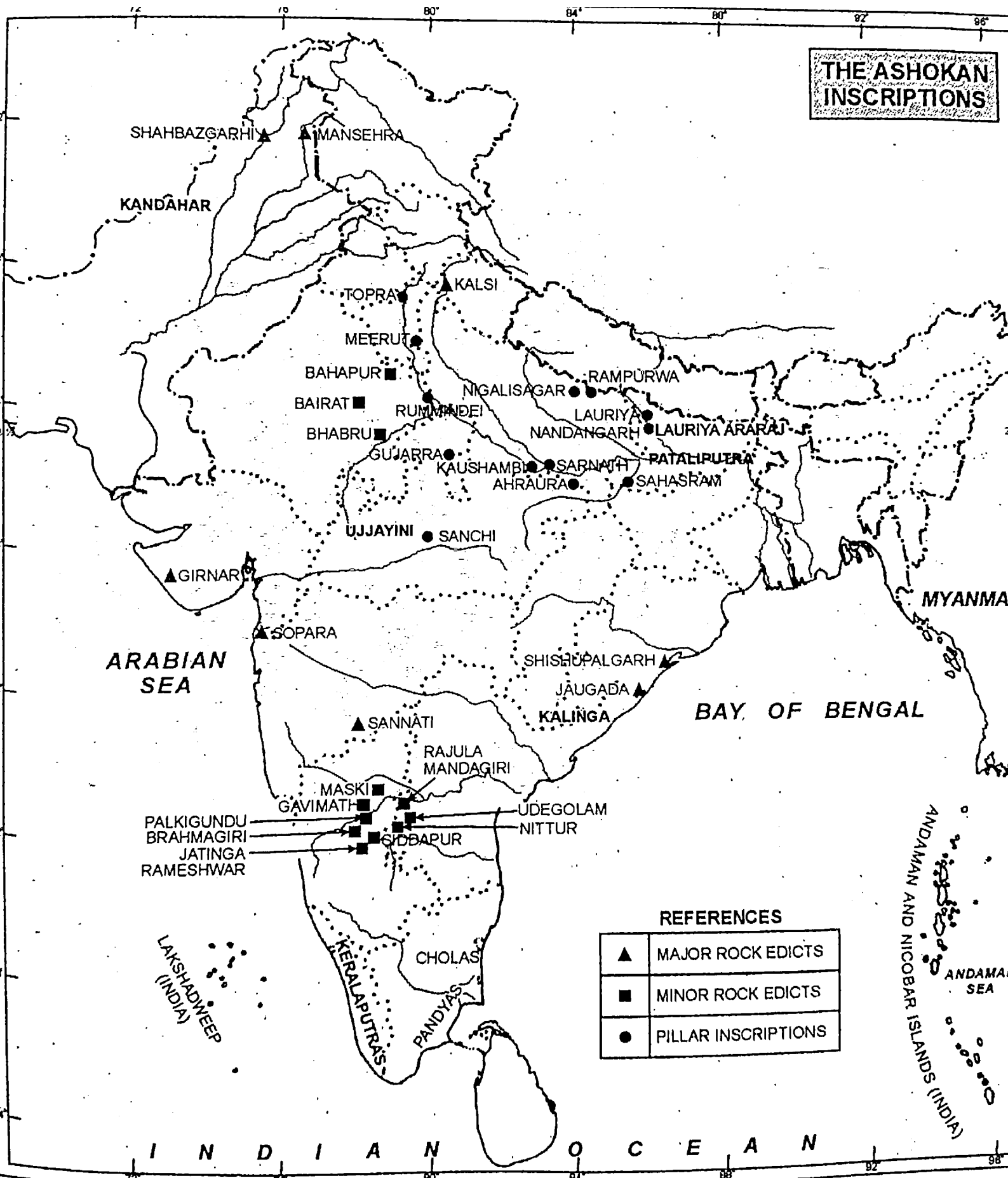


# THE ASHOKAN INSCRIPTIONS



REFERENCES	
▲	MAJOR ROCK EDICTS
■	MINOR ROCK EDICTS
●	PILLAR INSCRIPTIONS



## **Ashokan Inscriptions**

Ashokan inscriptions occupy a very significant place in the history of India. They are very helpful in reconstructing the history of the Mauryan period. Undoubtedly, Ashoka was the first ruler in the history of India who spoke directly to his people through

his inscriptions and got engraved his edicts on stones. These inscriptions have been found on stones, polished stone pillars and the walls of the caves. The inscriptions on rocks are called Rock Edicts and those on pillars Pillar Edicts. The inscriptions of Ashoka have been found in India, Nepal, Pakistan and Afghanistan.

The Ashokan inscriptions can be divided in the following categories:

### **1. The Rock Edicts**

Of Ashokan Rock Edicts the fourteen Rock Edicts are the most important. These Rock Edicts refer to fourteen main policies or edicts regarding administration and religion, hence they are known as Fourteen Rock Edicts. The Fourteen Rock Edicts have been found at Kandhar, Mansehra, Shahbazgarhi, Kalsi, Girnar, Sopara, Sannati, Shishupalgarh and Jaugada.

### **2. The Minor Rock Edicts**

The Minor Rock Edicts particularly refer to Ashoka's personal life, his deep devotion in Buddhism and essence of Dharma. The Minor Rock Edicts have been found at Bahapur, Bairat, Bhabru, Maski, Gavimath, Palkigundu, Jating Rameshwar, Udegolam, Rajula Mandagiri, Nittur, Brahmagiri and Siddapur.

### **3. The Pillar Inscriptions**

The Pillar Inscriptions particularly refer to Ashoka's measures for the propagation and spread of Dhamma. Of the Pillar Inscriptions, the Seven Pillar Inscriptions are particularly popular. Probably, because of the inscription of seven edicts, they were known as Seven Pillar Inscriptions. However, it is worthy to note that all the seven edicts are found engraved only on Delhi-Topara Pillar; the other Pillars have six or less than six edicts. The Pillar Inscriptions have been found at Topra, Meerut, Nigalisagar, Rummindei, Rampurwa, Lauriya Nandangarh, Lauriya Araraj, Sarnath, Sasaram, Ahraura, Kaushambi, Gujjarra and Sanchi.

### **Significance**

Undoubtedly, the Ashokan inscriptions or edicts (found in the form of Rock edicts, Pillar inscriptions and Cave inscriptions) occupy a very significant place in the history of India. They give us a complete picture of the conquests, administrative policies of Emperor Ashoka and his measures for the spread of Dhamma as well.

They also throw light on the extent of Ashoka's empire and also on his relations with the neighbouring countries. The Rock Edicts and Pillar Inscriptions are admirable specimens of art as well.