

Development of the Sinhalese Script from 8th Century A.D. to 15th Century A.D.

THE chief factor that led to the appearance in Ceylon of what may be described as the Sinhalese Script was the influence of the Pallava Grantha Script of South India on the Brāhmī Script which was prevalent in Ceylon upto almost the seventh century. In my paper on the Palaeographical Development of the Brāhmī Script in Ceylon from the 3rd century B.C. to the seventh century A.D.¹ an attempt was made to indicate the circumstances that led to the contact between the Pallavas and the Sinhalese. Table I attached to this paper shows the extent to which the Pallava Script has brought about the transformation of the later Brāhmī Script of Ceylon into what came to be called the Sinhalese Script.

This table has been compiled from the characters in the following inscriptions² :—

- A. 1. Nāgirikanda inscription of Kumāradāsa, (c. 570-579 A.D.).
2. Inscriptions near Burrow's Pavilion, (c. 7th century).
3. Nilagama inscription of Moggallāna II, (c. 603-622).

1. *University of Ceylon Review*, Vol. VII, No. 4.

2. The alphabet used in each of the records of the period covered is not represented in Table II, which is intended to give in broad outline the development of the script during the period 8th to 15th century.

The Tables I and II and Fig. 1 were drawn by Mr. L. Prematilaka, an undergraduate member of the Sinhalese Department of the University. My thanks are also due to Mr. F. H. Gunasekara, Assistant Superintendent of Surveys (Map Publications), Surveyor General's Office—who supervised the printing of Tables I and II.

In addition to the facsimiles printed in the *Epigraphia Zeylanica*, the following records were consulted in the compilation of Table II :—

1. Copper Plate Grant of Vijayabāhu I (12th century).
2. Waharakgoda Inscription, (13th century), Bell, *Kegalla Report*, plate facing p. 74.
3. *Cullavagga*, Ola Leaf Manuscript (13th century), Museum Library, Colombo.
4. *Visuddhimārga Tīkā* (13th century), University of Ceylon Library.
5. *Visuddhimagga Tīkā*, Arattana Purāṇa Rajamahavihāraya, Haṅguranketa.
6. Petigamma Inscription, (14th century), Bell, *Kegalla Report*, plate facing p. 80.
7. *Samyutta Nikāya*, Ola Leaf Manuscript, (15th century), Vidyālaṅkāra Pirivena, Kālaniya.
8. Beligala Sannasa, (15th century), Bell, *Kegalla Report*, plate facing p. 94.
9. Dādigama Inscription of Bhuvanekabāhu VI, (15th century), Bell, *Kegalla Report*, plate facing p. 80.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE SINHALESE SCRIPT

- B. 1. Early Pallava Grantha Alphabet, 7th century A.D., *Travancore Archaeological Series*, Vol. I, p. 220.
2. Grantha Alphabet of the time of Nandivarman Pallavamalla, (last quarter of the 8th century), *Travancore Archaeological Series*, Vol. I, p. 223.
- C. 1. Gāraṇḍigāla inscription of Kassapa III, (c. 710-717).
2. Inscription at Ambasthala, Mihintale, 8th century.
3. Tammannāva inscription, 8th century³.

A study of Table I together with the chart illustrating the Palaeographical Development of the Brāhmī Script in Ceylon from 3rd century B.C. to 7th century A.D. in the *University of Ceylon Review*, Vol. VII, No. 1, shows that the Pallava Grantha has contributed towards the transformation of the Sinhalese Script during the seventh and the eighth century in two ways: 1. Modification of Sinhalese characters already in use, 2. The provision of characters which did not exist in the Sinhalese alphabet or had long become obsolete owing to desuetude. Letters which existed in the alphabet but have been modified by Pallava influence seem to be: *a, u, ka, ga, ca, ja, ḍa, na, ba, ya, ra, la, va, ha* and *ḷa*. It has, however, to be noted that side by side with letters modified by the Pallava Script, there exist also letters that were directly developed in Ceylon from early Brāhmī origins.

The characters that were not available in the current Sinhalese alphabet of the period immediately preceding the eighth century, but provided by the Pallava Grantha alphabet are: *i, o, kha, gha, cha, ṇa, tha, pha, bha, ṣa* and *ṣa*. From about the 3rd century A.D. upto about the eighth century the Sinhalese language had so developed phonetically that most of the letters indicated above, particularly the aspirates and the cerebral and the palatal sibilants, were seldom or never used. These letters, though often used in the early Brāhmī records of Ceylon, had no opportunity for development and had long become obsolete when in the seventh, eighth and ninth centuries, opportunities presented themselves for the use of these letters in lithic and other records. Owing to Mahayānist influences prevalent in the country at the time, the Sanskrit language was used for religious purposes and scribes could do no better than borrow from the Pallava alphabet, the characters that they needed to make the Sinhalese alphabet meet their new requirements, i.e. the letters mentioned above and some conjunct consonants.

The script used in the Iṅdikatuṣāya Copper Plaques assigned to the 8th or the 9th century illustrates the extent to which the Pallava Grantha alphabet met the requirements of the Sinhalese scribes when they used Sinhalese characters to write Sanskrit.

3. Sections A and C are taken from *E.Z.*, Vol. IV, plate 15.

Medial vowel signs too were subject to considerable modification and development and the main features of this development are indicated below.

MEDIAL Ā: In the early Brāhmī stage long vowels, particularly medial *ā*, were not represented graphically. In the centuries following the Christian era long vowels did not find a place in the Sinhalese alphabet and consequently symbols to represent medial long vowels were not used in the records of this period. But towards the eighth century long vowels found a place in the language and had to be graphically represented in inscriptions. Thus Sinhalese scribes had to take over from South India the forms that were current there.

MEDIAL I: In the early Brāhmī stage the medial *i* was indicated by a vertical stroke attached to the top of the main letter by a short horizontal stroke. Later this symbol developed into a curve turned towards the left. In the documents of the eighth century the medial *i* has developed into a very pronounced hair-spring-like curve. Some of the symbols, e.g. in *mi*, *pi*, *ri*, *si*, *hi* in the inscriptions Nos. IV and V, *E.Z.* IV, plate 14 suggest Pallava influence.

MEDIAL Ī: This symbol takes the form of a semi-circular stroke with a loop at the right or the left extremity, *mī* and *vī* in the Rock Inscription at Rāssahela, *E.Z.* IV, plate 18, II, l. 4 and III, l. 10 respectively. The former context demands that *mī* should be read as *mi*. In many instances there does not seem to be any distinction between the short and the long medial vowel.

MEDIAL U: In the early Brāhmī stage two symbols were used to indicate the medial *u*. In letters of which the lower portion terminated in one or two vertical or diagonal strokes the symbol took the form of a short horizontal stroke attached to the vertical stroke of the letter (Fig. 1, No. 1) or to the right limb if it had more than one such limb (Fig. 1, Nos. 2 and 3). In all other letters the medial *u* was indicated by a short vertical stroke attached to the bottom of the main letter (Fig. 1, Nos. 4, 5 and 6). This distinction with certain modifications has been preserved upto the present day.

The medial *u* is indicated in the eighth century records by one of two symbols. The first consists of two short vertical strokes connected at the lower extremity (Fig. 1, No. 7). This is a development from the single vertical stroke used in the Brāhmī stage and may be traced to the Pallava script—for in this script the practice was to use two vertical strokes in places where only a single vertical stroke was used in the Brāhmī stage. This symbol was used to mark the medial *u* in all letters except *ka*, *ga*, *ta*, *bha* and *śa*. Sometimes the two extremities of the vertical strokes of the medial *u* are left unconnected, this form probably being the later type; medial vowel symbols in *ru*, *vu* and *du* in the Rock Inscription at Rāssahela, *E.Z.* IV, plate 18, I,

DEVELOPMENT OF THE SINHALESE SCRIPT

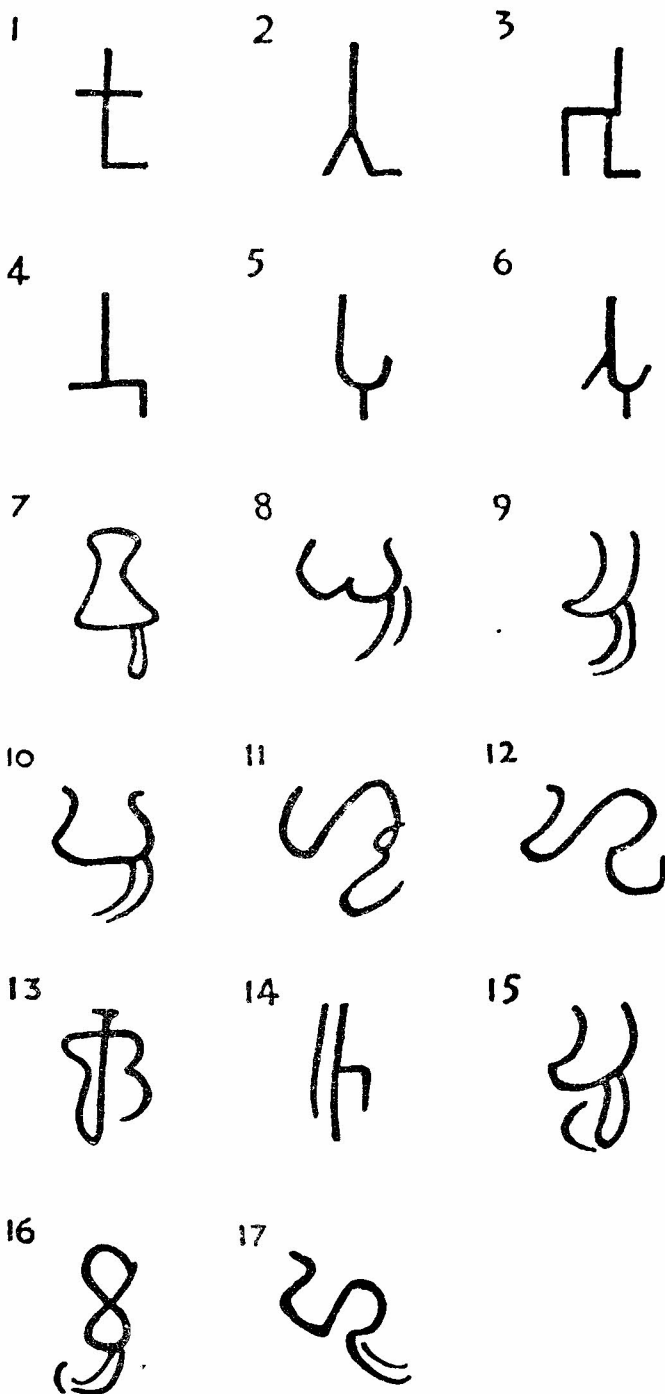


FIG. 1

illustrate this type. In the *Īndikaṭuṣāya* Copper Plaques, *E.Z.* III, plates 17, 18 and 19, the medial *u* consists of two downward strokes and are curved towards the left, (Fig. 1, Nos. 8, 9 and 10). Occasionally the two vertical strokes are curved towards the left and also connected at the lower extremities.

The second type of medial *u* is used only in conjunction with the letters *ka*, *ga*, *ta*, *bha* and *śa*. It consists of a curved stroke opening upwards and attached to the right limb of the main letter, (Fig. 1, Nos. 11 and 12). It is however noteworthy that sometimes the medial *u* is marked in the letter *ka* with a small semi-circular stroke turned towards the left (Fig. 1, No. 13). In the letter *ra* this medial vowel is marked by adding to the right-hand side of the main letter, a short horizontal stroke which curves downwards (Fig. 1, No. 14).

MEDIAL Ū: Corresponding to the two types of medial *u* there are two types of symbols to indicate the long medial *u*. The first type consists of the two vertical strokes, curving to the left with an additional curve turned to the right (Fig. 1, Nos. 15 and 16). The second type is associated with the consonants *ka*, *ga*, *ta*, *bha* and *śa* and consists of the curved stroke used to indicate the short medial *u* with an additional curved stroke placed above it (Fig. 1, No. 17).

MEDIAL Ṛ: The medial *r* is indicated by a curved stroke, opening upwards placed below the consonant, see *kr*, *dr* and *mr* in the *Īndikaṭuṣāya* Copper Plaques, Nos. 67, 72, 85.

MEDIAL Ā: The earliest instances of the medial *ā* occur in some 8th century records, namely:

1. A lithic record preserved at the Archaeological Museum, Anuradhapura, *E.Z.* IV, plate 14, No. IV.
2. Gāraṇḍigala Rock Inscription, *E.Z.* III, plate 16.
3. Tammānāgala Vihāra Inscription, *E.Z.* IV, plate 14, No. VI.
4. Rock Inscription at Rāssahela, *E.Z.* IV, plate 18, I, II and III.

In these records the medial *ā* is represented by a small curved stroke opening upwards, placed at the right-hand top corner of the main letter. In the Gāraṇḍigala Rock Inscription, however, the curved stroke opens towards the right and is placed at the right-hand side of the main letter. (*Cf.* *gā* in *E.Z.* IV, plate 14, No. IV, line 2 and *bā* in *E.Z.* III, plate 16 B, line 6). Perhaps the origin of this medial *ā* may be traced to a symbol consisting of a small semi-circle opening upwards and placed above the main letter⁴. This symbol occurs in a few records of the eighth century⁵ and in the graffiti at Sigiriya.

4. *E.Z.* IV, p. 146.

5. Mādagama Vihāra Rock Inscription, *E.Z.* IV, plate 14 and the Inscription found at Ambasthala, Mihintale, *E.Z.* IV, plate 14, No. V. Veherakema Inscription, *E.Z.* IV, plate 14, No. 1.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE SINHALESE SCRIPT

THE VIRĀMA. The *virāma* sign occurs in Ceylon for the first time in the records of the eighth century, e.g. Gārañḍigala Rock Inscription, *E.Z.* III, plate 16; the Ambasthala Inscription, *E.Z.* IV, plate 14, No. V; Tammānāgala Vihāra Inscription, *E.Z.* IV, plate 14, No. VI; Rock Inscription at Rāssahela, *E.Z.* IV, plate 18; Inscription near the stone canopy, Anuradhapura, *E.Z.* IV, plate 14, No. VII; Īndikaṭṣāya Copper plaques, *E.Z.* III, plates 17, 18 and 19. In these records the *virāma* is indicated by a short stroke placed above the main letter on the right-hand side, the exact position of the symbol depending on the fancy of the scribe. It may be mentioned that the *virāma* symbol occurs in South India in records written in the Pallava Grantha Script as early as the seventh century,⁶ and that the symbol used in these records is the same as was used in Ceylon.

The *anusvāra* and the *visarga* occur in the Īndikaṭṣāya Copper plaques and call for no remarks except to point out that the symbol for the former is sometimes placed inside the symbol indicating the preceding sound, as in plaque No. 18,⁷ and not after the symbol for the main consonant as in plaque No. 62.⁸

Conjunct Consonants and Ligatures

Except in one or two instances conjunct consonants and ligatures were not employed in the Brāhmī records of Ceylon.⁹ This feature, due no doubt to the peculiar structure of the Sinhalese language, is noticeable in the records of even the later period upto the end of the seventh century, when conjunct consonants begin to make their appearance. In India from the earliest times when Brāhmī records came to be set up, letters were generally placed one above the other in conjunct consonants, except in ligatures such as *pra*, *kra*, etc. where the *ra* was incorporated into one of the arms of the letter and in conjunct consonants such as *mha* where the peculiar shape of the component consonants permitted them to be placed side by side on the same plane. When the structure of the Sinhalese language changed in such a manner as to necessitate the use of conjunct consonants, the Indian practice seems to have prevailed on the Sinhalese scribes in Ceylon. Thus in the inscriptions of the eighth century most of the conjunct consonants have the components placed one above the other, e.g. *nda*, *sva*, *sta*, in the Ambasthala Inscription, *E.Z.* IV, plate 14, No. V, and *ta*, *tva*, *ndha*, *pta*, *rṇṇa*, *spa* and *hva* in the Īndikaṭṣāya Copper Plaques Nos. 1, 6, 8, 2, 58, 33 and 7 respectively. Side by side with these are also found conjunct consonants where the component letters are placed on

6. Kurram Pallava Grant, *Epigraphia Indica*, Vol. XVII, plate facing p. 340.

7. *E.Z.* III, plate 17.

8. *E.Z.* III, plate 19.

9. *University of Ceylon Review*, Vol. VII, No. 4, p. 286.

the same plane, e.g. *ddha*, *nda*, *nma* and *mba* in the Gāraṇḍigala Rock Inscription, *E.Z.* III, plate 16 and *kṣ*, *dda*, *rśśa* and *śśa*, *ṣṭa* in the Iṅḍikaṭusāya Copper Plaques Nos. 55, 77, 36, 91 and 72 respectively. The occurrence of these two types of conjunct consonants seems to indicate that the script was in a transitional state in the eighth century as far as the conjunct consonants were concerned.

In Sinhalese inscriptions the three ligatures, the *repha*, (*r* preceding a consonant) the *rakārāṃśaya* (*r* combined with a preceding consonant), and the *yanśaya* (*ya* combined with a preceding consonant) appear for the first time in the eighth century. These conjunct consonants are found in India in Brāhmī records of an earlier period, including the inscriptions of Asoka. In them the individual letters could be identified whereas in later records both in India and in Ceylon these sounds were represented by symbols quite different from the letters used to represent these sounds normally.

The *repha* is represented in Sinhalese documents by a curved stroke placed above the main letter. Sometimes this curved stroke opens towards the left and sometimes to the right, Iṅḍikaṭusāya Copper Plaques Nos. 21, 26, 37 and 54. It is the same as the symbol used in contemporary Pallava Grantha inscriptions of South India¹⁰. In plaque No. 73 the symbol takes the form of a semi-circle opening downwards almost like the symbol used in the present day. When the *repha* occurs in conjunction with sounds such as *ṇ*, *l*, *n*, *m*, *y*, *v* and *ś*, the latter character is doubled—Plaques Nos. 58, 61, 21, 59, 79, 54 and 36 respectively. When it is used in conjunction with *dha*, *d* precedes the latter as in plaque No. 53. In other instances the character that follows the *r* is not doubled as shown in plaques Nos. 37 and 73.

The two ligatures *ñca* and *jña*, occurring in the Iṅḍikaṭusāya Copper Plaques Nos. 36 and 23 respectively, indicate once again that their origin is to be traced to South India¹¹. The ligature *ñca* seems to be a combination of *na* and *ca* while the *jña* seems to be composed of *na* or *ṇa* and *ja*. The loop intended to represent *na* or *ṇa* in *jña* may have, in fact, indicated merely the nasalization of the *ja*. Thus the *jña* in the Iṅḍikaṭusāya Copper Plaques and in contemporary Indian records has the graphical value of *ñja*. In earlier Indian records *jña* was represented by a conjunct consonant incorporating the *ja* and the *ña*¹².

10. See e.g. the *repha* used in the Kurram Plates of the Pallava King Parameśvaravarman I, *E.I.* Vol. XII, plates facing pp. 340 and 341.

11. Bühler, *Indian Palaeography* (Plates) Tafel VII, Col. XX, line 16 for *ñca* and Col. XXIV, line 16 for *jña*.

12. G. H. Ojha, *The Palaeography of India*, Plate XXVI.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE SINHALESE SCRIPT

The letter *ra* when combined with another consonant takes the form of a curve opening upwards and attached to the latter on the right. In the Iṅḍikaṭusāya Copper Plaques this symbol seems to have been written with a sweeping flourish as in the contemporary Pallava Inscriptions cf. *kra*, *ndra*, *pra* and *śra* in Iṅḍikaṭusāya Copper Plaques Nos. 3, 2, 1 and 79 respectively with *pri*, *sri* and *trai* in plates IIIa, l. 20 ; IIIb, l. 31 and IVa, l. 37 respectively, of the Kurram Grant of Parameśvaravarman I¹³. The above remarks are equally applicable to the *ya* in combination with any other consonant. Both in contemporary Pallava records and in Sinhalese inscriptions the symbol takes the form of a sweeping curve drawn downwards and attached to the bottom of the right limb of the consonant ; the end of the curve is retraced upwards. Two other noteworthy ligatures that occur in the 8th century are *ddha* in the Iṅḍikaṭusāya Copper Plaques Nos. 53, 59 and *dva* Iṅḍikaṭusāya Copper Plaque No. 73 and Gāraṅḍigala Rock Inscription B, which may be compared with the corresponding ligatures occurring in contemporary Pallava records¹⁴.

The foregoing account of the Sinhalese script of the eighth century would show that it was still in a formative stage. The old Brāhmī forms had become obsolete during this period and new forms had been evolved or taken over from the Pallava Grantha Alphabet used in South India. The alphabet was striving to become a full-fledged alphabet that would be adequate even to meet the demands of the Sanskrit language. Mahayānist teachings introduced to the country at different periods seem to have played an important part in the development of the Sinhalese script at this time, as is shown by the variety of forms used in the Iṅḍikaṭusāya Copper Plaques.

9-10th Century A.D.

During the 9th and 10th centuries the Sinhalese script continued its course of development, marked changes being noticeable in a number of characters. The influence the Grantha alphabet used in South India can still be noticed—though to a very limited extent, in the Sinhalese script. This is as it should have been, for by this time the Sinhalese script had developed its own character and had marked for itself a particular course of development, and an individuality of its own in which a foreign script could play only a very minor role. Thus though an occasional *ka* or *ya* may show traces of the influence of the Grantha, most of the letters of this period can be considered to be natural developments of the forms used in the eighth century.

13. *E.I.* Vol. XVII plates facing pp. 340 and 341.

14. Velvikudi Grant of Nedunjadaiyan, *E.I.* Vol. XVII, plate facing p. 298 ; for *ddha* see plate I, l. 2 and for *dva* plate IIa, line 9 and IIb, l. 18.

The letters that seem to have undergone a considerable measure of development are *a*, *i*, *ka*, *ca*, *ṇa*, *ba*, *ma*, *ra* and *ḷa*, while the rest retain almost the same forms as they had in the eighth century.

A: The right component of this letter now takes the form of a rectangle, the single vertical stroke that formed this limb having been doubled as in the corresponding Grantha letter, Table II, cols. 7, 8 and 9; letters with a right component consisting of a single vertical stroke are also met with sporadically as in l. 6 in the inscription of Sena I at Kivulekaḍa, *E.Z.* III, plate 34 (II). The right component of *a* develops into a curved or triangular loop towards the tenth century, as in the Fragmentary Pillar Inscription in the Colombo Museum, *E.Z.* IV, plate 23, Sect. A, l. 13; the Slab Inscription of Kassapa V, *E.Z.* I, plate 12, and the Vessagiri Slab Inscription of Dappula V, *E.Z.* I, plate 8. An *a* with a right component consisting of a pair of parallel vertical strokes, left unconnected at the bottom, similar to letter No. 8 in Table II is noticeable in the Giritale Pillar Inscription, *E.Z.* III, plate 10, the Badulla Pillar Inscription of Udaya III, *E.Z.* III, plate 5, the Fragmentary Slab Inscription at the Buddhist Railing, *E.Z.* III, plate 25, the Stone Canoe Inscription at Anuradhapura, *E.Z.* III, plate 9, the Polonnaruva Pillar Inscription of Mahinda V, *E.Z.* IV, plate 7. Grantha influence can be traced in some of the *a* symbols in the Pillar Inscription of Kassapa IV, *E.Z.* III, plate 32 A, l. 12. A freak form of the letter occurs in the same record at line 29, section A. It can generally be said that during this period there was no standard form of the letter *a*: there were a number of forms which were used according to the tradition or even the fancy of the scribe.

I: This character was formed by placing two hair-spring-like spirals one below the other. But the letter took several different forms, owing to the shape of the spirals and the manner in which they were connected, as for example the *i* in the Īrippiniyāva Pillar Inscription, *E.Z.* I, plate 21 B, l. 12, D, ll. 2, 14 and 23. Cursive forms of the letter are found in the Kiribat Vehera Pillar Inscription, *E.Z.* I, plate 20 A, ll. 13 and 15 and B, l. 12, etc. The form that was to be common in the Polonnaruva Period, i.e. a form with a loop in the middle of the letter appears as early as the beginning of the tenth century, *E.Z.* IV, plate 23 B, l. 6 side by side with earlier forms, A, l. 4. These developed forms occur in the Badulla Pillar Inscription of Udaya III, the two inscriptions from Eppāvala, *E.Z.* III, plate 15, the Fragmentary Slab Inscription at the Buddhist Railing, *E.Z.* III, plate 25 and the Vessagiriya Inscription of Mahinda IV, *E.Z.* I, plate 29. Two forms Nos. 8 and 11 occur in the Giritale Pillar Inscription of Udaya II, *E.Z.* III, plate 10 C, l. 2 and ll. 15 and 18. An uncommon form of the letter *i* consisting of two flat curves opening downwards and placed one above the other, which perhaps can be traced to South Indian influence, occurs in the same record side C, l. 32.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE SINHALESE SCRIPT

Ka: This letter occurs in the records of this period in a variety of forms ranging from the simple outline of a cross through a dagger shaped symbol to almost the full-fledged form of the present-day letter. In the ninth century the forms that were commonly used are those represented in columns 7, 8, 10 and 11 of Table II, while in the 10th century the more developed form represented by the character in column 9 is the standard type. In the period between the end of the 9th century and the beginning of the 10th century, both the earlier form and the more developed form of the letter seem to have been used without distinction by the Sinhalese scribes, e.g. the *ka* occurring in the Pillar Inscription of Kassapa IV, *E.Z.* III, plate 32 A, ll. 17 and 21 and in the Īrippinniyāva Pillar Inscription, *E.Z.* I, plate 21 A, ll. 5 and 9. The Badulla Pillar Inscription of Udaya III contains two varieties of *ka* but the divergence between the two forms is not very marked. It is noteworthy that the *ka* represented in col. 2 of Table II is used in the Grantha inscriptions of South India in the seventh and the eighth centuries¹⁵.

Ca: There is a marked difference between the *ca* used in the Īṇḍikaṭusāya Copper Plaques and that used during the 9th and the 10th centuries, which is quite similar to the form used in the contemporary Grantha records.

Na: The form of this letter used in the different records of this period remains substantially the same, though when compared with the eighth century forms it seems to have gained in height.

Ba: The general tendency of this letter during this period is to develop into the almost modern form with a flat bottom but without the right arm being brought towards the left. Nevertheless there seems to be some uncertainty as to a standard form and consequently there are divergent forms appearing in one and the same record, as for example in the Viyaulpota Pillar Inscription, *E.Z.* IV, plate 18 A, l. 1 and B, l. 5, Pillar Inscription of Kassapa IV, *E.Z.* III, plate 32 A, l. 25 and l. 32. Cf. also the *ba* occurring in the Velmilla Slab Inscription of Sena III, *E.Z.* III, plate 35 A, l. 4 with that in D, l. 8. Notice also the variety of forms of *ba* occurring in the Badulla Pillar Inscription, A, ll. 1, 3, 6; C, l. 11 and D, l. 25.

Ma: The *ma* used during the earlier part of the period--i.e. during the 9th century and the early part of the 10th century is the closed *ma* which is a direct development of the symbol used as far back as the second half of the second century A.D.¹⁶, the only difference being the circular form of the two loops of the letter. The "open" form of the letter represented by the symbol

15. Sanskrit Inscription of Narendra Śatrumalla, *Epigraphia Indica*, Vol. XII, p. 225; Kurrām Pallava Grant, *E.I.*, Vol. XVII, plate facing p. 340; Atiracaṇḍeśvara Cave-Temple Inscription, *E.I.*, Vol. X, plate 1, facing p. 12.

16. C. W. Nicholas, *Palaeographical Development of the Brāhmī Script*, col. 7, second letter, *University of Ceylon Review*, Vol. VII, No. 1.

in col. 9 of Table II begins to appear towards the end of the first quarter of the 10th century. "Closed" forms however, are occasionally used side by side with the 'open' form, Giritale Pillar Inscriptions A, ll. 14 and 33 and C, l. 31. The more developed form of the *ma* that was to be the standard type in the Polonnaruva Period is noticed in some of the records of the latter half of the 10th century, such as the Fragmentary Slab Inscription at the Buddhist Railing at Anuradhapura and the Vessagiriya Inscription of Mahinda IV. The persistent appearance of the earlier closed type of *ma* is seen in the Stone Canoe Inscription No. I, *E.Z.* III, plate 9, where this type of *ma* appears alongside of forms that were to become the common type in the twelfth century, *cf. ma* occurring in line 1, with those at ll. 10 and 12.

Ra: The doubling of the single line of *ra*, resulted in this letter assuming a number of forms in the 9th and the 10th centuries. In some of the records of the earlier half of the 9th century, the left vertical line meets the main vertical somewhere in the middle, cols. 7 and 8 in Table II. Later this letter assumed an angular form as in the Pillar Inscription of Kassapa IV, col. 9, Table II. A form of *ra* where the two verticals are not connected at the bottom is also occasionally noticed in the records throughout the period, Kiribat Vehera Pillar Inscription, *E.Z.* I, plate 20 A, 3, 6, 9, etc., Giritale Pillar Inscription, *E.Z.* III, plate 10 A, ll. 19, 23; Velmilla Slab Inscription of Sena III, *E.Z.* III, plate 35 A, ll. 1, 4, 10; Badulla Pillar Inscription, *E.Z.* III, plate 5 A, l. 20, C, l. 47, etc., Kaludiya Pokuna Inscription, *E.Z.* III, plate 31, ll. 1, 4, etc., Fragmentary Slab Inscription on the Buddhist Railing, *E.Z.* III, plate 25, ll. 9, 13, 16, etc. and the Polonnaruva Pillar Inscription, *E.Z.* IV, plate 7 A, ll. 3, 14, etc. A fatter form of *ra* with a curved bottom occurs in the Fragmentary Pillar Inscription in the Colombo Museum; Vessagiri Slab No. 1, *E.Z.* I, plate 8, the Giritale Pillar Inscription, *E.Z.* III, plate 10, the Vessagiriya Inscription of Mahinda IV, *E.Z.* I, plates 9 and 10.

La: The more developed form of the *la* beginning with a dot and a curve turned towards the right as indicated in col. II of Table II occurs as early as the middle of the 9th century, e.g. the Viyaulpota Pillar Inscription. A serif occasionally replaced the dot as in B, l. 4 of the same inscription.

Medial Vowels

The system of marking the medial vowels in consonants seems to have become varied in the ninth and tenth centuries, probably because of the multitude of lithic documents set up during the period. Occasional traces of influences from South India can be seen in some of the signs, particularly of the ninth century. The practice of attaching the medial *ā* and the medial *e*, to the body of the consonant is still met with and seems to continue upto

DEVELOPMENT OF THE SINHALESE SCRIPT

the end of the ninth century with sporadic instances occurring even in later records. For example a considerable number of instances where the medial *ā* or the medial *e* is attached to the consonant can be noticed in the Kiribat Vehera Pillar Inscription of the reign of Kassapa IV. The long medial *o* occurs in Sinhalese inscriptions for the first time in this period.

Ā: During the period under consideration the medial *ā* was represented by a short stroke, slightly curved and opening towards the left. Owing to want of space, sometimes, scribes were obliged to insert the medial *ā* above the consonant, the curved stroke facing downwards, as in *kā* in the Viyaulpota Pillar Inscription, *E.Z.* IV, plate 18 D, l. 10. In an inscription of Sena I at Kiulekaḍa, N.C.P., there is an instance of a medial *ā* represented by a short horizontal stroke bent downwards forming a right angle, see last letter *kā* in line 1 and *lā* in *E.Z.* III, plate 32 C, l. 7.

I: In letters with two arms stretching upwards such as *ṭa*, *pa* and *va*, there seems to have been some uncertainty as to the exact position where the symbol for the medial *i* should be placed, the symbol being sometimes placed above or attached to the left limb and sometimes to the right limb according to the fancy of the scribe, e.g. *vi* in l. 7 of the inscription at the Vaṭadāge Polonnaruva, *E.Z.* III, plate 34, III; *ṭi* in l. 1 of the Inscription of Sena I, *E.Z.* III, plate 34, II; *pi* in l. 4 of the Pillar Inscription of Kassapa IV, *E.Z.* III, plate 32 A. Rarely it is found that the medial *i* sign is placed right above the consonant as in the *ṭi* in the Fragmentary Pillar Inscription in the Colombo Museum, *E.Z.* IV, plate 23 B, line 19. Occasionally the symbol for this medial vowel is written cursively as a continuation of the consonant, as in the *ṭi* in the Vessagiriya Inscription of Mahinda IV, *E.Z.* I, plate 9, l. 2 and the Stone Canoe Inscription at Anuradhapura, *E.Z.* III, plate 9, l. 11; and *bi* in the Badulla Pillar Inscription D, l. 22.

Ī: The remarks made in connection with the short medial *i* apply *mutatis mutandis* to the long medial *i*. It is important to note that the small loop at the right-hand end is not always found in some medial vowels and one has to often depend on the context to decipher such a symbol as the medial *ī*.

U: The general remarks made on the medial vowel symbols *u* and *ū* of the 8th century are true of the symbols used during the 9th and the 10th centuries. To denote the medial *u* sometimes two independent vertical strokes are used instead of two vertical strokes connected at the bottom. This type of medial *u* is well illustrated in the Kiribat Vehera Pillar Inscription, *E.Z.* I, plate 20 and the Kaludiyapokuṇa Slab Inscription, *E.Z.* III, plate 31. The Pallava form of the medial *u* sign is used in some records occasionally as in the Īrippinniyāva Pillar Inscription, D, l. 21 and the Mannār Kacceri Pillar Inscription, *E.Z.* III, plate 6 C, l. 10. In consonants such as *du*, *nu*, *lu* and

hu, the medial sign is inscribed cursively, but sometimes it is inscribed as a separate or semi-detached limb, see *du* in *E.Z.* III, plate 32 B, l. 28; *E.Z.* I, plate 12, l. 13; *E.Z.* I, plate 8, l. 14 and *E.Z.* I, plate 20 A, l. 4; *nu* in *E.Z.* IV, plate 23 B, l. 2 and *E.Z.* I, plate 20 D, l. 9; *hu* in *E.Z.* IV, plate 23 A, l. 5 and *E.Z.* III, plate 10 A, l. 19. In the *lu* occurring in l. 10 of the Stone Canoe Inscription of Anuradhapura, *E.Z.* III, plate 9, the medial vowel sign is attached in the same way as in the case of the other consonants such as *nu* or *pu*. In all other instances the medial *u* sign is marked in a *la* by adding a loop at the bottom.

Ū: The medial *ū* is indicated by the addition of a short vertical stroke to the short medial *u* on the right-hand side. Where in the medial *u* sign the vertical strokes are detached, the medial *ū* sign takes the form of three short strokes. Sometimes, particularly in the 10th century, the additional vertical stroke is attached to the consonant on the left-hand side of the medial *u* sign as in *vū* and *yū* in the Vessagiriya Inscription of Mahinda IV, *E.Z.* I, plate 9, l. 13 and l. 5 respectively. A medial *ū* of a more developed type approaching that used in the next period occurs in the Pillar Inscription of Kassapa IV, *E.Z.* III, plate 32 B, l. 9.

E: In the early stages of this period, as was pointed out earlier, the medial *e* was attached to the consonant. But later, towards the latter half of the 10th century it was inscribed separated from the main letter. In letters such as *ge*, *ne*, *me* and *he* the medial *e* was usually attached to the main letter.

O: The medial *o* does not call for any comments, except to point out that the remarks on medial *ā* and *e* would apply equally well to this medial sign. In the letter *lo* occurring in the Polonnaruva Vaṭadāge Inscription, *E.Z.* III, plate 34, III, A, l. 4, the medial *ē* sign and the *ā* sign are attached to each other and the conjunct sign is placed above the consonant *la*.

Ō: The earliest occurrence of the medial *ō* in a Sinhalese Inscription, is in the Vēvālkāṭiya Inscription of Mahinda IV, *E.Z.* I, plate 29, l. 3.

According to Wickremasinghe the upward stroke attached to the sign of the medial vowel to lengthen it is no other than the final circular stroke used to indicate the medial *ō* in Telugu. "In Sinhalese", says Dr. Wickremasinghe, "the curved stroke seems to have been confounded with the vertical *virāma* sign, owing perhaps to their resemblance to each other. Otherwise it is difficult to account for the use of the *virāma* signs . . . in modern Sinhalese to indicate the long vowels *ē* and *ō*"¹⁷.

Ā, Ā̄: The medial *ā* and *ā̄* occur more frequently during this period than it was in the eighth century when the symbol came into existence. The long *ā* is indicated by employing two small curved strokes opening towards the

17. *E.Z.* I, p. 242.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE SINHALESE SCRIPT

right. When written cursively this sign takes the form of the modern medial \bar{a} without the short horizontal stroke.

Conjunct Consonants and Ligatures

By the beginning of the ninth century the practice of writing conjunct consonants in the same plane, i.e. alongside each other, had become well established. Yet, the auspicious word *Svasti*, placed at the commencement of inscriptions of the period, continued to be written in the old way, with the component letters of each conjunct consonant placed one below the other, upto even beyond the beginning of the 10th century. The survival of this practice only in the inscription of this auspicious word *svasti* can well be understood, if it is imagined that the scribes of those times regarded the letters forming this word not as individual letters to be inscribed but as a symbol to be drawn or copied, in the same manner as earlier scribes had done.

The conjunct consonants commonly found in the inscriptions of this period are: *jña, tta, ttha, nda, tta, tra, ddha, nga, nda, nna, mba, rya, šta, śra, sta, stha*, and *sva*.

The ligature *nga* seems to be formed of the two letters *ñ* and *ga*, as is shown in the *nga* occurring in the Vessagiriya Slab Inscription of Dappula V, No. I, *E.Z.* I, plate 8, l. 5. The hook attached to the top of the left arm of *ga* is quite similar to the *ñ* used in *ñka* of Iñdikaṭusāya Copper Plaque, No. 16. This symbol, it appears, has been extended later to the so-called *saññaka* letters such as *ddha, nda, nca*, etc.

In the conjunct consonant *nda*, occurring in the Mannār Kacceri Pillar Inscription, *E.Z.* III, plate 6 B, l. 2, a trace of the component *na* has been preserved.

The *anunāsika* sign has been used in the word *Virāṅkura* in l. 12 of the Vessagiri Slab, No. I, *E.Z.* I, plate 8.

Virāma: The *virāma* sign comes into more frequent use during the ninth and the tenth centuries owing to certain developments that took place in the Sinhalese language during this period. It is represented by a stroke slanting towards the right and placed above the consonant. But where a letter has a limb moving upwards on the right-hand side such as *ta*, the *virāma* is sometimes, particularly in the tenth century, represented by this limb being continued upwards, e.g. *ṭ* in the Kataragama Pillar Inscription, B, ll. 14 and 16. Occasionally the *virāma* takes the form of a curve opening towards the right and attached to the consonant, as in the Giritalē Pillar Inscription, *E.Z.* III, plate 10 A, l. 10. In letters such as *ta, pa, va* and even *ba* the *virāma* is let

down in the middle of the letter, as in *t*, *d* and *p* in the Irippinniyāva Pillar Inscription, A, l. 18, B, l. 1, D, l. 15, respectively, *v* in *E.Z.* III, plate 28 A, l. 3 and *b* in *E.Z.* III, plate 24 A, l. 7.

The above survey should show that the Sinhalese Script of the ninth and tenth centuries occupies an important place in the history of Sinhalese palaeography. The new symbols such as the *virāma* and the medial *ā* were put to great use during this period and on the whole the script was afforded opportunities to be used in the writing of records as it had never been earlier. The short dedications and grants of the earlier period were replaced and supplemented by long land grants with details of immunities associated with the grant and consequently a large number of Pillar Inscriptions was set up in different parts of Ceylon at this time. Consequent to the general deterioration of the Sangha and the corruption that existed on the monasteries regulations in the form of Tablets had to be set up in monasteries for the guidance of the monks. Two of the earliest extant works, namely the *Siyabaslakara* and the *Dhampiyā Atiwā Gāḷapadaya* in Sinhalese, were probably written during this period and perhaps other works too, now lost to us, were produced during these two centuries.

Kassapa V is said to have caused the Abhidhamma discourses to be transcribed on plates of gold and in various ways to have promoted the growth of the Sāsana and the pursuit of learning¹⁸. Original Pali works, such as the Khemappakarāṇa and the Mahābodhivaṃsa are also said to have been composed during the tenth century¹⁹. In monasteries that existed during this period, wardens and custodians were required to keep accounts of income and expenditure in books²⁰.

Thus the social and economic conditions of the time were such as to help the development of a system of writing that would satisfy the demands made on it. As the Sinhalese Script was on the way to becoming a full fledged system of writing, the influence wielded on this script by scripts existing in South India was not so great as it had been in the eighth century when the Sinhalese alphabet was incomplete in many respects. All the influence that the South Indian scripts wielded on the Sinhalese Script can be seen in such letters as *ka*, *ga*, *na*, *ya*, *lu* and in some medial vowel signs.

11-13th Century

This period of three hundred years can be generally described as a period of intense religious and scholastic activity. It is indeed undeniable that the occupation of Ceylon by the Coḷas from South India for over (1017-1070) half

18. *E.Z.* I, p. 43.

19. Malalasekera, *The Pali Literature of Ceylon*, pp. 155-157.

20. *E.Z.* I, p. 240.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE SINHALESE SCRIPT

a century must have hindered such activities for a time, but energetic and enlightened rulers such as Vijayabāhu I and later Parakramabāhu the Great, Niśsaṅkamalla and Parakramabāhu II did, indeed, their best to make up for all the losses sustained by Ceylon at the hands of South Indian invaders. Moreover each of these rulers was surrounded by a galaxy of pious and learned men like Dimbulāgala Mahā Kassapa and Sāriputta, who were ever zealous in the promotion of learning. Among themselves these monks were responsible for the writing of a number of commentaries and grammars and original works both in Sinhalese and Pali. Then there were also laymen who were well versed in Sinhalese, Pali and Sanskrit, scholars and men of letters such as Gurulugomi, Anavamadarśi and Vidyācakraṇvarti by whom were written some of the most cherished literary works of the Sinhalese²¹. Some of the rulers themselves were men of great learning, who amidst arduous affairs of State found sufficient leisure to indulge in literary pursuits. Vijayabāhu I is said to have been the author of a number of books, while Parakramabāhu II is credited with the Sinhalese Epic Poem, the *Kaṣṣilumina* and several other works. The activities of these scholars and writers must undoubtedly have contributed their own share towards the development of the script they used in their writings.

Many of the scholars who lived during this period, particularly during the Polonnaruva period were well versed in Sanskrit, and Sanskrit loanwords began to be used increasingly in Sinhalese writings. Not only the Sinhalese literary works of this period such as the *Dharma-praṭīpikā* and the *Daham-saraṇa*, but also the lithic records set up by kings such as Parakramabāhu, Niśsaṅkamalla and Sāhasamalla show the extent to which Sinhalese writers were indebted to the Sanskrit language during this period.

Practical steps were also taken by kings and nobles to popularise the teachings of the Buddha. Various books of the Tripiṭaka and commentaries on important treatises dealing with Buddhist teaching, such as the Visuddhimagga Ṭīkā were copied on ola leaves and distributed throughout the country. Copies of such texts made during the reign of Parakramabāhu II and of later periods have been discovered in temple libraries of Ceylon²².

The considerable volume of writing—resulting from the copying of existing books and the compilation of original works and setting up of a large number of lithic inscriptions together with the preponderance of Sanskrit words in the

21. For an account of the literary activity of this period, see Malalasekera, *The Pali Literature of Ceylon*, pp. 175-237.

22. In addition to the copy of the *Cullavagga* in the Colombo Museum Library, the writer has come across the following :—

Visuddhimagga Ṭīka : (1) of the Dambadeniya Period, at the Library of the University of Ceylon, (2) of a period slightly later than the Dambadeniya Period, Arattana Purana Rajamaha vihara, Hanguranketa; *Mahavagga*, Dambadeniya Period (13th century). Vidyālankāra Pirivena, Peliyagoda.

Sinhalese language provided sufficient exercise to the script, in which process it underwent a certain measure of development. But this development did not result in radical changes in the form of the individual letters—it was rather a development that was to be expected as a result of constant use of the script during a course of three centuries. A few letters such as the long initial vowel *i* and *jha* and *ña* made their appearance together with the sign for the medial *au*. Attention may, however, be drawn to the peculiar forms of the *i*, *ka*, *ta*, *na* and *ra* occurring in the Ambagamuva Rock Inscription of Vijayabāhu I.²³

The general tendency of this period seems to be that the letters continue to be rounder and fuller, a tendency that was inevitable when writing had to be done with speed and clarity.

Some letters, however, call for a few remarks.

A: The angular form of the *a* has given place to a round form, almost the same as that used in the present day.

I: In the Ambagamuva Rock Inscription it is like the *ta* of the 10th century. In other records of the period the *i* has developed a loop in the middle, Nos. 14, 15, 16 in Table II.

I: The first occurrence of the long initial *i* in Ceylon appears to be in the Pritidānakamaṇḍapa Rock Inscription of Niśśaṅkamalla, *E.Z.* II, plate 28, l. 26. This sign seems to have been adapted from the South Indian Scripts. In the Coḷa Grantha Script, the long *i* is represented by a short vertical stroke with two dots on either side²⁴. The Karaḍi Script had a long *ī* represented by an oval shaped symbol with two dots²⁵ on either side, similar to the symbol *ī* in Table II. A symbol for long *i* seems to have been in the Sinhalese alphabet before the time of Niśśaṅkamalla, for the long initial *ī* occurs in a few words in the *Dhampiyā Aṭuvā Gāṭapādayā* of the tenth century.²⁶

U, *E* and *O*: These initial vowel signs have become rounder and fuller, though occasionally archaic forms occur side by side with later forms, as in the Devanagala Rock Inscription of Parakramabāhu I, *E.Z.* III, plate 37. The initial *o* is common in the inscriptions of the ninth and the tenth centuries though it is not represented in Table II²⁷.

Jha and *Ña*: In the Pillar Inscription of Kassapa IV, A, l. 8 occurs a *jña*, which has been adopted in the records of the 11th-13th century to represent *ña*. *Jña*, on the other hand, was represented by a letter similar to the *ja*.

23. *E.Z.* II, p. 293.

24. Ojha, *The Palaeography of India*, plate LXII.

25. *Ibid.*, Plate LXXXIII.

26. *Dhampiyā aṭuvā gāṭapādaya*, ed. D. B. Jayatilaka, 1932, pp. 3 and 13.

27. The *gha* is also found in the 10th century, though not represented in Table II.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE SINHALESE SCRIPT

Polonnaruva Slab Inscription of Niśsaṅkamalla at the North Gate of the Citadel, *E.Z.* II, plate 27 A, ll. 24 and 30, and also Polonnaruva Slab Inscription of Sāhasamalla, *E.Z.* II, plate 32 B, l. 28. As the *ṅa* was represented by a ligature consisting of a *ka* and what appears to be a *da*, the Sinhalese scribes seem to have formed the *jha*—an aspirate, by combining the *ka* and the *dha*, another aspirate. In later times the *ja*—which was used to represent *jṅa* seem to have been transformed by being combined with *da*, on the analogy of *ṅa*.

Na: After the tenth century *na* develops a small circle in the first of its three loops. Another characteristic of the *na* of this period is that generally the middle loop is raised higher than the two others on either side of it, see *na* in the Devanagala Rock Inscription, *E.Z.* III, plate 37 and the Batalagoda-vāva Slab Inscription of Kalyānavatī, *E.Z.* IV, plate 8. But some characters in the Laṅkātilaka Guard Stone Inscription, *E.Z.* III, plate 1, are more akin to the earlier forms of this character.

The *na* occurring in the Waharakgoda Inscription, seems to be more developed than forms occurring in contemporary records²⁸.

Na: The dental *na* has a triangular formation instead of the loop or the thin wedge shaped formation that was common in the eighth, ninth and tenth centuries. Unusual forms occur in the Polonnaruva Fragmentary Slab Inscription of Sundara Mahādevi, *E.Z.* IV, plate 8 and the Laṅkātilaka Guard Stone of Vijayabāhu IV.

Ma: This is one of the test letters in Sinhalese palaeography. A number of stages in the development of this letter can be traced during the three centuries under review. In the Ambagamuwa Rock Inscription of Vijayabāhu I three distinct types of *ma* can be noticed, A, ll. 1, 8, B, ll. 2, 44; also cols. 12 and 13 of Table II. More advanced forms, as being proper to the thirteenth century, are found in the Cullavagga Manuscript of the Colombo Museum Library and the Visuddhimaggaṭikā Manuscript of the University of Ceylon Library—both of which belong to the Dambadeniya period. The *ma* illustrated in cols. 15 and 16 of Table II are typical of this period.

Ra: From about the beginning of the twelfth century *ra* tends to become fatter and in the manuscripts of the Dambadeniya period it has a short curved stroke on the top left. Scribes seem to have commenced writing the letter with this stroke as a kind of flourish, which persists even upto the Kottē period, see *ra* in cols. 16 and 19 of Table II.

28. H. C. P. Bell, *Report on the Kegalla District*, plate facing p. 74. Bell assigned this record to the reign of Parakramabāhu VI, but later suggested that it may go as far back as the reign of Parakramabāhu I. Dr. Paranavitana is inclined to assign it to the reign of Parakramabāhu II.

La: During this period *la* has become round, from an elongated form which was the standard type during the preceding three centuries.

Medial Vowels

Ā, E: As a general rule, unlike in the preceding period, the medial vowel signs *ā* and *e* are separated from the consonant, though in very rare instances they may be found attached to the consonant as in *to* of the Polonnaruva Fragmentary Slab Inscription of Sundara Mahādevi, *E.Z.* IV, plate 8, l. 1.

I, Ī: These medial vowel signs are written generally separated from the consonant. But in letters like *ṭi*, *dhi*, *pi*, *bi*, *mi*, *ri*, *li*, *vi* and *ḷi* the vowel sign is often inserted as a continuation of the consonant or attached to it. This feature is to a considerable extent found in the records of the twelfth and the thirteenth century, see, for *ṭi* Batalagoḍa Slab Inscription, *E.Z.* IV, plate 8, line 9; for *dhi* and *dhi*, Batalagoḍa Slab Inscription, l. 4 and Polonnaruva Fragmentary Inscription of Sundara Mahādevi, *E.Z.* IV, plate 8, l. 2; *pi* Koṭṭange Pillar Inscription, *E.Z.* IV, plate 9, l. 1; *bi* Devanagala Rock Inscription, *E.Z.* III, plate 37, l. 4; *mi* Koṭṭange Rock Inscription, No. 1, l. 3 and Waharakgoda Inscription, Bell, *Kegalla Report*, plate facing p. 74; *vi*, Saṅgamu Vihāra Rock Inscription, l. 4, Batalagoḍa Slab, l. 3, Kevulgama Inscription, *E.Z.* III, plate 26 A, l. 3; *li* Devanagala Rock Inscription, l. 2, Kevulgama Inscription, A, l. 2; *ḷi* Devanagala Rock Inscription, l. 1.

U: The medial *u* sign has become broader than in the ninth or the tenth century; in fact, it has almost become a semi-circle in some instances. The sign is usually attached to the bottom of the consonant, but in letters such as *ju*, *du*, *hu*, it is often detached from the consonant, see *du* in Devanagala Rock Inscription, l. 8 and Batalagoḍa-vāva Slab Inscription, *E.Z.* IV, plate 8, l. 13 and *hu* in Batalagoḍa-vāva Slab Inscription, l. 13 and Waharakgoda Inscription, l. 1. Different ways of attaching the medial sign to the consonant are illustrated in *nu* in l. 3 of the Polonnaruva Fragmentary Inscription of Sundara Mahādevi, *du* in l. 4, *mu* and *nu* in l. 5 of the Koṭṭange Rock Inscription. The cerebral *lu* has assumed a form quite similar to the form used today. It contains though concealed, the medial *u* sign added onto *la*. The medial signs of the preceding period have survived in the Ambagamuva Rock Inscription of Vijayabāhu.

Ū: During the period under review the medial *ū* sign of the earlier period was simplified by adding a loop or a notch in the bottom curve of the medial *u* sign. The sign of the preceding period is noticed in the *dū* in l. 8 of the Devanagala Rock Inscription and *vū* in the Kevulgama Inscription, *E.Z.* III, plate 26 A, l. 16.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE SINHALESE SCRIPT

Ē, O, Ō: These medial signs call for no comments. The *virāma* sign used in medial *ē* and *ō* is represented by a short vertical stroke even in connection with letters like *ma* and *va* etc., see *dē, mē* and *sē* in the Inscription of Niśsaṅkamalla near the Vān Āḷa, *E.Z.* III, plate 11 A, ll. 8, 15 and 7. The *virāma* sign in letters like *ma* sometimes is formed by continuing the right arm upwards, e.g. *m* in Galpota Slab Inscription, *E.Z.* II, plate 20 C, l. 13.

R: The medial *r̥* is represented by a sign similar to the sign denoting the *ra* combined with a preceding consonant, but with a pronounced curve or loop at the left end, see *kr̥* in Slab Inscription of Sāhaśamalla, *E.Z.* II, plate 32 A, l. 4, *vr̥* in the Slab Inscription at the North Gate of the Citadel, *E.Z.* II, plate 27 A, l. 14. In the Grantha Inscriptions of South India the medial *r̥* was represented by a sign different from the sign used to denote a *ra* preceded by another consonant. In Ceylon, it would appear, the two sounds were not distinguished and therefore there was no difference between the two signs.

Au: This medial sign appears for the first time during the Polonnaruwa Period, see for example *gau* in the Galpota Slab Inscription, Section B, l. 18.

Ā, Ā̄: These medial signs call for no remarks.

Conjunct Consonants and Ligatures

Conjunct consonants and ligatures are of frequent occurrence as the Sinhalese language had by this time become highly sanskritized. A peculiar formation worthy of note is the ligature *mśu* in the Slab Inscription of Sāhasamalla, *E.Z.* II, plate 32 A, ll. 1 and 25.

14-15th Century A.D.

The fourteenth and fifteenth centuries roughly cover what historians call the Gampola Period and perhaps the most important portion of the Kottē Period. During the Gampola Period efforts were made to arrest the decline of Buddhism that set in after the reign of Parakramabāhu II. Important centres of religious and scholastic activity were set up at the Gaḍalādeṇiya and Laṅkātilaka Vihāras. In the Kottē Period—particularly during its first half, vigorous steps were taken to restore and sustain the *sāsaṇa*. Monastic establishments and centres of learning were newly established, old ones revived and rich endowments were made by Parākramabāhu VI, who surrounded himself with a galaxy of learned men well versed in the Dhamma and languages such as Pali, Sanskrit and even Tamil. Hindu influence from South India was also noticeable in the Court of Parākrama. His patronage was extended to scribes from South India and faint traces of the South Indian Script can be occasionally traced in the documents of the period.

UNIVERSITY OF CEYLON REVIEW

During this period the Sinhalese Script has developed to such an extent as to present no difficulties to any one who can read the Sinhalese Script of the present day. It was precisely for this reason, that it happened that most of the earliest manuscripts that we have in Ceylon today go only as far back as the Kottē Period. The script used in earlier periods is not readily intelligible to the layman, who is not acquainted with the peculiar forms of the old Sinhalese characters, and manuscripts where such a script is found were left discarded to be eaten by moths and white ants.

Fortunately Stone inscriptions and Copper plates, however neglected they may be, have survived truly placing their valuable contents at the disposal of those who are devoted to their study. Palaeographical changes in the Sinhalese Script, much more than the holocausts of books made by Māgha, Rājasinha and others have been responsible for the loss forever, of a large number of books written in the Sinhalese Script.

As stated earlier, the Sinhalese Script of the fourteenth and the fifteenth centuries is quite modern in appearance. The letters are round and full, and some letters such as the initial *e*, *ca*, *ḍa*, *ḍha*, *bha* and *sa* have even developed the horizontal stroke so characteristic of the present day script, from an original loop, *cf. sa* in cols. 17 and 20 in Table II with that in col. 19.

A few letters, however, are different from those used in the present day. The cerebral *ṇa* has as yet not developed the diagonal straight stroke found in the modern *ṇa*. In the fourteenth century documents the *ṇa* is hardly different from the forms used a century or two earlier, *cf. ṇa* in cols. 17 and 18 with *ṇa* in cols. 13 and 16 in Table II. The *ṇa* occurring in documents such as the Oruvala Sannasa, *E.Z.* III, plate 2 and the Maḍaval Rock Inscription, *E.Z.* III, plate 27 are more developed, the former being the most developed type of *ṇa* used in the fifteenth century.

The letter *ma* is represented by a variety of forms during these two centuries; the fourteenth century types, occurring in records such as the Gaḍalādeniya Rock Inscription, *E.Z.* IV, plate 10, are represented in cols. 17 and 18 of Table II. There is also a more developed type—cols. 19 and 20 occurring in the Oruvala Sannasa and the Beligala Sannasa, Bell, *Kegalla Report*, plate facing p. 94, and the Saṃyutta Nikāya manuscript of the Kottē period, belonging to the Vidyālaṅkāra Pirivena and the Dāḍigama Inscription of Bhuvanekabāhu VI, Bell, *Kegalla Report*, plate facing p. 80.

The letter *ra* is represented during this period by four distinct types: 1. a form not dissimilar to a pear, col. 17. 2. a triangular form, col. 18, Table II. 3. the so-called tadpole shaped *ra*, with the right arm continued beyond the point at which it meets the main arm, cols. 19 and 20. 4. the modern form of *ra*, col. 21.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE SINHALESE SCRIPT

Medial Vowels

Ā: In letters such as *khā*, *mā* and *vā* the medial *ā* is marked by retracing downwards the right arm of the letter. In other letters, such as *kā*, *nā*, *hā*, the right-hand curve is interrupted at the top and thence medial *ā* sign is drawn downwards. The modern form of the medial *ā* occurs in the Dādigama Inscription of Bhuvanekabāhu VI, Bell, *Kegalla Report*, plate facing p. 80.

I and *Ī*: Unlike in the preceding period the medial signs *i* and *ī* are marked as a continuation of the main letter.

U and *Ū*: The medial signs for *u* and *ū* are like the signs used at the present day, but in *mu*, sometimes the *ū* sign and the *u* sign are retraced from right arm of the letter. This type of medial is to be found in the Saṃyutta Nikāya manuscript belonging to the Vidyālaṅkāra Pirivena. In letters such as *du*, *nu*, *pu*, *su*, *ku* and *lu*, the medial sign attached to the right flank of the letter somewhere half way up its height. This type of medial *u* is found in the Gaḍalādeṇiya Rock Inscription, *E.Z.* IV, plate 10 and in the Oruvala Sannasa, *E.Z.* III, plate 2.

E and *O*: These medial signs call for no special comment.

Ā and *Ā̄*: In these two signs the short horizontal stroke of present day is missing, otherwise they are quite similar to the signs used in the present day.

R: The *rakūvāṅśaya* is used to indicate the medial vowel *r* probably because there was no distinction made in the pronunciation of medial *r* and *r* preceded by another consonant.

The importance of this period in the palaeographical history of the Sinhalese Script lies in the fact that the earlier Kottē Period, that is the fifteenth century, witnessed the last stage of the development of the Sinhalese alphabet. In the beginning of the next century Ceylon came into contact with Europeans and before long printing was introduced to the country. Schools in the modern sense of the word, were established and the ola leaf and the stylus were replaced by more efficient writing materials and instruments. The consequence of all these was final fixing of the letters of the Sinhalese alphabet, which has not undergone any substantial changes for the last five hundred years.

P. E. E. FERNANDO

යා	ආ	ඈ	ඉ	ඊ	උ	ඌ	ඍ	ඎ	ඏ
රා	ඊ	උ	ඌ	ඍ	ඎ	ඏ	ඐ	එ	ඒ
ලා	ච	ඡ	ජ	ඣ	ඤ	ඦ	ට	ඨ	ඩ
වා	ඔ	ඕ	ඖ	඗	඘	඙	ක	ඛ	ඛ
සා	ඞ	ඟ	ච	ඡ	ජ	ඣ	ඤ	ඦ	ට
හා	ඣ	ඤ	ඦ	ට	ඨ	ඩ	ඐ	එ	ඒ
ලා	ඣ	ඤ	ඦ	ට	ඨ	ඩ	ඐ	එ	ඒ

TABLE 2.

	8 TH CENTURY A.C.						9 TH - 10 TH CENTURY A.C.					11 TH - 13 TH CENTURY		
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
ka	𑀓	𑀔	𑀕	𑀖			𑀗	𑀘	𑀙	𑀚	𑀛	𑀜	𑀝	𑀞
ki	𑀟	𑀠					𑀡	𑀢	𑀣	𑀤	𑀥	𑀦	𑀧	𑀨
ku	𑀩						𑀪	𑀫	𑀬	𑀭	𑀮	𑀯	𑀰	𑀱
ke	𑀲	𑀳	𑀴				𑀵	𑀶	𑀷	𑀸	𑀹	𑀺	𑀻	𑀼
ko												𑀽	𑀾	𑀿
ka	𑀿	𑁀	𑁁	𑁂			𑁃	𑁄	𑁅	𑁆	𑁇	𑁈	𑁉	𑁊
kha	𑁋												𑁌	𑁍
ga	𑁎	𑁏	𑁐	𑁑			𑁒	𑁓	𑁔	𑁕		𑁖	𑁗	𑁘
gha	𑁙	𑁚										𑁛	𑁜	𑁝
na												𑁞	𑁟	
ca	𑁠	𑁡	𑁢				𑁣	𑁤				𑁥	𑁦	𑁧
cha	𑁨											𑁩	𑁪	𑁫
ja	𑁬	𑁭	𑁮	𑁯			𑁰	𑁱	𑁲	𑁳	𑁴	𑁵	𑁶	𑁷

9 TH - 10 TH CENTURY A.C.					11 TH - 13 TH CENTURY A.C.					14 TH - 15 TH CENTURY A.C.				
7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21
𑀓	𑀔	𑀕	𑀖	𑀗	𑀘	𑀙	𑀚	𑀛	𑀜	𑀝	𑀞	𑀟	𑀠	𑀡
𑀢	𑀣	𑀤	𑀥	𑀦	𑀧	𑀨	𑀩	𑀪	𑀫	𑀬	𑀭	𑀮	𑀯	𑀰
𑀱	𑀲	𑀳	𑀴	𑀵	𑀶	𑀷	𑀸	𑀹	𑀺	𑀻	𑀼	𑀽	𑀾	𑀿
𑀿	𑁀	𑁁	𑁂	𑁃	𑁄	𑁅	𑁆	𑁇	𑁈	𑁉	𑁊	𑁋	𑁌	𑁍
𑁎	𑁏	𑁐	𑁑	𑁒	𑁓	𑁔	𑁕	𑁖	𑁗	𑁘	𑁙	𑁚	𑁛	𑁜
𑁝	𑁞	𑁟	𑁠	𑁡	𑁢	𑁣	𑁤	𑁥	𑁦	𑁧	𑁨	𑁩	𑁪	𑁫
𑁬	𑁭	𑁮	𑁯	𑁰	𑁱	𑁲	𑁳	𑁴	𑁵	𑁶	𑁷	𑁸	𑁹	𑁺
𑁻	𑁼	𑁽	𑁾	𑁿	𑂀	𑂁	𑂂	𑂃	𑂄	𑂅	𑂆	𑂇	𑂈	𑂉
𑂊	𑂋	𑂌	𑂍	𑂎	𑂏	𑂐	𑂑	𑂒	𑂓	𑂔	𑂕	𑂖	𑂗	𑂘
𑂙	𑂚	𑂛	𑂜	𑂝	𑂞	𑂟	𑂠	𑂡	𑂢	𑂣	𑂤	𑂥	𑂦	𑂧

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