēṇis, 120
Śrī, 111
Śri-matkarṇadeva, 114
Śringeri-matha, 71
Śrīprabhasuri, 72
Stevenson, James, 61
Sthaulasthin, 12
Stone, 74-76
Subahita Gotiputa, 89
Subhadatta, 171
Sudarśana, 125, 126, 172
Śuddha, 110
Śūdra, 92
Śukla-paṅsa-dina, 110
Śulapāṇi, 151
SUMERIAN, 20, 29-32
Śun nga, 166, 180, 191
Śūrya, 149
Suryachakra, 112
Śūrya-siddhānta, 216
Śūtra, 10
Śūtradhara, 3
SUSTRAPITAKA, 79
Suttānta, 6
Suvanna-paṭṭa, 8
Svahasta, 142
Svara, 12
Svarita, 11
Svasti, 111, 147
Svastika, 11, 109, 111, 129, 145
Svastyastu, 170
Śvetāmbara, 170, 216

Taḍāka, 137
Tādapatra, 68, 70
Takṣaśilā, 134
Tālapatra, 8, 78
Tāmrakara, 94
Tāmrapatra, 78
Tāmraśasana, 78, 80
Tāntrika, 78
Tārā, 112
Taylor, 41
Taxila, 19, 78
Technique, of writing, 97-116
Tevanaiya, 23
Tḥakkura,
Thomas, Edward, 35
Tilabhatṭaka, 171
Tilaka, B. G., 37, 38
Tin, 82
Tirthaṅkaras, 148, 152
Tod, James, 59
Tormāṇa, 206
Traṅkūṭaka Era, 216
Traṅkūṭkas, 115, 147
Tramira, 130
Tribal, 26
Trībhuvanāṅkuśa, 116
Trīkāveni, 125
Trilokasāra, 177
Tripada, 13
Triratna, 111
Trirāśmi, 140
Tristūbha, 13
Troyer, Capt., 59

Tughlaq, Ferōx Shah, 58
Tuli, 86
Tulikā, 86
Tūz, 67
Types of records, 117-44

U
Udāna-Sutta of Buddha, 144
Ugralipi, 23
Ugras, 26
Ujjayini, 201
Unmilīta, 93
Upadeśa-śāstra, 78
Upaniṣadas, 13
Uparagaudālipi, 23
Upaśthāna-śālās, 137
Upathāna, 137
Ūrdhva-dhanurālipi, 23, 26
Uśavadāta, 139
Uṣṇīṣa-Vijayadhārīṇī, 60
Uśman, 12
Uktattita, 93
Uktīrṇa, 93
Uktṣepalipi, 24, 27
Uttarakurudvīpalipi, 23, 25
Uttarāpatha, 130
Uvimikastusa, 190

V
Vāhiyaka, 137
Vaiśākha, 126, 172, 210, 213, 215
Vaiṣṇava, 153
Vaiśya, 92
Vaiṣṭāneṣyī Saṁhitā, 13, 14
Vaiṣākha, 89
Vajrālipi, 24, 26
Vākṣṭākas, 114, 147, 156, 170, 175, 209
Valabhi, 94, 208-09
Vangalipi, 23, 26
Vāpī, 137
Varāha, 115
Vararuci, 95
Vargā, 35
Varṇa, 12, 91-92
Varṇaka, Wooden pen, 85-86
Varṇasamkara, 92
Varṇavārtika, 86
Varuṇa, 132, 149
Vāsava, 149
Vāsadāttā, 74, 89
Vāsiṣṭha, 117, 169
Vāsiṣṭha-Dharmaśūtra, refers to legal written documents,
Vasu, 169
Vāsudeva, 149, 151
Vāsula, 171
Vāyumaratulipi, 23, 27
Vedāṅga, a class of Sanskrit literature,
Vedāṅga-Sikṣā, refers to all branches of technical knowledge and necessarily presupposes the existence of art of writing,
Vedas, authors of, were familiar with the art of writing, 13, 15
Vedic Literature, refers to high figures involving the knowledge of written arithmetic, 14, 20
Vīchāraśreṇi, 177
Vidhika, 170
Vidyādharādhivāsa, 129
Vidyādharis, 123
Vidyānulomalipi, 24
Vīgraharāja of Ajmer, 144
Vījñāneśvara, 90
Vijñānika, 94
Vikrama, 210-13, 216
Vikramādiyā, 95, 186, 198, 200, 212
Vikṣepalipi, 24, 27
Vikṣepārvatalipi, 24
Vimśīratalipi, 24, 27-28
Vindhyāsakti II, 209
Vinayapitaka, praises art of writing, 6, 72, 79, 87
Vinaya-vibhāṣā-śāstra, 79
Vīranirvāṇ Samvat, 176, 177
Vīrapuruṣadatta-Sri, 168, 169.
Vīra-Vikrama Era, 215
Visarga, 49
Vīśākhā, 214
Vīṣṇu, 113, 151, 152, 173
Vīṣṇupada, 173
Vīṣṇuvardhana, Mandsor stone Inscription of 155,
Vīśvanītra, taught letters to Buddha, 7
Vīśvavarman, the Gangadhar Stone Inscription of, 155
Votive, 133-36
Vṛātya Kṣatriya, 92
Vṛddhi, 212
Vṛkaraṇa, 12
Vṛyaṇjana, 12
Vṛṣa, 5, 9, 119
W
Waddel, 31
Weber, 40, 41, 83
Wilford, 60
Wilkins, Charles. 59
Wilson, 39
Winternitz, 9, 38
Wooden Boards, 72
Writing materials, 66 to 86
Y
Yādavas, 116, 143, 164
Yajamān, 15
Yajñāsatkarni, 181
Yajñavalkya, 119
Yajñavalkya-Smṛiti, 90, 92, 113, 118, 119
Yajurveda, 14
Yakha, 138
Yakṣa, 26, 138
Yakšalipi, 23, 26
Yama, 148
Yāska, 11, 12
Yavanāli, 11, 22, 25
Yerragudi, 46-47
Yoga, 212
Yojanas, 209
Yuktas, 124
Table No. I—Indus Valley Script (p. 24)

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Table No. V—Derivation of Brāhmī from Indus Valley Script (p.50)

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Table No. VI—Kharoṣṭhī Script (p. 50)

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