

ON THE HISTORY OF ORIGIN OF KAITHI AND MANY OTHER INDIAN SCRIPTS

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ABSTRACT

This work deals with history of Kaithi and other important Indian scripts. It shows the reason why many scripts came about between 6th to 9th century and then evolution of these scripts into Devanagari.

The work shows that for ordinary people's interest, Kaithi, Modhi, Mahajani etc were in use rather than Devanagari even in the Hindi speaking states of India. Devanagari was used for Sanskrit and other formal and scriptural purposes since many of these Kutil derived scripts could not be used to express precisely the Sanskrit literature which the old brahmi was used for.

1. INTRODUCTION

Indian Civilization is old as can be seen from the remains of the Indus-Harappa civilizations which go back to 3500 BC. One finds various seals and other artifacts from this civilization which extended over vast territories greater than any other ones in ancient world. The cities were well developed and also, had drainage system not found anywhere else in those years.

This civilization had a script called the Indus Script whose decipherment has remained elusive even though many have claimed to have deciphered it but so far – no test has been established to check the decipherments.

One of the claimants is Kalyanaraman; he uses the rebus method to decode [1]. He assumes that the script is a cryptographic system that uses pictures or glyphs to convey text messages. These messages could only be understood by those who knew the code. The language of the Indus Valley Civilization was a combination of dialects that were spoken over the South Asian linguistic areas of the time. These dialects belonged to the Munda, Dravidian, Tibeto Burmese and the Indo-Aryan families.

The earliest brahmi script was discovered at Morva in the state of Bihar during the Mauryan times around 300 BC. After this, all of a sudden we find the edicts of Ashoka (272 BC – 232 BC) written in this script. These edicts are found all over India in Ashoka's kingdom which extended even to Afghanistan (see Fig. 1)

Shankh (conch) script also existed along the side of brahmi for a long time until 10th century [2,3].

Ancient scriptures for the Hindus and Jains in written form came about between 300 BC to 200 AD. These were written in brahmi script. The language used in the

Hindu scriptures was Sanskrit which is a highly evolved language. Panini who lived in 4th century BC made original contribution to Sanskrit grammar.

2. PROLIFERATION OF SCRIPTS IN INDIA

The brahmi script was used in the entire Mauryan Empire which began in 4th century BC and it extended over vast areas as shown in Fig. 1. It, brahmi, continued to be used until the end of the Gupta Empire which (the end) took place in the 7th century (see Fig. 2). This Gupta Empire was smaller than the Mauryan Empire yet it extended over vast areas of India (Central and North).

As Gupta Empire ended in the 7th century, there did not exist large kingdoms in India for example, the Pala Empire was confined to East India only.as shown in Fig. 3 [4].

Due to the breaking up of India into smaller kingdoms – no central authority remained to govern entire India with the result the communication between different areas became difficult. This possibly led to coming up of new scripts in their respective regions.

Fig. 4 shows the timeline of the evolution of various scripts in different regions of India [5]. As an example, Figs 5, and 6 show newer (non brahmi) script during the Pala Dynasty which is being referred to as a general group of Kutil in [6,7]. One can see more ancient inscriptions in [3]

3. THE KAITHI SCRIPT

Das has done an extensive work on Kaithi script in his book [8]. On the other hand, Ojha has done vast amount of work on various scripts of India [6]. These scripts include Kutil, Nagari, Gurumukhi, Kharoshti and many other regional scripts . Most of these scripts are shown in Fig. 4.

Sinha has written a paper on the origin of Kaithi script where he writes that the origin of Sharada and Kaithi is from Eastern Nagari script whereas the Nagari script's origin was from Kutil script [7].

Sinha writes that the Kaithi script did not arise from Davanagari but it (Kaithi) arose from Kutil. He points out the difference between Kaithi and Devanagari scripts.

Regarding the name of this script as Kaithi, one has to look into the history of India through various inscriptions [9,10]. The Indian society has been divided into castes depending on the services people performed. The brahmins were familiar with scriptures and looked after the religious aspect in India. The Kshatriyas were the rulers and were engaged in wars and battles. Every government needs civil servants who could look into the matters of revenue collection, administration etc. Those who looked after this were called Kayasthas. In order to perform their duties, they needed records which needed script just like brahmi or Indus Valley Script. So, the script that they used for this purpose used to be called Kaithi. It did not mean that others could not use this script. For example, the script that was used for this purpose in Maharashtra was called Modhi. Similarly, the script used to record financial and business matters was called Mahajani [11]

These inscriptions in [9,10] indicate the existence of Kaithi or Kutil in the ancient times going back to 9th century. One can see more information about Kaithi script in [12]. Kaithi and Modhi were used for administration as well as in courts in many north Indian states for many centuries until India obtained independence.

4. REFERENCES

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, <http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Kaithi&action=info>

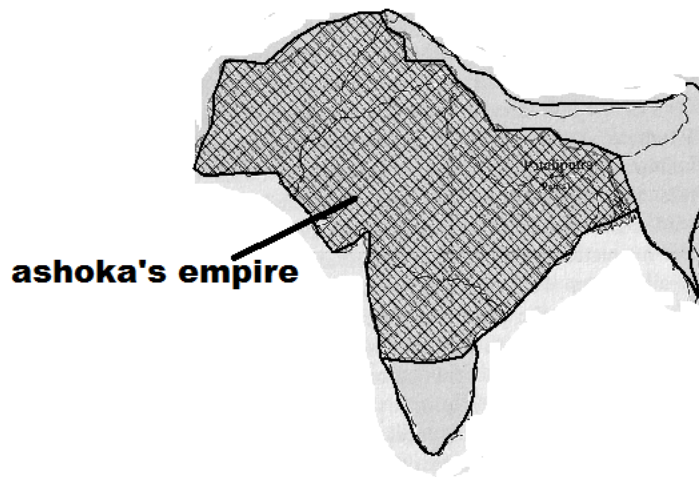


FIG. 1 ASHOKA'S EMPIRE



FIG. 2 GUPTA EMPIRE

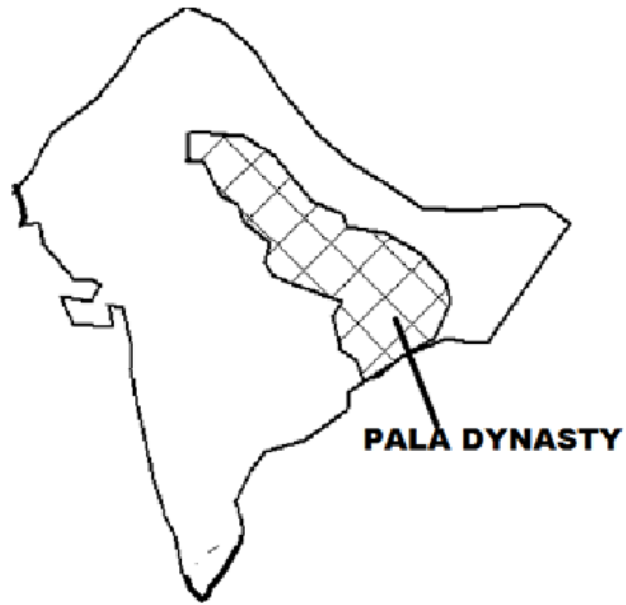


FIG. 3 MAP OF PALA DYNASTY RULE

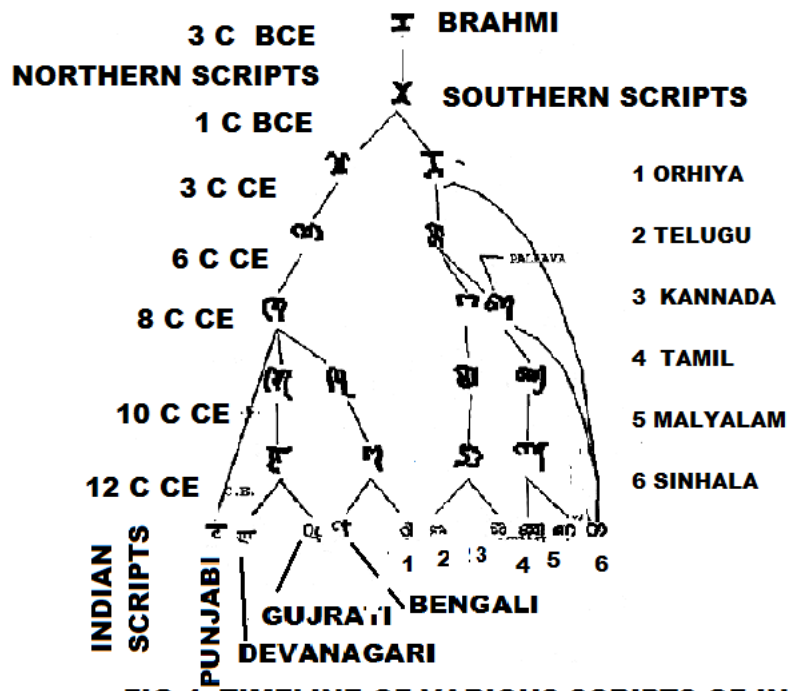
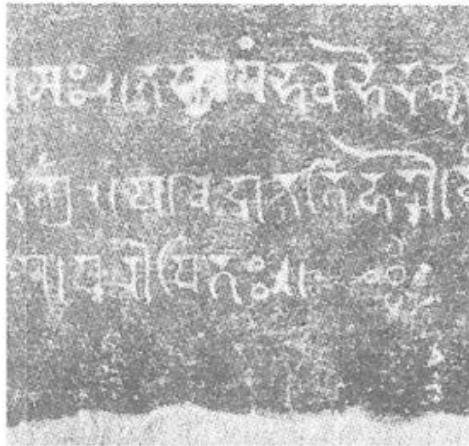
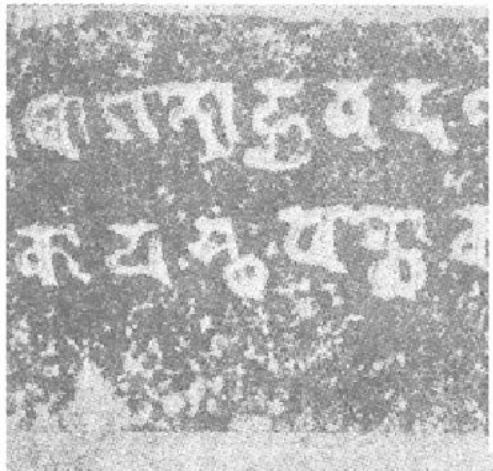


FIG 4 TIMELINE OF VARIOUS SCRIPTS OF INDIA



**FIG 5 INSCRIPTION DURING
DHARMAPALDEVA**



**FIG. 6 INSCRIPTIONS DURING
MAHENDRAPALDEVA**