





# **BRAHMI**

**Rediscovering the Lost Script**

**Ankita Roy**

## Why Brahmi ?



Attraction

Translating Text to visuals

Understanding the subject

The indic scripts are an decendent of  
Brahmi.

## Target Audience

A person deeply interested in scripts  
Type enthusiasts,  
Font designers,



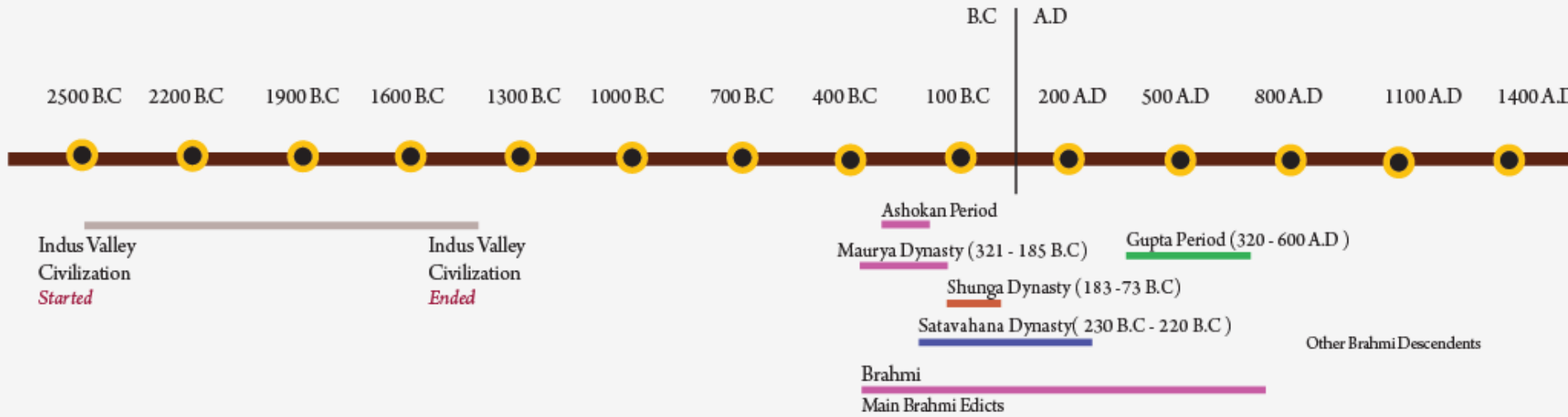
## Research

### Information Available:

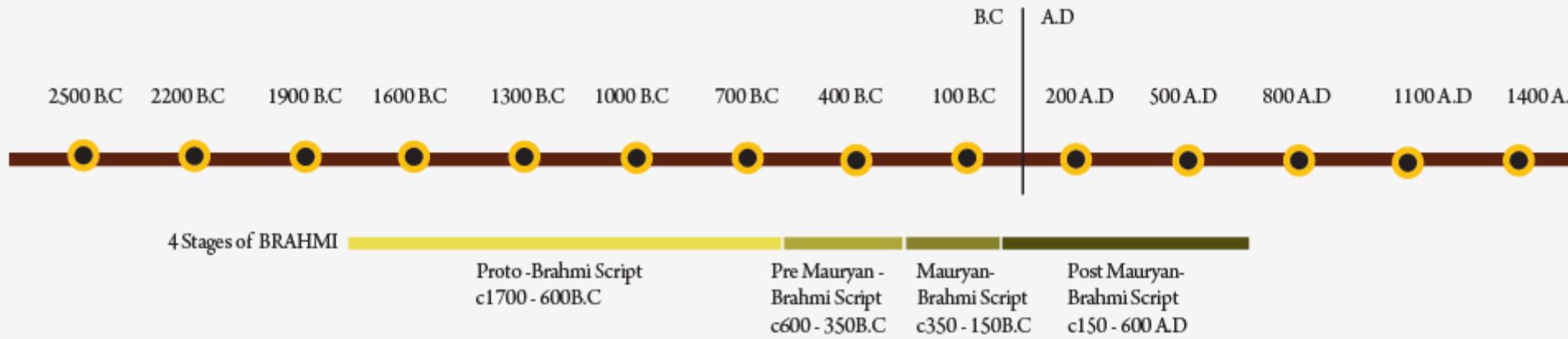
- Through Books,
- Visits,
- Websites.



# Chronology



# Chronology

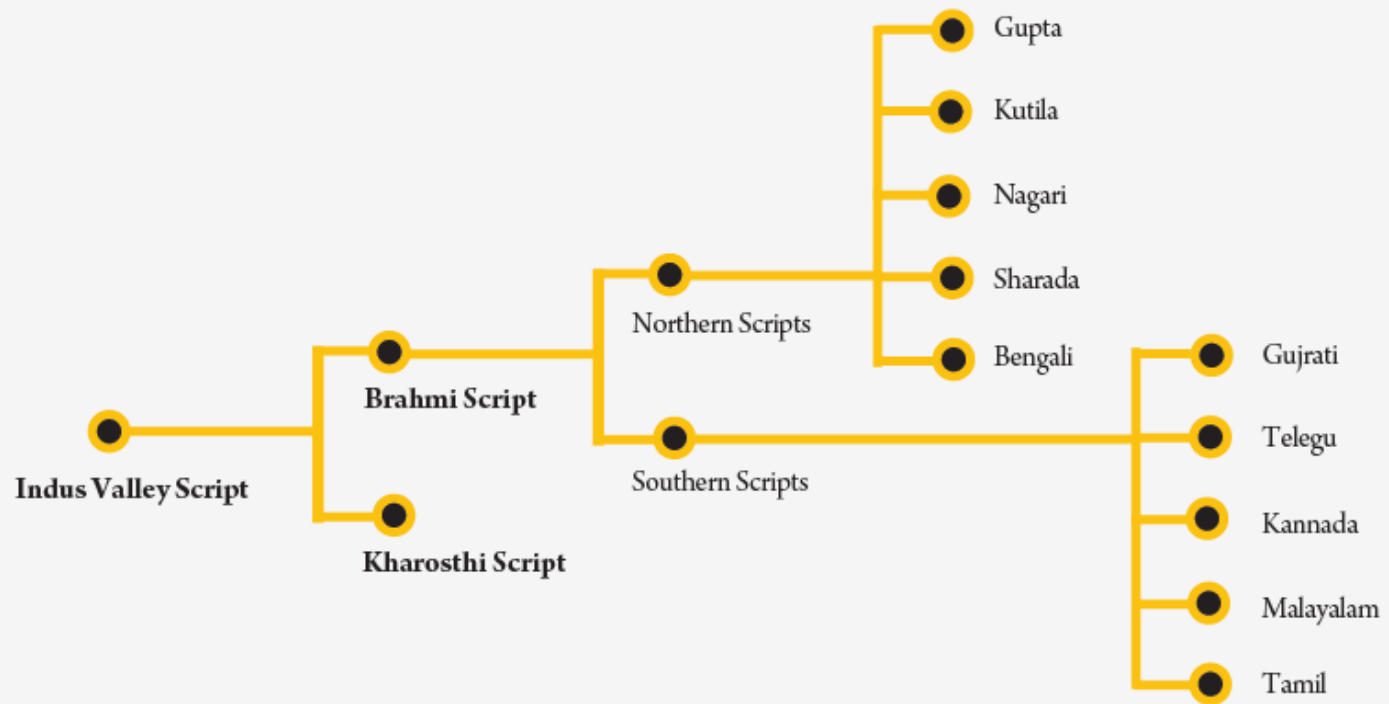


## Origin of Brahmi

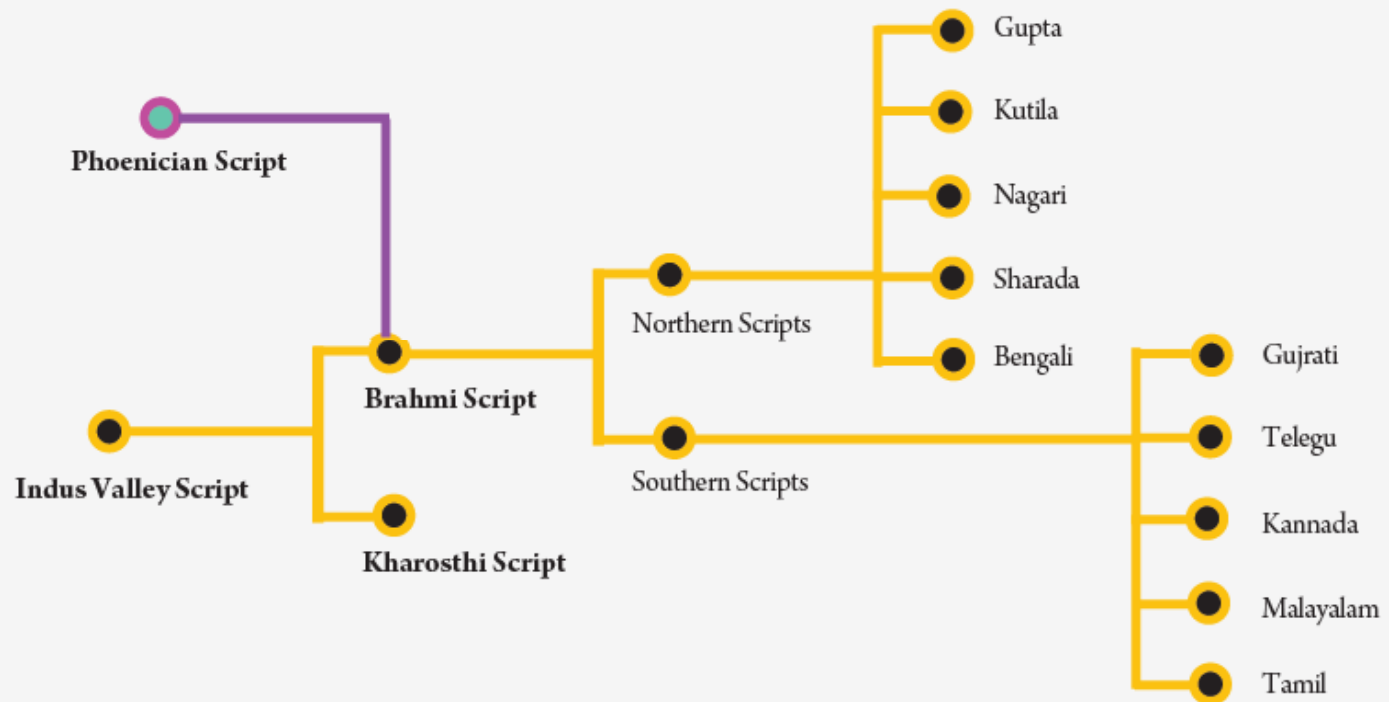




# Origin of Brahmi



# Origin of Brahmi



## Indus Valley Civilization



One of the highly developed and cultured civilization. The earliest scripts in India so far is the Indus Valley pictographic script. Two great cities of over 5000 yrs old have been discovered in the excavation of Harappa and Mohenjodaro. Over 3000 seals have been discovered in the Indus Valley.

## Indus Valley Seals



**Pashupati seal :** This seal shows a three headed deity, many have identified it with Bhagwan Shiva also known as Pashupati, seated in an advanced yogic position of Mul Bandhana Asana



**Gilgamesh seal :** This seal shows a man with two tigers. Many scholars say that this is the Mesopotamian priest king Gilgamesh who was 16ft tall and could fight two tigers all alone.

# Indus Valley Script



# Kharosthi Script

Handwritten text in Kharosthi script on a palm leaf manuscript. The text is arranged in several lines, written from right to left. The script is highly stylized and characteristic of the ancient Indian subcontinent.

Handwritten text in Kharosthi script on a palm leaf manuscript. The text is arranged in several lines, written from right to left. A small circular label is visible on the left side of the leaf.

# Brahmi Script



𑀀 a	𑀁 ā	𑀂 i	𑀃 ī	𑀄 u	𑀅 ū
𑀆 e	𑀇 ai	𑀈 o			
𑀉 ka	𑀊 kha	𑀋 ga	𑀌 gha	𑀍 ṅa	
𑀎 ca	𑀏 cha	𑀐 ja	𑀑 jha	𑀒 ṅa	
𑀓 ṭa	𑀔 ṭha	𑀕 ḍa	𑀖 ḍha	𑀗 ṇa	
𑀘 ta	𑀙 tha	𑀚 da	𑀛 dha	𑀜 na	
𑀝 pa	𑀞 pha	𑀟 ba	𑀠 bha	𑀡 ma	
𑀢 ya	𑀣 ra	𑀤 la	𑀥 ḷa	𑀦 va	
𑀧 śa	𑀨 ṣa	𑀩 sa	𑀪 ha		



+	ƒ	ƒ̄	ƒ̄̄	⊥	⊥̄	⊥̄	⊥̄̄	⊥̄̄̄
ka	kā	ki	kī	ku	kū	ke	ko	kaṃ
∪	∪̄	∪̄	∪̄̄	∪̇	∪̇̄	∪̇	∪̇̄	∪̇̄̄
la	lā	li	lī	lu	lū	le	lo	laṃ

Strokes added to indicate different vowels following the consonants



## Brahmi

Brahmi script is one of the earliest scripts known to India. It came into existence in the form of stone inscriptions during the reign of Asoka, in 4<sup>th</sup> - 3<sup>rd</sup> century B.C

Pillar showing Suvanna Kartaka Jataka Story,  
Sunga 2<sup>nd</sup> Century B.C, Bharhut M.P

## Maurya Dynasty



The 4<sup>th</sup> century B.C witnessed the rise of Magadha Empire ( present day Bihar ) under the rule of Chandragupta Maurya in 323 B.C. The empire later expanded under Asoka the Great.

## Buddhism



**Asoka** embraced **Buddhism** and was later dedicated to the propagation of Buddhism across Asia making several stupas , rock edicts, pillars.

This change in King Asoka's life came after witnessing the mass deaths which was the result of Kalinga War.

## Child learning Brahmi Vernmala



Found from Sugh, Haryana,  
ht: 5.4 cm\_ in stone, 3<sup>rd</sup> century B.C



Girnar, Gujrat, 3<sup>rd</sup> c B.C

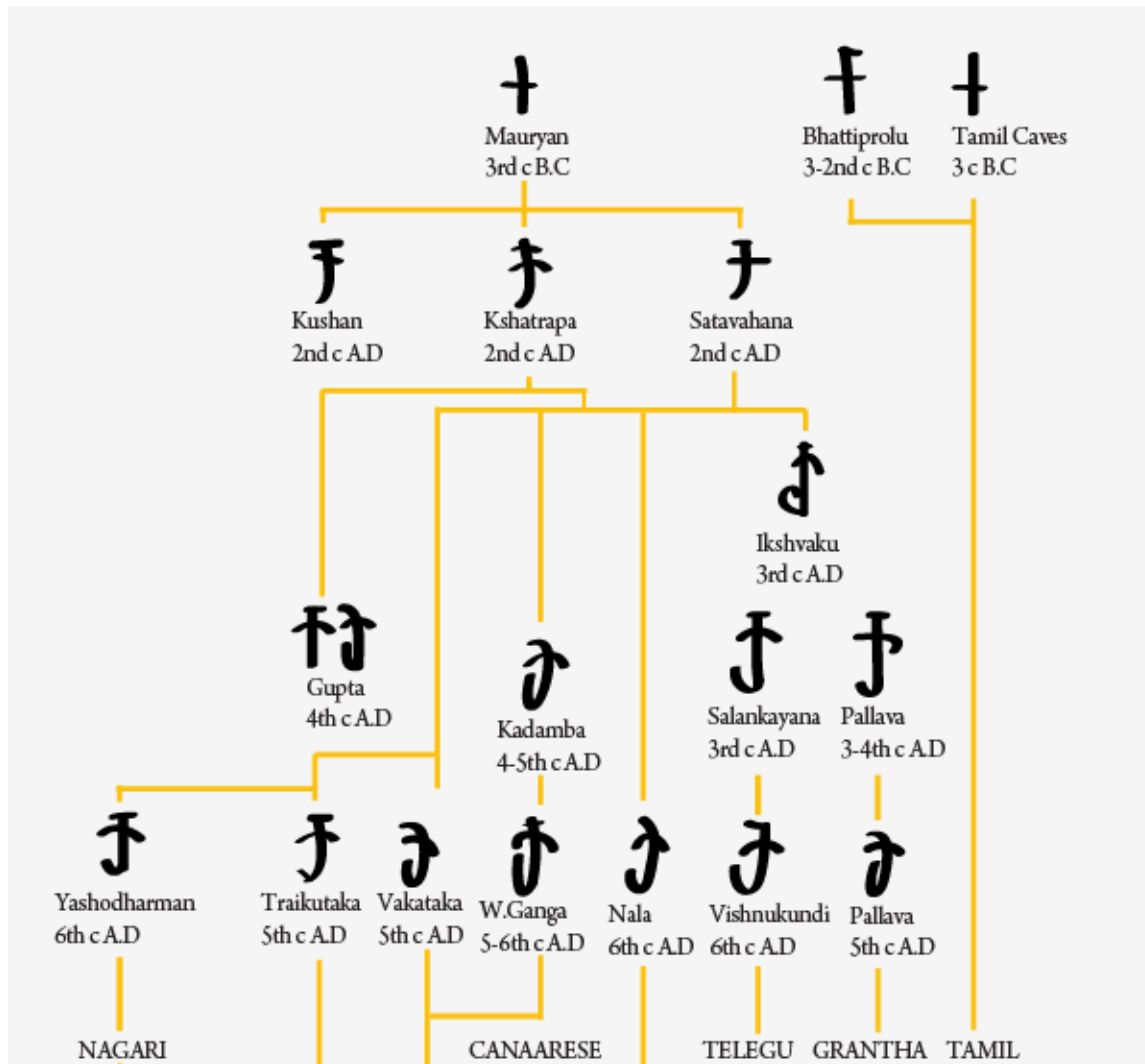
## Brahmi Edicts



## Developmental Stages of Brahmi

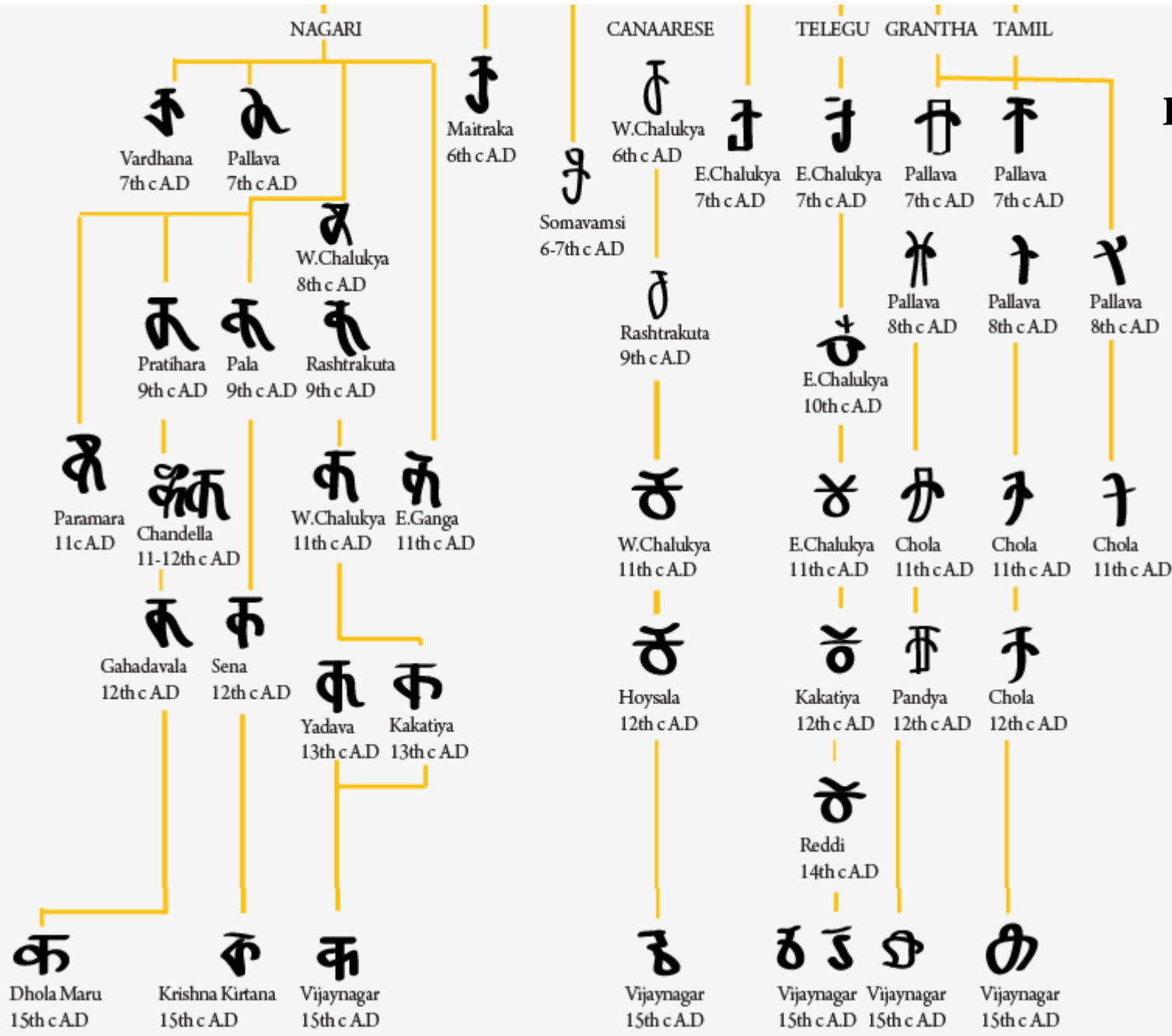
KEY	AŚOKAN 3rd Cent BC	BHATTIPRĒLU 3rd Cent BC	TAMIL-CAVES 3rd Cent BC	ŚUNGA 2nd Cent BC	SĀTAVĀHANA 2nd Cent BC	KALĪNGA 2nd Cent BC	KUṢĀNA 2nd Cent AD	KŚĀTRAPA 2nd Cent AD	SĀTANĀHANA 2nd Cent AD	IKṢVĀKU 3rd Cent AD	PALLAVA 3rd-4th Cent AD	GUPTA 4th Cent AD	VĀKĀTAKA 5th Cent AD
A	𑀅	𑀅	𑀅	𑀅	𑀅	𑀅	𑀅	𑀅	𑀅	𑀅	𑀅	𑀅	𑀅
Ā	𑀆	𑀆	𑀆	𑀆	𑀆	𑀆	𑀆	𑀆	𑀆	𑀆	𑀆	𑀆	𑀆
I	𑀇	𑀇	𑀇	𑀇	𑀇	𑀇	𑀇	𑀇	𑀇	𑀇	𑀇	𑀇	𑀇
U	𑀈	𑀈	𑀈	𑀈	𑀈	𑀈	𑀈	𑀈	𑀈	𑀈	𑀈	𑀈	𑀈
E	𑀉	𑀉	𑀉	𑀉	𑀉	𑀉	𑀉	𑀉	𑀉	𑀉	𑀉	𑀉	𑀉
O	𑀊	𑀊	𑀊	𑀊	𑀊	𑀊	𑀊	𑀊	𑀊	𑀊	𑀊	𑀊	𑀊
KA	𑀋	𑀋	𑀋	𑀋	𑀋	𑀋	𑀋	𑀋	𑀋	𑀋	𑀋	𑀋	𑀋
KHA	𑀌	𑀌	𑀌	𑀌	𑀌	𑀌	𑀌	𑀌	𑀌	𑀌	𑀌	𑀌	𑀌
GA	𑀍	𑀍	𑀍	𑀍	𑀍	𑀍	𑀍	𑀍	𑀍	𑀍	𑀍	𑀍	𑀍

# Development of letter 'K'

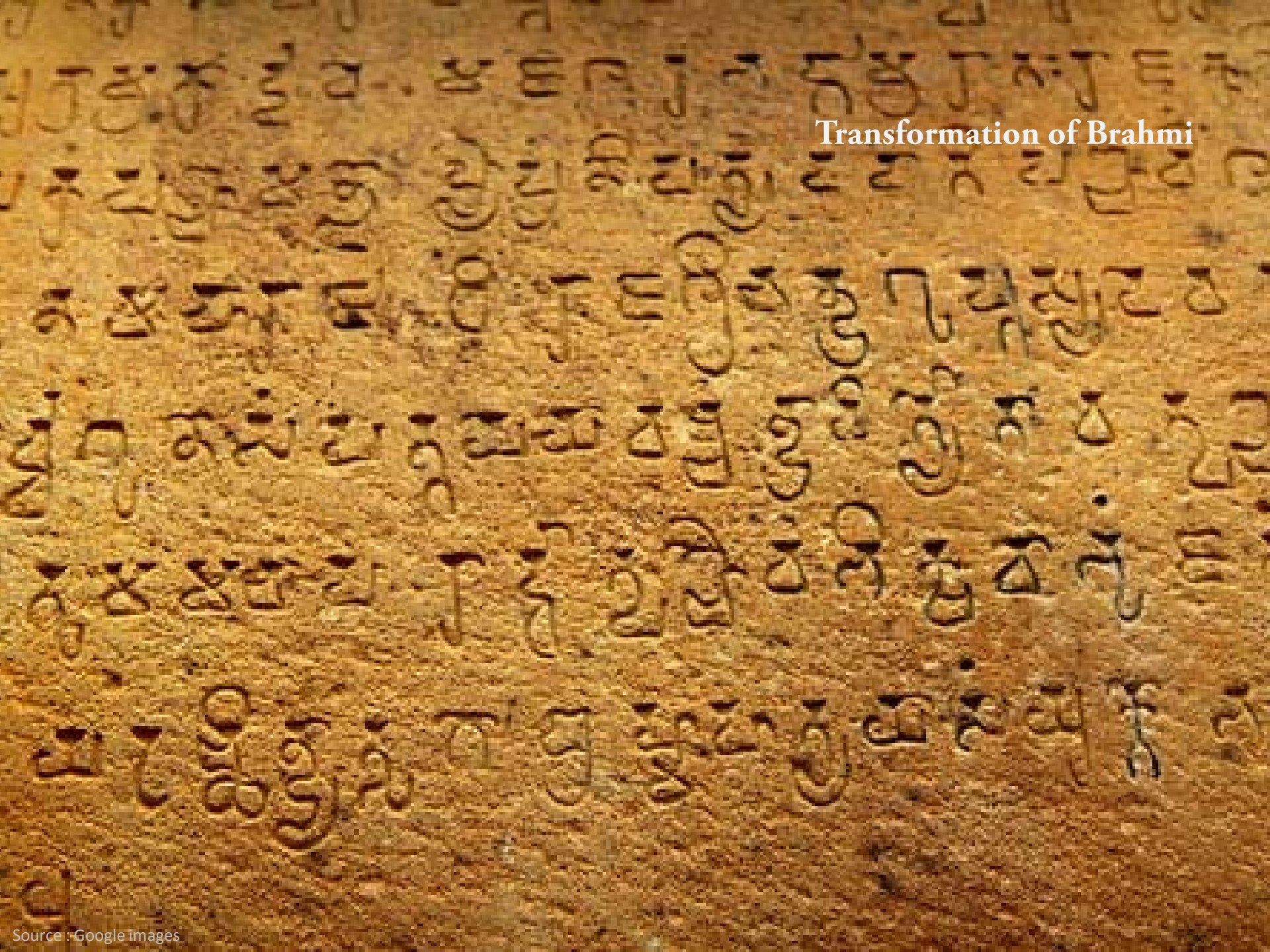




# Development of letter 'K'



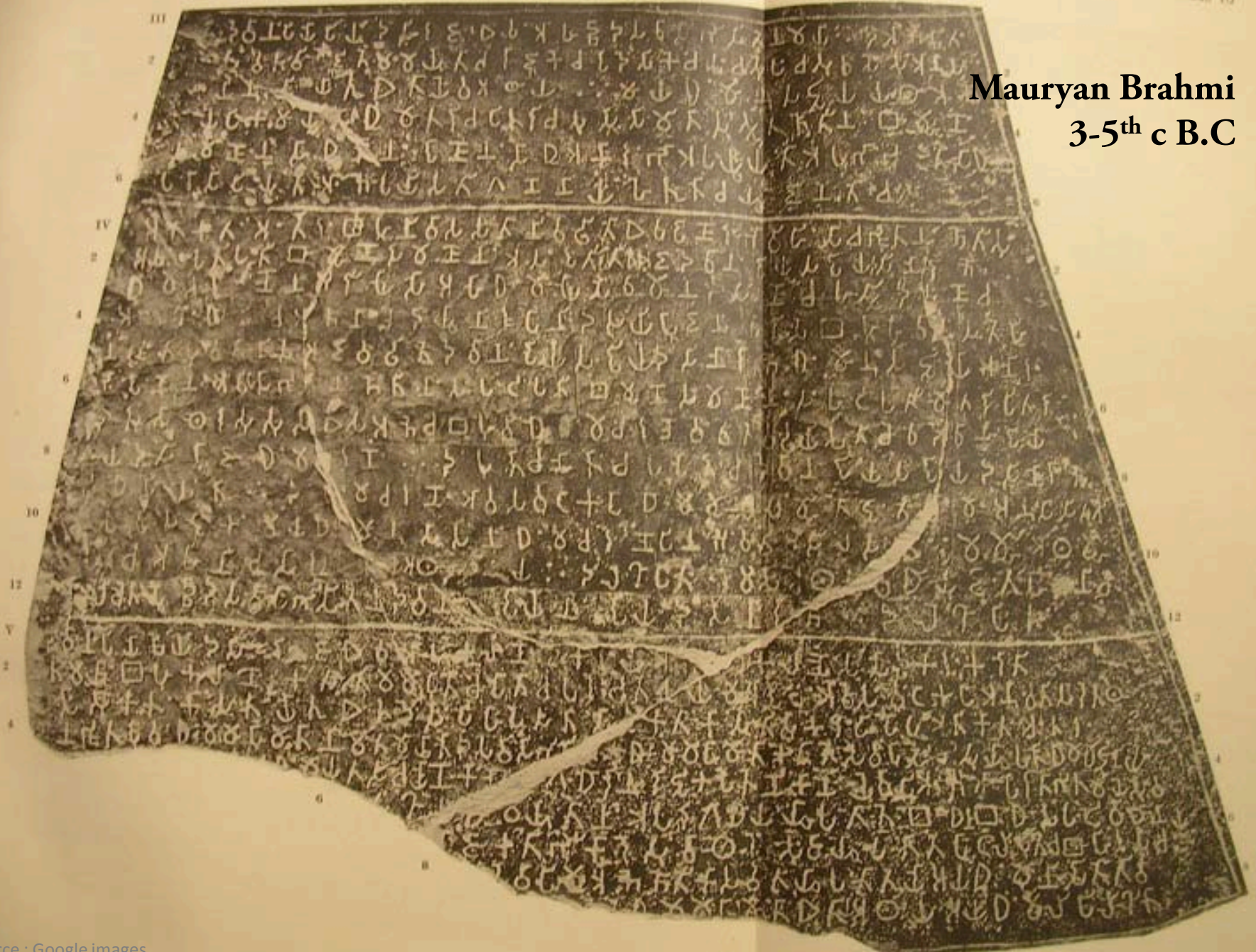
## Transformation of Brahmi





## Mauryan Brahmi 2<sup>nd</sup> c B.C

Naga Muchalinda, Sunga,  
2<sup>nd</sup> c B.C, Pauni, Maharashtra



**Mauryan Brahmi**  
**3-5<sup>th</sup> c B.C**



**Post Mauryan Brahmi**  
**2<sup>nd</sup> c A.D**

Jain Votive Plaque, Kushan  
Kankali Tila, Mathura, U.P



**Post Mauryan Brahmi**  
2<sup>nd</sup> c A.D



Jain Votive Plaque, Kushan  
Kankali Tila, Mathura, U.P

**Brahmi - Nagari**

**11<sup>th</sup> c A.D**



Buddhist Preist, Pala  
Eastern India

**Nagari**  
**12<sup>th</sup> c A.D**



King Prativideva & Queen Kelachhadevi  
Gahadavala, Alwar, Rajasthan

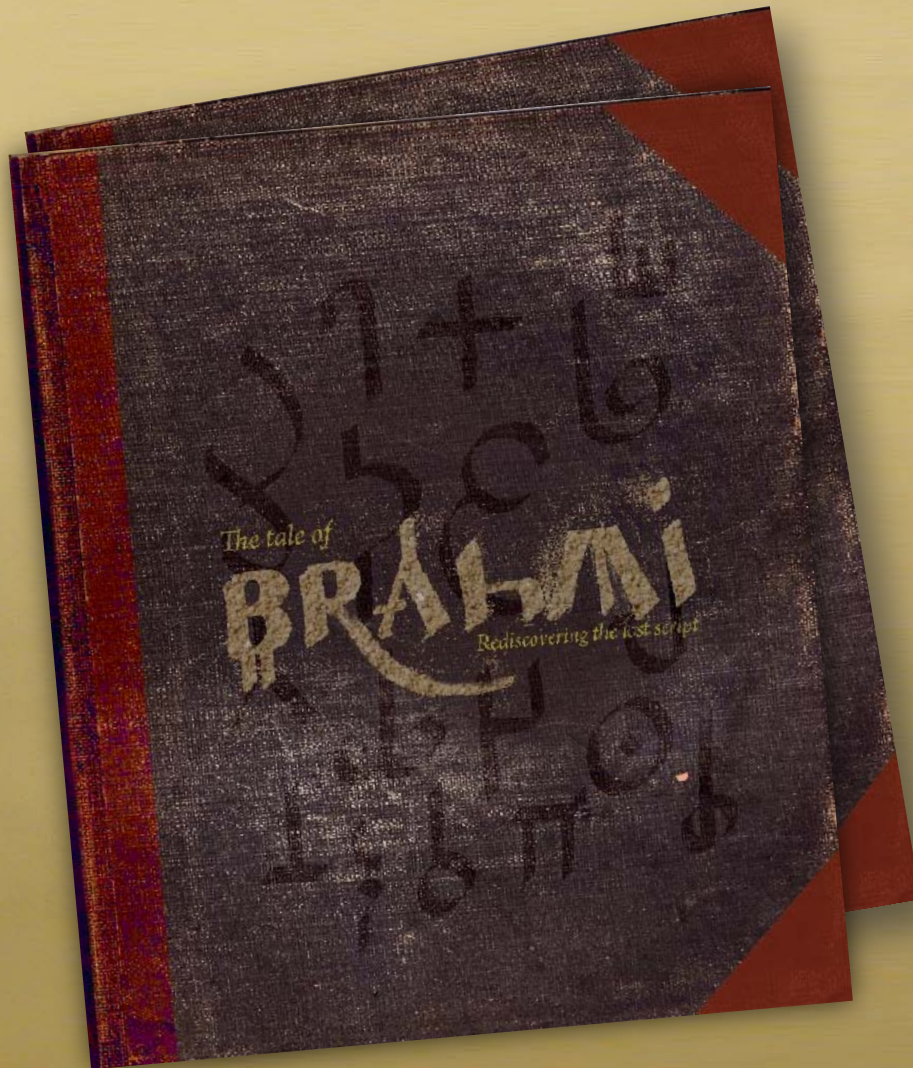


Nagari  
12<sup>th</sup> c A.D



King Prativideva & Queen Kelachhadevi  
Gahadavala, Alwar, Rajasthan

## What the Book consists of ?



It is a brief introduction about the ancient Script Brahmi.

This book talks about ancient writing styles and how it further developed into its other various descendants.

Brief Historical documentation of various scattered form of information, put together in one book format.

Translating Text to visuals.

More on interaction with Brahmi

## Content Structuring

### Writing Antiquity

- Indus Valley Civilization
- Inscriptions & Manuscripts

### Early Scripts of India

- Indus Script
- Brahmi Script
- Kharosthi Script
- Writing Materials

### Brahmi

### Chronology

### Maurya Dynasty

- Edicts describing the Kalinga War

### Brahmi Decipherment

### Origin of Brahmi

- Brahmi as a Hieroglyph
- Descendants of Brahmi
- Developmental Stages of Brahmi

- Nagari

- Bengali

- Indic Scripts

- Brahmi numerals and Matras in Comparison with Devnagri

- Ancient Symbols

- Construction of Om

- Deciphering a symbol.

Handwritten text in Devanagari script, appearing to be a list or index of names and titles. The text is written in a cursive style on aged, yellowish paper. The entries are arranged in approximately 10 horizontal lines, with some entries appearing to be numbered or grouped. The text is somewhat faded and difficult to read precisely, but it appears to contain names of individuals and possibly titles or descriptions. The overall appearance is that of an old manuscript or a handwritten record book.

# Brahmi

Many examples of Brahmi are found during the period of 3rd or 4th century B.C, but Brahmi lipi had a long history in India even before king Pyastasi Ashoka caused his edicts to be inscribed in the various provinces of his large empire. Brahmi letters were found inscribed from right to left (Boustrophedon style) in a seal from Mohenjodaro and the Indus Civilization which was older than 2400 B.C. In one of the inscriptions - Ashoka has

justified, the engravings on stone, last longer in comparison with the writing on other perishable mediums such as cloth, leather, wood etc. The Brahmi letters are given in comparison with the *Devanagari* forms in the bottom figure.

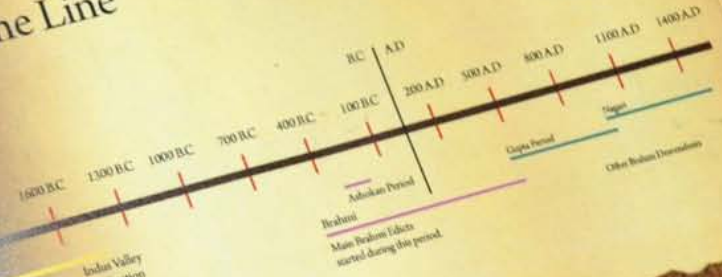


The inscription in Black & Brahmi, and the one in pink & Devanagari (Shown for comparison.)

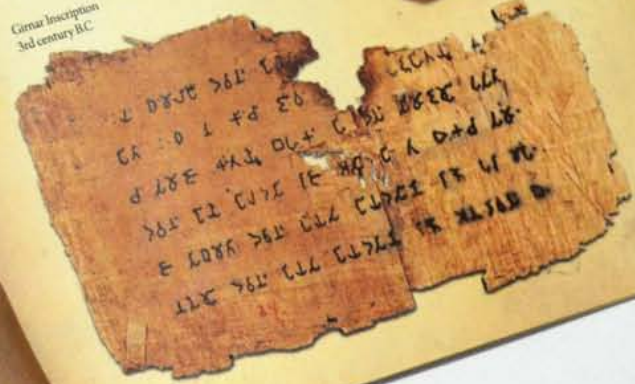


King Ashoka ca. 304-232 B.C.

## Time Line



Garnar Inscription 3rd century B.C.



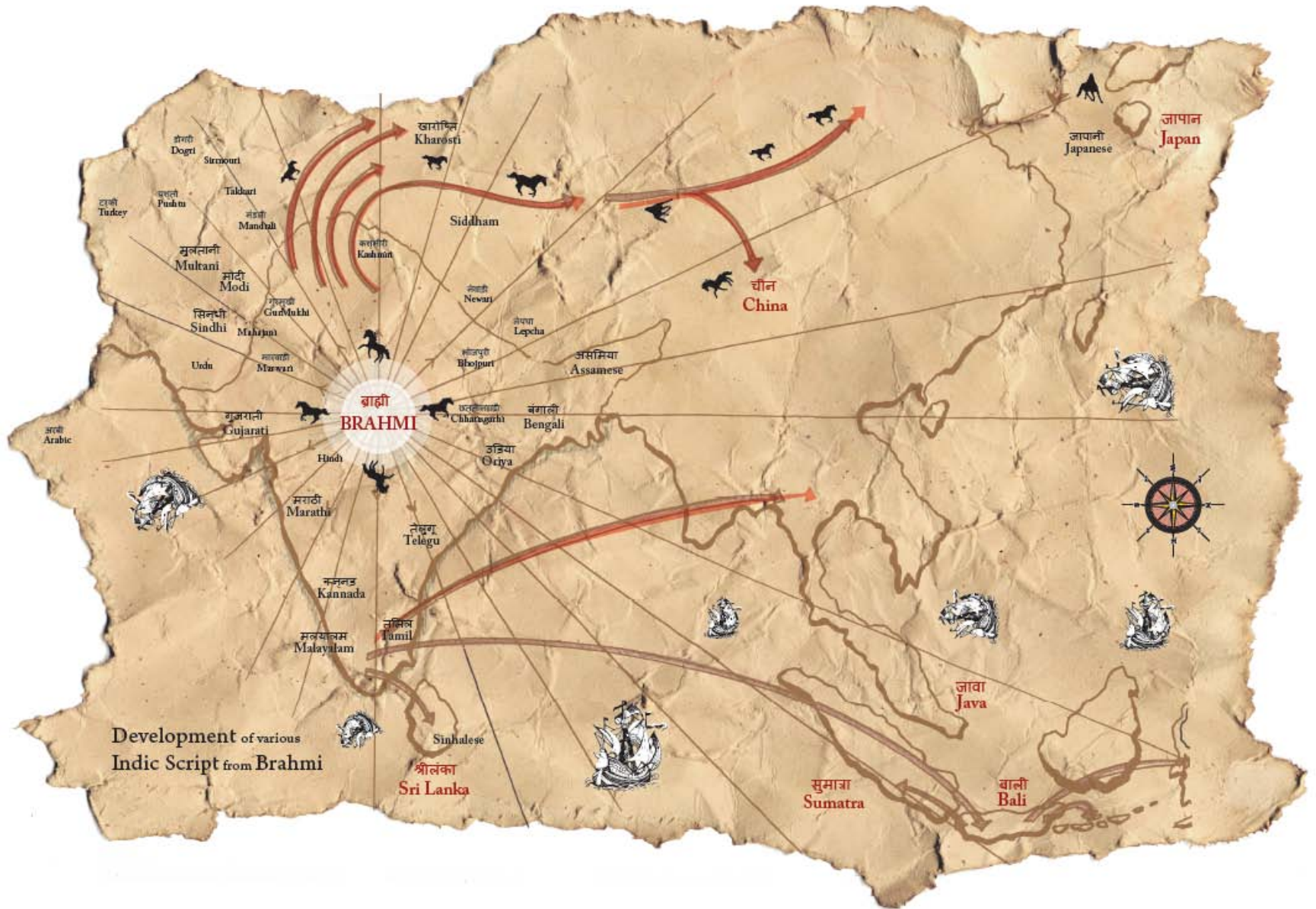
# Descendants of Brahmi

They are used throughout India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Bhutan, Tibet, Burma, Thailand, Laos, Cambodia and in scattered enclaves in Indonesia, southern China, Vietnam and the Philippines. As the script of Buddhist scriptures, Brahmic alphabets are used for religious purposes throughout China, Korea, Japan and Vietnam.

- The Asian continent is the main holder of all the Brahmi descendants. In India the scripts of India are divided in two main parts:
- Northern Group :** Gupta, Kutila, Nagari, Sharada & Bengali
  - Southern Group :** Western (Gujarati, Modri), Malhya Pradesh, Telegu, Kannada, Vattelutu (Malayalam) & Tamil (Tamil)

Map of the descendants of Brahmi Script





# Early Scripts of India

Indian Valley  
 Brahmi  
 Kharoshthi

**Indian Valley Script:**  
 The earliest script in India as it is known is the Indian Valley script. The earliest inscriptions of over 5000 years old have been discovered in the excavations of Harappa in present-day Punjab in India. Over 100 seals have been discovered in the Indian valley.  
**Brahmi Script:**  
 Brahmi script appeared by the 3rd century BC during the reign of the great emperor King Ashoka who ruled the Indian continent in its most glorious era.  
**Kharoshthi Script:**  
 Kharoshthi script is the earliest script which is known to have been used by the people of the Indian valley. It is considered to be descended from Brahmi.



Gold Coins with figures of Karashika II & Shera with bull marks in Brahmi Script



Clay Tablet with Indian Valley Script



Wooden Tablet with Kharoshthi Script

## Writing materials

- Stone
- Metal
- Palm Leaf / Tinku palm
- Bark Bark / Barka Palm
- Wood
- Bamboo
- Bricks
- Clay Tablets
- Cotton cloth
- Paper

Clay Tablet depicting Shera from Indian Valley



Metal Tablet with Indian Valley Script



An example of palm Leaf Manuscript



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In one of the inscriptions - Ashoka has justified, the writings on stone, last longer in comparison

with the writing on other perishable mediums such as cloth, leather, wood etc. The Brahmi letters are given in comparison with the damaged forms in the bottom figure.



King Ashoka ca. 304-232 B.C.

# Time Line



Garia Inscrption  
3rd century B.C.



# Other Explorations

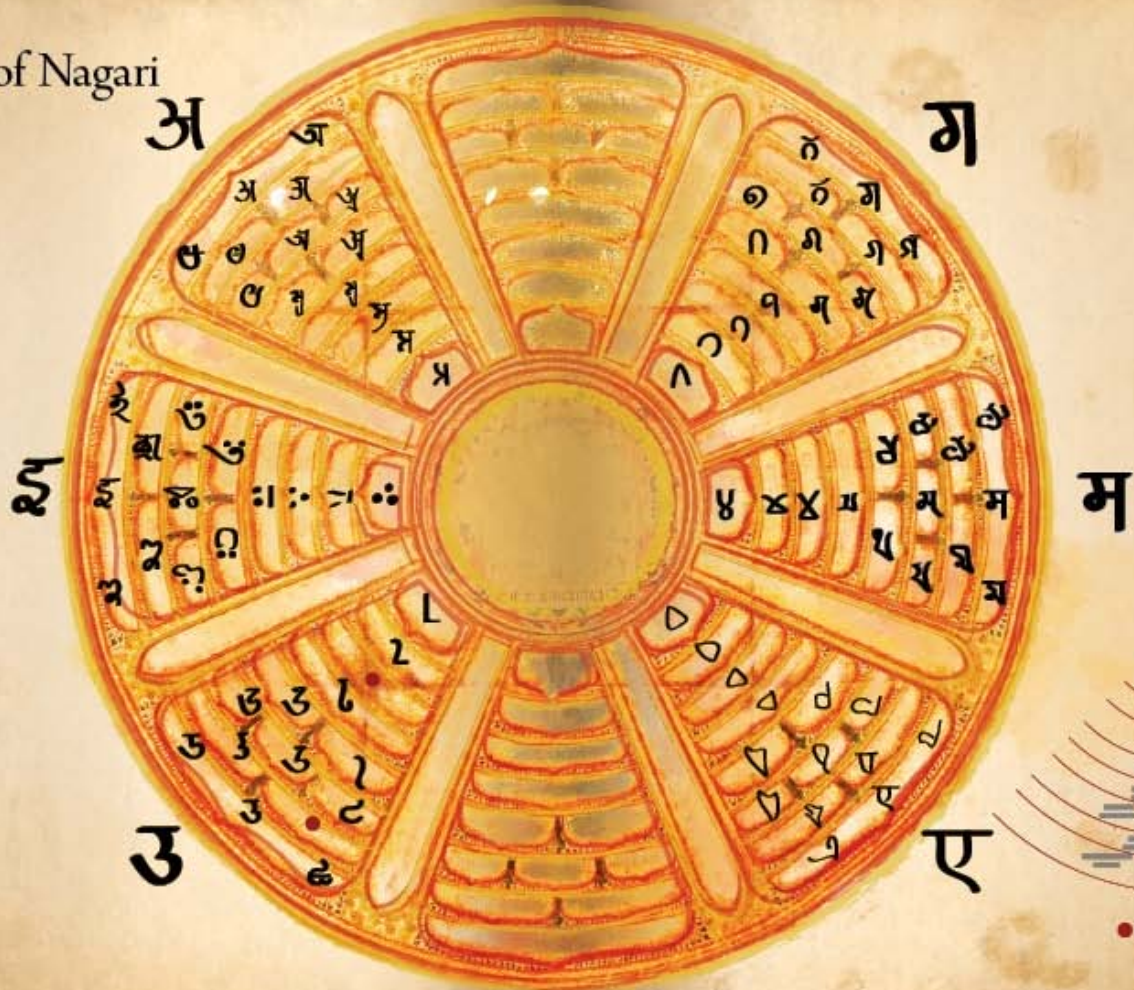


## Other Explorations

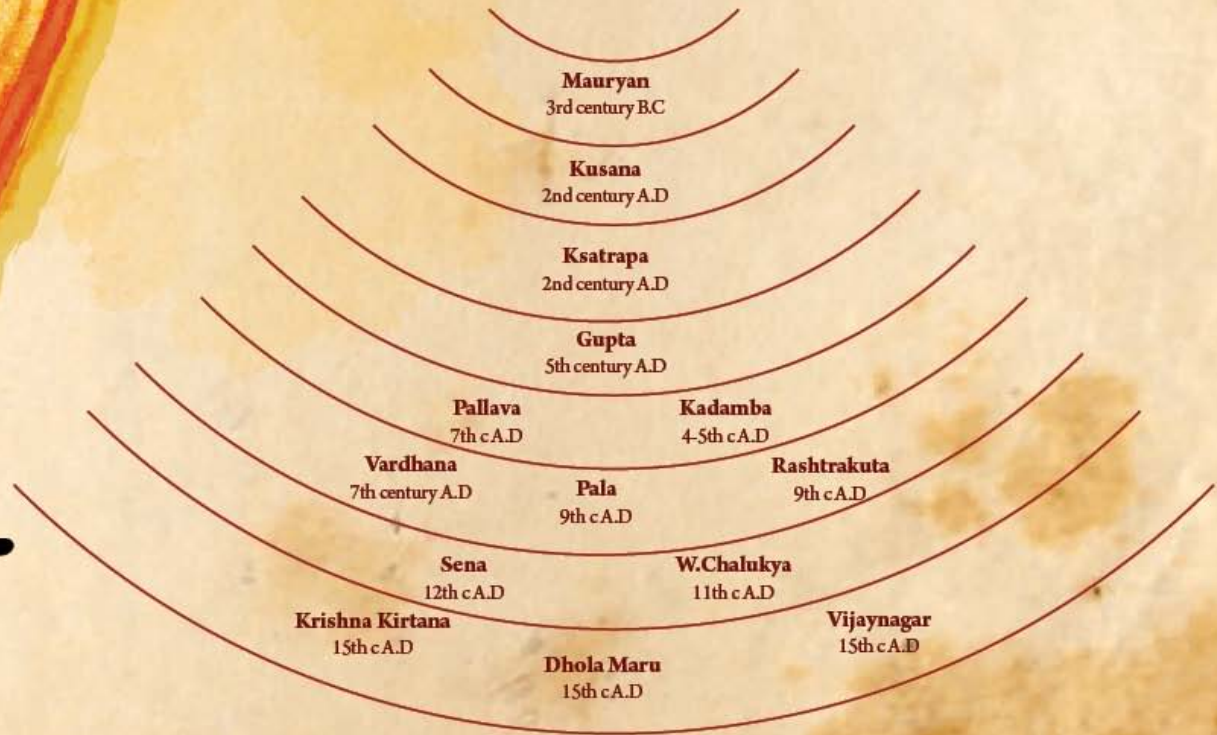
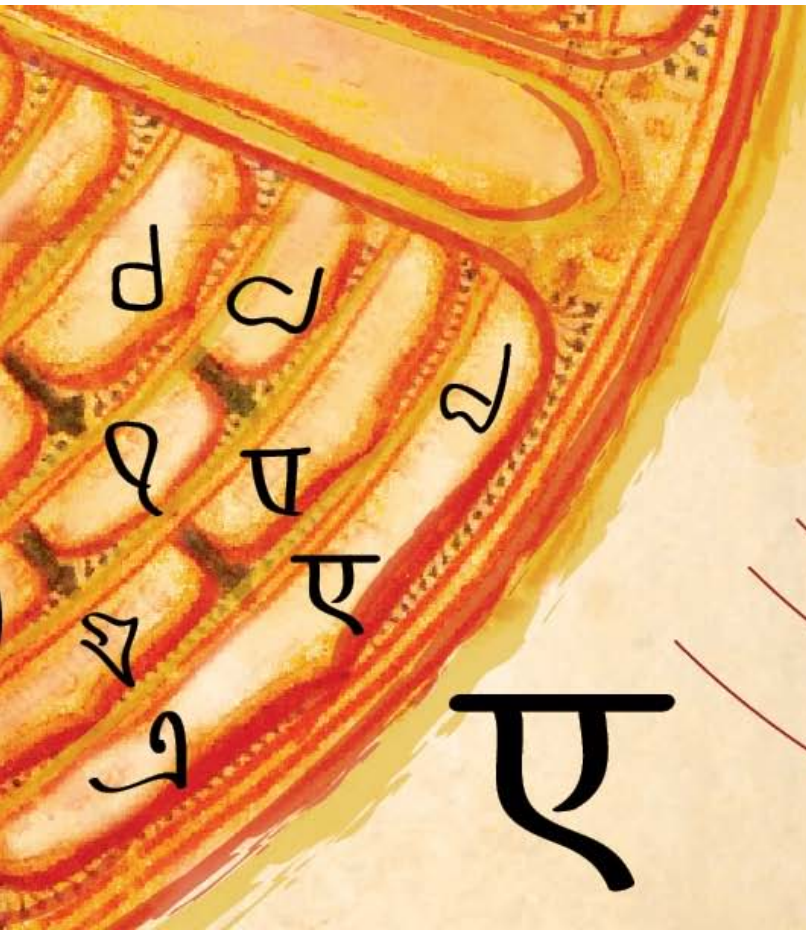




# Development of Nagari



Information is not available



**Mauryan**  
3rd century B.C.

**Kusana**  
2nd century A.D.

**Ksatrapa**  
2nd century A.D.

**Gupta**  
5th century A.D.

**Pallava**  
7th c.A.D.

**Kadamba**  
4-5th c.A.D.

**Vardhana**  
7th century A.D.

**Pala**  
9th c.A.D.

**Rashtrakuta**  
9th c.A.D.

**Sena**  
12th c.A.D.

**W.Chalukya**  
11th c.A.D.

**Krishna Kirtana**  
15th c.A.D.

**Dhola Maru**  
15th c.A.D.

**Vijaynagar**  
15th c.A.D.

**Mauryan**  
3rd century B.C

**Kusana**  
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9th c.A.D

**Sena**  
12th c.A.D

**W.Chalukya**  
11th c.A.D

**Krishna Kirtana**  
15th c.A.D

**Dhola Maru**  
15th c.A.D

**Vijaynagar**  
15th c.A.D

● This part is not available

# Development of Nagari Script



	Mauryan 3rd century B.C.	Kushan 2nd century A.D.	Gupta 5th century A.D.	Yashodharman 6th c.A.D.	Vardhana 7th century A.D.	Pratihara 10th c.A.D.	Pallava 7th century A.D.	Rashtrakuta 9th c.A.D.	Yadava 13th c.A.D.	Vijaynagar 15th c.A.D.	Nagari Script
अ	𑀅	𑀆	𑀇	𑀈	𑀉	𑀊	𑀋	𑀌	𑀍	𑀎	अ
आ	𑀏	𑀐	𑀑	𑀒	•	𑀓	𑀔	•	𑀕	𑀖	आ
इ	••	𑀗	𑀘	••	𑀙	𑀚	𑀛	𑀜	𑀝	𑀞	इ
उ	𑀟	𑀠	𑀡	𑀢	𑀣	𑀤	𑀥	𑀦	𑀧	𑀨	उ
ए	𑀩	𑀪	𑀫	𑀬	𑀭	𑀮	𑀯	𑀰	𑀱	𑀲	ए
क	𑀳	𑀴	𑀵	𑀶	𑀷	𑀸	𑀹	𑀺	𑀻	𑀼	क
ख	𑀽	𑀾	𑀿	𑀿	𑀿	𑀿	𑀿	𑀿	𑀿	𑀿	ख
ग	𑀿	𑀿	𑀿	𑀿	𑀿	𑀿	𑀿	𑀿	𑀿	𑀿	ग
घ	𑀿	𑀿	𑀿	𑀿	•	𑀿	𑀿	𑀿	𑀿	•	घ



# Development of Bengali Script



	Mauryan 3rd century B.C.	Ksatrapa 2nd century A.D.	Gupta 5th century A.D.	Maukhari 6th c.A.D.	Sasanka 7th c.A.D.	Pala 10th c.A.D.	Sena 11th c.A.D.	Sena 12th c.A.D.	KrishnaKirtana 15th c.A.D.	Bengali Script
জ	𑌕	𑌕	𑌕	𑌕	•	𑌕	𑌕	𑌕	𑌕	জ
আ	𑌕	𑌕	𑌕	𑌕	𑌕	𑌕	•	𑌕	𑌕	আ
ই	••	••	•।	•	𑌕	•	•	𑌕	•	ই
ঈ	𑌕	•	𑌕	𑌕	•	•	𑌕	•	•	ঈ
উ	𑌕	𑌕	𑌕	•	•	𑌕	𑌕	𑌕	𑌕	উ
এ	𑌕	𑌕	𑌕	•	•	𑌕	𑌕	𑌕	𑌕	এ
ক	𑌕	𑌕	𑌕	𑌕	𑌕	𑌕	𑌕	𑌕	𑌕	ক
খ	𑌕	𑌕	𑌕	𑌕	𑌕	𑌕	•	𑌕	𑌕	খ
গ	𑌕	𑌕	𑌕	𑌕	𑌕	𑌕	•	𑌕	𑌕	গ
ঘ	𑌕	𑌕	𑌕	𑌕	𑌕	𑌕	•	𑌕	𑌕	ঘ

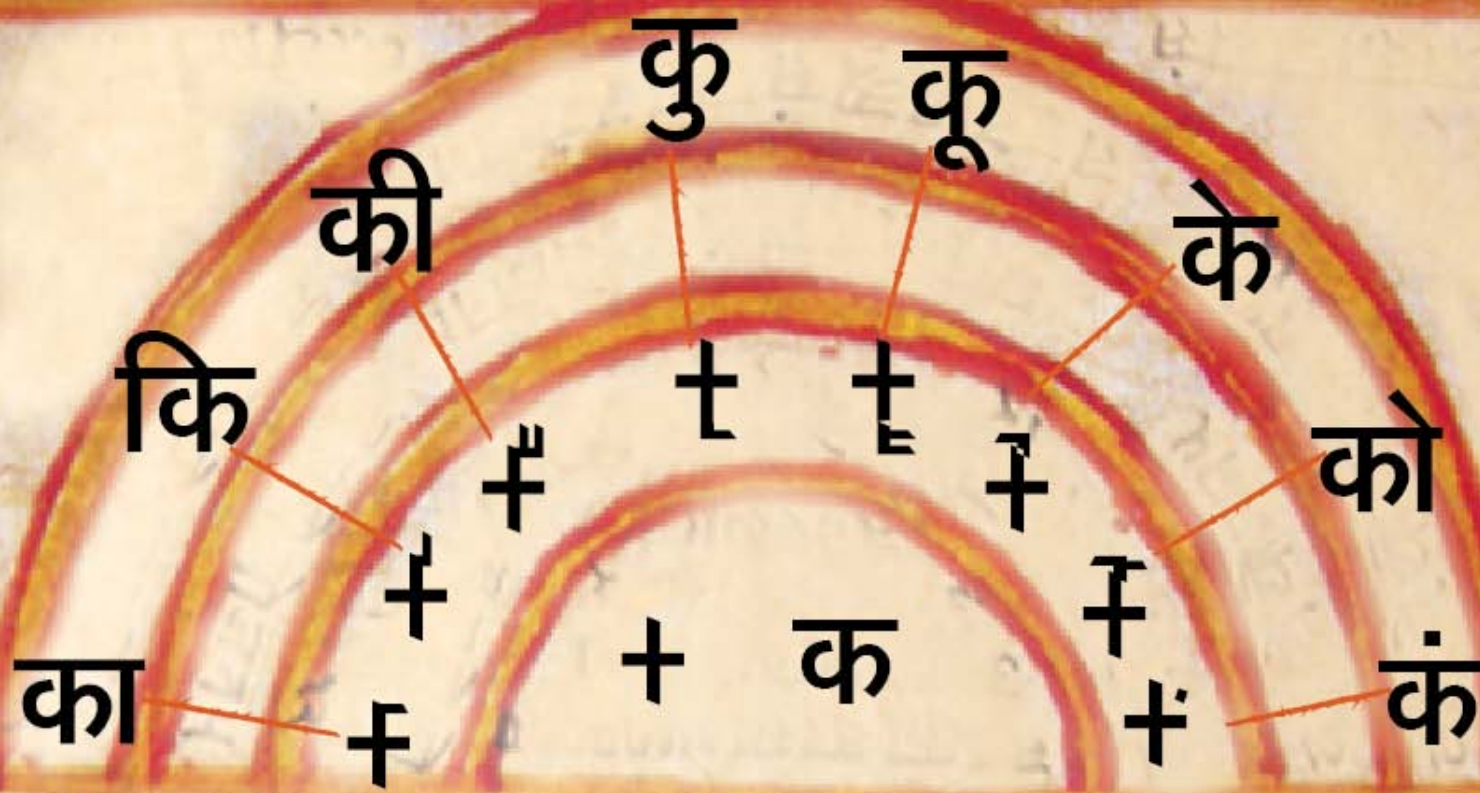


कु कू  
की के  
कि को  
का कं

कू कु  
के की  
को कि  
कं का

कू कु  
के की  
को कि  
कं का

कू कु  
के की  
को कि  
कं का



# Developmental Stages of Brahmi

The journey of how the type travelled from 3rd century B.C., Asokan period to Gahadwala of the 12th century A.D. This shows the developmental stages of letter 'Ka'. The last 'Ka' is today's Devnagari script which is the descendant of the Brahmi script.

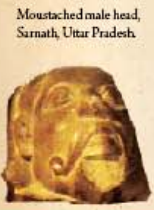
<p>Moustached male head Sarnath, Uttar Pradesh.</p> 	<p>Garland bearer, Anawati, Andhra Pradesh.</p> 	<p>Dwarapala (Door keeper), Nishana Kuthara, Madhya Pradesh.</p> 	<p>Vishnu (Preserver God), Kanchipuram, Tamil Nadu.</p> 	<p>Female bust, Gosdior, Madhya Pradesh.</p> 	<p>Garuda (Mythical bird and mount of Vishnu), Pala, Rajasthan.</p> 	<p>Vishnu (Preserver God), Bengal.</p> 	<p>Mukhina (A female representation of Vishnu), Gadag, Karnataka.</p> 	<p>Lama/Nayan on Garudi, Halebidu, Mysore.</p> 	<p>King Prabhavahara &amp; Queen Kalachchhadra, Aber, Rajasthan.</p> 
<p>Mauryan 3rd century B.C.</p>	<p>Satavahana 2nd century A.D.</p>	<p>Gupta 5th century A.D.</p>	<p>Pallava 6th-7th century A.D.</p>	<p>Varadhana 7th century A.D.</p>	<p>Pratihara 10th c.A.D.</p>	<p>Pala 11th century A.D.</p>	<p>W.Chalukya 11th c.A.D.</p>	<p>Hoysala 12th c.A.D.</p>	<p>Gahadwala 12th c.A.D.</p>
									
								<p>Canarese Script Kannada, Southern Group.</p>	<p>Nagari Script Devnagari, Northern Group.</p>

The above display also shows how the earlier sculptures were just a simple human form and slowly the detailing is seen in the later stages.

The change in design that came over a period of time was due to the base and tools used to write or inscribe. While writing, scribes tend not to hit their hand for writing faster. This brought in a different look altogether.

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The journey of how the type travelled from 3rd century B.C., Asokan period to Gahadavala of the 12th century A.D. This shows the developmental stages of letter 'Ka'. The last 'Ka' is today's Devnagari script which is the descendent of the Brahmi script.



Moustached male head, Sarnath, Uttar Pradesh.

**Mauryan**  
3rd century B.C.

𑀓



Garland bearer, Amravati, Andhra Pradesh.

**Satavahana**  
2nd century A.D.

𑀔



Dvarapala (Door keeper), Nachana Kutbura, Madhya Pradesh.

**Gupta**  
5th century A.D.

𑀕



Vishnu (Preserver God), Kanchipuram, Tamil Nadu.

**Pallava**  
6th-7th century A.D.

𑀖



Female bust, Gwalior, Madhya Pradesh.

**Vardhana**  
7th century A.D.

𑀗



Garuda (Mythical bird and mount of Vishnu), Pallu, Rajasthan.

**Pratihara**  
10th c A.D.

𑀘



Vishnu (Preserver God), Bengal.

**Pala**  
11th century A.D.

𑀙



Mohini (A female representation of Vishnu), Gadag, Karnataka.

**W.Chalukya**  
11th c A.D.

𑀚



Lazmi-Narayan on Garuda, Halebid, Mysore.

**Hoysala**  
12th c A.D.

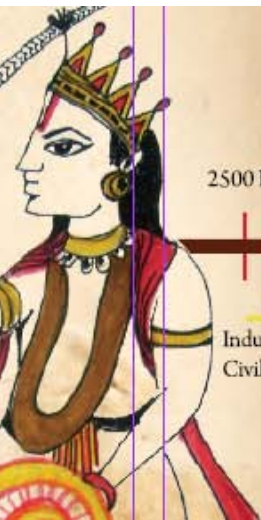
𑀛



King Prathivideva & Queen Kelachchadevi, Alwar, Rajasthan.

**Gahadavala**  
12th c A.D.

𑀜



2500 B.C. 2200 B.C.

Indus Valley  
Civilization

1600 B.C. 1300 B.C. 1000 B.C. 700 B.C.

Indus Valley  
Civilization

400 B.C. 100 B.C.

Brahmi

Main Brahmi Edicts  
started during this period.

B.C. A.D.

Ashokan Period

200 A.D. 500 A.D.

Gupta Period

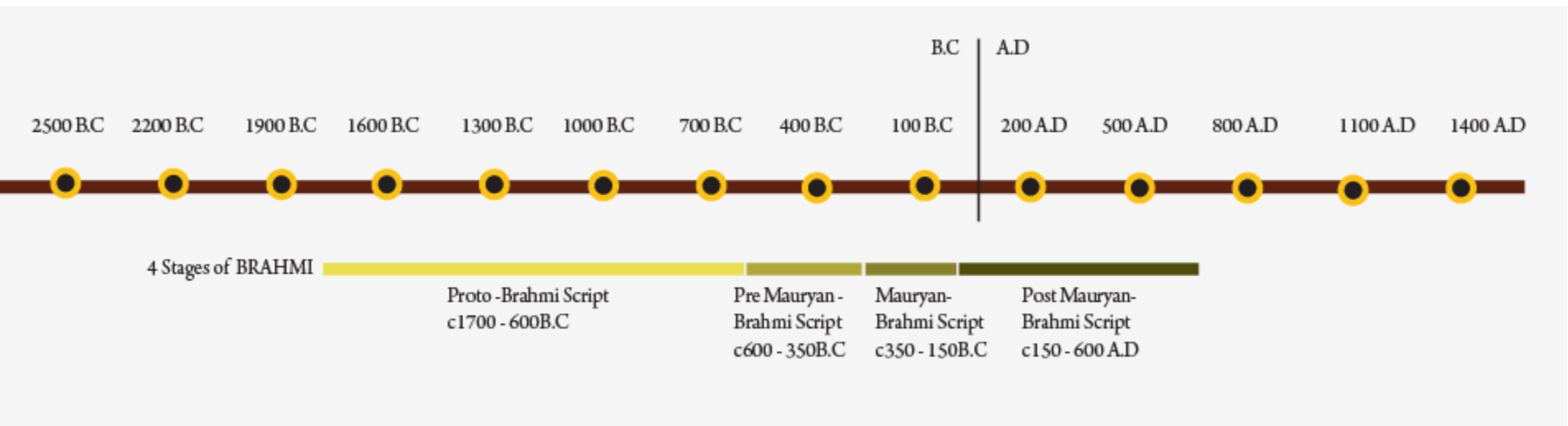
800 A.D.

Nagari

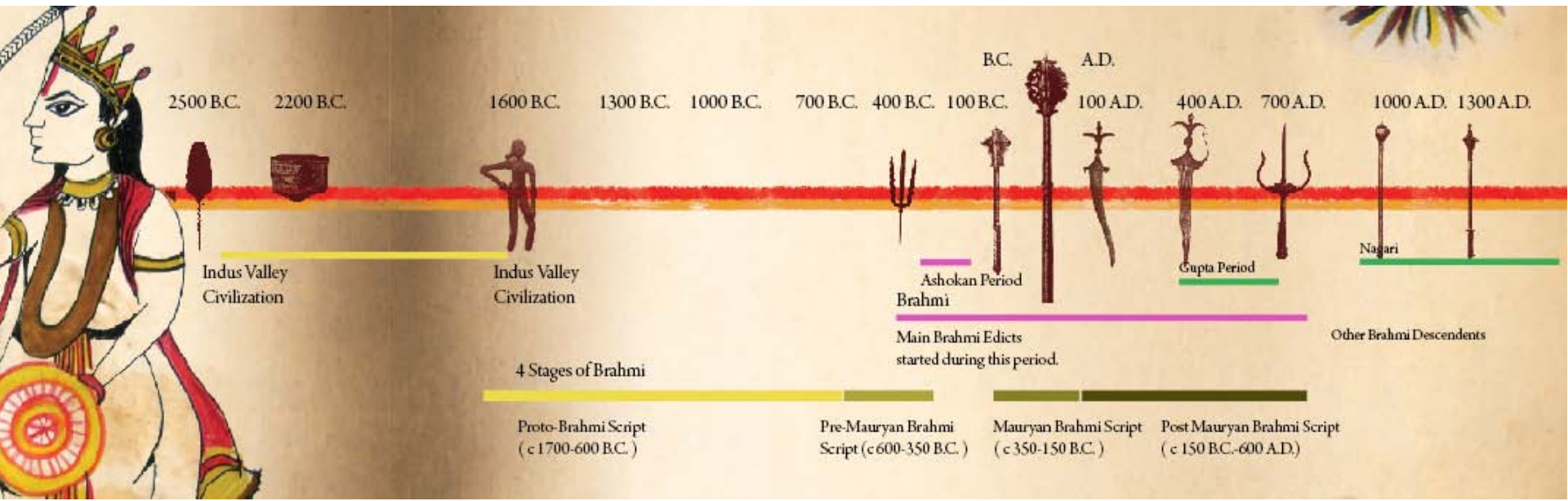
Other Brahmi Descendants

1100 A.D. 1400 A.D.







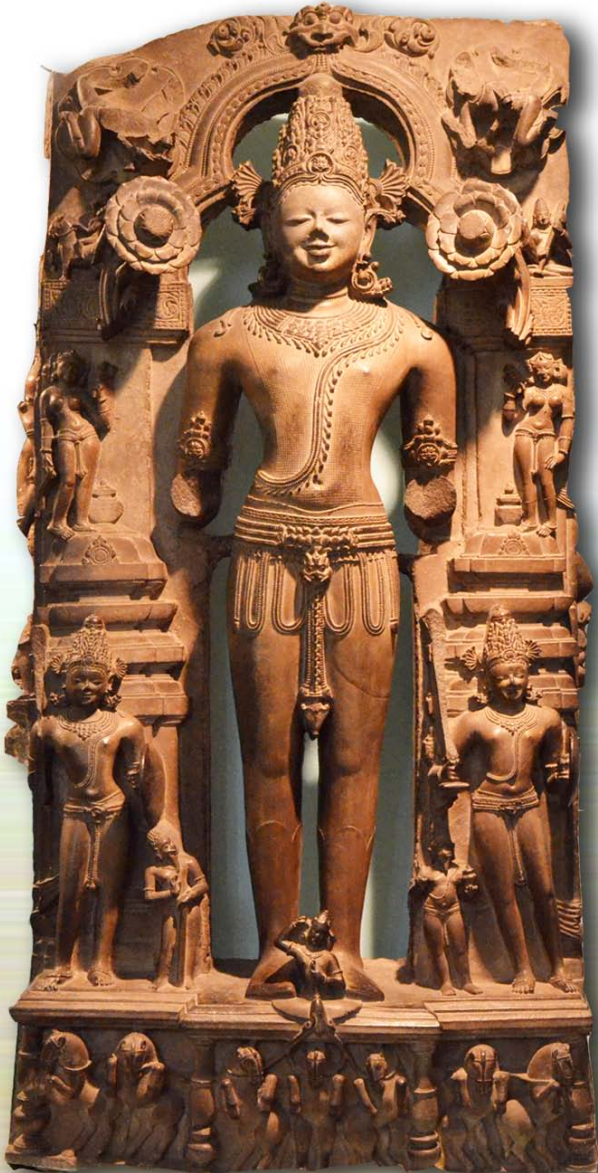






Categorization of the data collected  
Content structuring  
Graphical representation of the data  
Writing the content  
Working on illustration

# Bibliography



## Books :

- Hidden Horizons
- Typography of Devnagari
- A history of Ancient and Early Medieval India
- Understanding India : The Culture of India
- The Indo – Aryan Languages
- Elephant in Indian Art and Mythology
- Unknown masterpieces of Indian Folk and Tribal Art
- Palo linguistic Profile of Brahmi Script.
- An invention of the early Mauryan Period.
- Development of Nagari Script
- Origin of Brahmi Script
- Brahmi Script its Paleography

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- [www.wikipedia.org](http://www.wikipedia.org)
- [www.ancientscripts.com](http://www.ancientscripts.com)
- [www.chinese-school.netfirms.com/Tibet/brahmi.html](http://www.chinese-school.netfirms.com/Tibet/brahmi.html)

## Visits:

- National Museum - New Delhi
- National Library – New Delhi
- National Museum – Kolkata
- Prince of Wales - Mumbai