BRAHMI
Rediscovering the Lost Script
Ankita Roy
Why Brahmi?

Attraction
Translating Text to visuals
Understanding the subject
The indic scripts are an descendent of Brahmi.
Target Audience

A person deeply interested in scripts
Type enthusiasts,
Font designers,
Information Available:
• Through Books,
• Visits,
• Websites.
Chronology

2500 B.C  2200 B.C  1900 B.C  1600 B.C  1300 B.C  1000 B.C  700 B.C  400 B.C  100 B.C  200 A.D  500 A.D  800 A.D  1100 A.D  1400 A.D

4 Stages of BRAHMI

Proto-Brahmi Script c1700 - 600 B.C
Pre Mauryan-Brahmi Script c600 - 350 B.C
Mauryan-Brahmi Script c350 - 150 B.C
Post Mauryan-Brahmi Script c150 - 600 A.D
Origin of Brahmi

Indus Valley Script → Brahmi Script → Kharosthi Script → Northern Scripts → Gupta, Kutila, Nagari, Sharada, Bengali → Southern Scripts → Gujrati, Telegu, Kannada, Malayalam, Tamil
Origin of Brahmi

- Phoenician Script
- Indus Valley Script
- Kharosthi Script
- Brahmi Script
- Northern Scripts
  - Gupta
  - Kutila
  - Nagari
  - Sharada
  - Bengali
- Southern Scripts
  - Gujrati
  - Telegu
  - Kannada
  - Malayalam
  - Tamil
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.
Brahmi Script

Source: Self Clicked
Strokes added to indicate different vowels following the consonants
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 4th - 3rd century B.C.
The 4th 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.
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, 3rd century B.C

Source: Self Clicked
Developmental Stages of Brahmi

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<th>ASOKAN 3rdCentBC</th>
<th>BHATTIPROLU 3rdCentBC</th>
<th>TAMIL-CAVES 3rdCentBC</th>
<th>SUINGA 2ndCentBC</th>
<th>SATAVAHANA 2ndCentBC</th>
<th>KALINGA 2ndCentBC</th>
<th>KUSHANA 2ndCentBC</th>
<th>KSHATRAPA 2ndCentAD</th>
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Source: Self Clicked
Development of letter ‘K’
Development of letter ‘K’
Mauryan Brahmi
2\textsuperscript{nd} c B.C

Naga Muchalinda, Sunga,
2\textsuperscript{nd} c B.C, Pauni, Maharashtra
Mauryan Brahmi
3-5th c B.C
Post Mauryan Brahmi
2\textsuperscript{nd} c A.D

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

Source: Self Clicked
Post Mauryan Brahmi
2\textsuperscript{nd} c A.D

Jain Votive Plaque, Kushan
Kankali Tila, Mathura, U.P
Nagari
12th c A.D

King Prativideva & Queen Kelachhadevi
Gahadavala, Alwar, Rajasthan
Nagari
12th c A.D

King Prativeda & 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.
Brahmi

Many examples of Brahmi are found during the period of the 3rd or 2nd century BCE. Brahmi spread along the Ganges River in India even before King Prasada Pushka's time, and the earliest form of Brahmi has been traced back to the Indus Valley Civilizations. The Brahmi letters were found inscribed on a seal from Mohenjo-daro, and these inscriptions are older than 2500 BCE. One of the inscriptions mentions Ashoka the Great.

In one of the inscriptions, Ashoka has justified the engraving on stone. It is believed that the writing on metal plates written in Brahmi is similar to the writing on stone plates written in Brahmi.

Time Line

- 2500 BCE to 2200 BCE: Early Brahmi scripts are found.
- 1000 BCE to 700 BCE: Brahmi reaches the Indus Valley Civilizations.
- 700 BCE to 400 BCE: Brahmi spreads to the Ganges River area.
- 400 BCE to 1000 CE: Brahmi scripts are found in various inscriptions.
- 1000 CE to 1100 CE: Brahmi scripts are found in early Buddhist texts.
- 1100 CE to 1400 CE: Brahmi scripts are found in early Hindu texts.
- 1400 CE to 1600 CE: Brahmi scripts are found in early Islamic texts.
Development of various Indic Script from Brahmi
Early Scripts of India

Indian Valley
Brakti
Khmerkha

Writing materials
- Stone
- Metal
- Palm Leaf / Tadka palm
- Bark Book / Banyan Palm
- Wood
- Bamboo
- Beads
- Clay Tablets
- Cotton cloth
- Paper

Clay Tablets depicting Shastra from Indian Valley.

An example of palm leaf manuscript.

Clay Tablets with Indian Valley Script
Wooden Tablet with Khmerkhata Script
Metal Tablet with Indian Valley Script
Brahmi

Many examples of Brahmi are found during the period of 8th or 9th century BC, but Brahmi handwriting had a long history in India even before King Ashoka. Ashoka granted his edicts in the Brahmi script in various parts of his large empire.

Brahmi letters were found inscribed in stone, on a variety of materials such as rock, leather, wood, etc. Records of the Brahmi script are also mentioned in other inscriptions. Ashoka has justified the inscriptions on stone, but longer in comparison.

Time Line

Stepped Pyramid
End of Rigvedic
Main Brähmi Edicts
started during this period.

Ganges Script
3rd century BC
Other Explorations
Other Explorations
there are some other laws. The Pharaohs also issue rules to control the number of animals in the kingdom. Pharaoh's laws must be obeyed to prevent the king from losing power. Laws should be enforced in the kingdom. If these laws are not followed, the king's power will decrease. Therefore, the king's edicts must be followed. If these laws are not followed, the king's power will decrease.
Development of Nagari
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.

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## Development of Nagari Script

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The tables compare the historical development of the Nagari and Bengali scripts, showing the evolution of each over time.
कि के का कु फ़ फ़ कू फ़ के को कं
Developmental Stages of Brahmi

The journey of how the type travelled from 3rd century B.C. to the 12th century A.D. This shows the developmental stages of letter "K." The last "K." is in two forms: Devanagari script which is the descendent of the Brahmi script.

The above display shows how the earlier sculptures were just a simple human form and slowly the detailing in sars 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 used to lift their hand for writing later. This brought in a different look altogether.
Developmental Stages of Brahmi

The journey of how the script travelled from 3rd century B.C., Asokan period to Gupta era of the 12th century A.D. This shows the developmental stages of letter "Ka". The last "Ka" is partly Devanagari script which is the descendant of the Brahmi script.
Indus Valley Civilization

Ashokan Period

Main Brahmi Scripts started during this period.

Brahmi

Gupta Period

Nagari

Other Brahmi Descendants
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

Websites:
- www.wikipedia.org
- www.ancientscripts.com
- www.chinese-school.netfirms.com/Tibet/brahmi.html

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