
DEVELOPMENT OF SINDHI WRITING AND CALLIGRAPHY

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ABSTRACT

This article is largely focused on the development of Sindhi language script and an art of calligraphy. The aim of this research is to analyze the various phases of historical development of writing and calligraphy in Sindh.

Keywords: Indus Valley Civilization, Script, Geometric design,

VARIOUS FORMS OF WRITING

Writing is based on alphabets, which have the interrelationship and originality with the art forms. Basically writing is a solid kind of communication art which reflects the socio-cultural identity of an area or nation throughout the history (Ahmed, 1959). The origin of written language started in the form of pictorial drawings and glyphs¹ in various cultures and civilizations of the world which served as a primarily utilitarian purpose in the history of mankind. The forms of written scripts or picture scripts reflect the identities, traditions and cultures of nations. Most ancient civilizations have different styles and art forms of writing for the sake of communication. Generally the figurative form of script gradually changed in the symbolic form of writing system in ancient cultures. This pictographic or iconographic² or figurative form of language was difficult and complicated to understand and to remember. Furthermore, this figurative form of writing system was too heavy to draw spontaneously according to rules. The other forms of writing were Hieroglyphic and Ideographic. The Hieroglyphic form of script

¹ Highly conventionalized group of picture signs gathered in a frame are known as glyphs or cartouches

² The term is referred to Egyptian hieroglyph, which is generally known as the picture writing or pictographic writing. It is the formal writing system, mixture of logograph and alphabetic elements. Egyptians use cursive hieroglyphs for religious literature

was suitable for the religious people of the time only. Hieroglyphic forms were developed according to vices and its need.

Pictographic Form: Pictography is generally known as picture writing. It is the most primitive stage of writing that represents picture or the sketch (pictogram). For example a circle may represents the sun, or and sketch of human or animal can be symbolized in pictography. This is a kind of writing system in a sequence of pictures, drawings symbols in straight narration. This writing system is found in the works of ancient people and in primitive cultures including Southern France, Northern Spain, Italy, Palestine and Crete, North America, Australia, Australia, Northern Siberia and Indus Valley. Moreover, they simplified the pictographic Signs by plummeting them in to wedge-shaped (cuneiform)³ signs, which is 2600 BC old form of writing according to history (Kleiner, 2001).

Ideographic Form: Ideograph or the ideogram is the Greek word. It is combination of two Ideo means 'Idea' and Grafo means to 'write'. Thus, it represents the idea or concept. In other words reflect the pictorial resemblance or physical object. Ideogram can be described as Logogram (Wikipedia). This is symbolic form in which concept is involved. This is also a form of Hieroglyphic form of poetic writing, where ideology is involved. Mayan writing is almost entirely Ideographic, although development of phonetic signs is already in evidence (Encyclopedia of World Art, 1958). This is related to syllable writing system.

Hierographic Form: Hierography is the developed form of script writing, where symbolic forms of voices are created according to needs for communication. It is the form of writing when the man became aware of sound symbolism; he gave certain forms to voice according to visual impression of figure or sketch. Historically speaking, this form was an outcome of the process of recognizing the symbols used for sound. For example in early ages bull was symbolized from the sketch or from the line work of its face with horns, and gradually face disappeared and it was symbolized from horns only.

³ A system of writing used in ancient Mesopotamia in which wedge shape characters were developed by producing a stylus in to soft clay tablets and backed or otherwise allowed to harden. Literally

INTRODUCTION TO CALLIGRAPHY

Generally the term calligraphy has been derived from the Latin word Calligraphia; in turn derived from Greek. 'kallos' which means beauty and 'graphin' which means to write. Calligraphy is an aesthetic expression regarded as an art not lower than to painting. It is equally important as painting and sculpture. In calligraphy, the letters are skillfully inscribed ordering of various forms with harmony of proportion to attract viewer's eye. Aesthetical form of letter composition, that requires balance that might be asymmetrical or symmetrical form, rhythm, unity and variety and according to ratio-portion it is calculated form of script writing is calligraphy.

Generally it is known as the art of beautiful writing or elegant penmanship. As a profession or field of study this is the art of beautiful writing depends on the aesthetic consideration (Britannica). A contemporary definition of calligraphic practice is the art of giving form to signs in an expressive harmonious and skillful manner (Mediavilla, 1996:18). Some languages spoken have their own writing system. Sindhi language is one of them.

SINDHI WRITING AND CALLIGRAPHY

Sindhi language is one of the ancient languages of Indo Aryan family. It is believed that Sindhi is derived from Sanskrit⁴ of Indo-Aryan family and it was believed to have been derived from Sanskrit⁵; which developed in the lower Indus Valley; in the proto-Vedic Prakrits⁶ of the pre-Sanskrit eras. More authentic information for Sindhi language, words, names, places, scripts and numerals can be viewed date back from 8th to 10th century A.D.,

⁴ The language is the name of repetition of various sounds in a series of symbolic forms and signs to make writing, through which human thoughts, feelings and hopes can be represented, in a form of written script

⁵ Sanskrit "refined speech" is the primary liturgical language of Hinduism, a philosophical language in Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism, and a scholarly literary language that was in use as a lingua franca in the Indian cultural zone. It is a standardized dialect of Old Indo-Aryan language, originating as Vedic Sanskrit and tracing its linguistic ancestry back to Proto-Indo-Iranian and ultimately to Proto-Indo-European

⁶ Prakrit; is the name for any of several Middle Indo-Aryan vernacular languages, derived from dialects of Old Indo-Aryan languages, particularly from Sanskrit

with the possible stretch of time to the 6th century A.D., further Muslim scholars have given brief accounts and references amongst them, Jahiz (d.912), Ibn Khurdadhbih (868/69) Mada'ini (circa 850), Baladhuri (d.892), Mas'udi (d.946), Ya'qubi (d.Crica 900), Ibn Hauqal (d.977), Istakhari (Circa 950), Muqaddisi (wrote in 985/86) and Beruni (d.after 1050) may be counted as the more distinguished ones who have contributed substantially to your knowledge of the history, language and general culture of Sindh up to the mid 11th century A.D.. In 2nd and 3rd centuries the script was adopted in Kufic style which is being confirmed by the mosque inscriptions discovered at Bhanbhore⁷ and after that from 4th to afterwards Naskh⁸ alphabet⁹ was introduced in Sindhi (Dr.Baloch, 1992:iii). Letters of alphabet are written symbols of specific sounds of language, while words are self-contained meaningful symbols of language. Orthography¹⁰ is the way the letters are joined together to form 'words'. Present Sindhi orthography has developed during a long period through pattern of Arabic writing. The discerned form of joining or not joining the letters together; initial, medial or final forms of words are similar to Arabic and some deviations having distinctive features of Sindhi orthography. The artistic way of shaping the letters of alphabets and the stylistic joints of structures of the words is Calligraphy (Dr.Baloch, 1992:ix). Ancient Sindhi language can be traced out from 1500 AD or before Aryans settled first in Indus Valley. First they settled in present Punjab and they continued their settlements in 1200 AD to Ganga¹¹, Gemna¹² and Dawabi. Their language was Vedic, which gradually converted in Sanskrit. It is generally said that Indus valley writing system were invented around 2600 B.C. is the most

⁷ An archaeological site; was an ancient city of Sindh on coastal side; right side of national Highway between the Karachi and Thatta

⁸ An style of calligraphy in rounded form created from Kotic Style

⁹ The alphabet is a system of signs and signals. The language is depended on the particular sound forms, depicted in visual representation. The visual symbolic forms of voices from that words and sentences can be making in any language which is in uniform and authentic for the whole country is known as alphabet

¹⁰ The art of writing words with the proper letters, according to accepted usage; correct spelling, other part of language study concerned with letters and spelling

¹¹ Ganga is Hindi name of great river of the plains of northern India

¹² Great River in India

developed language and the earliest use of script in lower Indus valley can be considered as pre historic concept due to the discovery of pictographic seals found from Mohen-Jo-Daro, and Harappa. Evidences shows that the Indus writing system (script) as evident from the seals and other inscribed objects is fully formed system of abstract signs called graphemes. Over 4200 objects bearing the Indus script have been discovered, most of the inscriptions are extremely short (Asoka, 1994).

The importance of writing system in ancient times has the symbolic meaning. It illustrates public rituals or events, on small tablets, writing and narrative scenes are on a miniature scale may have functioned as ritual tokens or souvenirs. This tradition is available at the tombs of saints of Sindh. Writing was used for religious purposes and for everyday use in combination with religious symbols and narratives, reflects the power of the people who used it. The writing on seals associated with animals represent the clans possibly shows the trading communities at ancient Indus times in Sindh. The writing systems which have been found in Moen-Jo-Daro possess 400 to 450 signs. Scholars are agreed that the Indus script is not in alphabetic form of writing. It is logo syllabic writing system because it is the combination of two extreme types of writing system referred as logo syllabic (morphemic), where a single sign can be a word, syllable or a sound, where a sequence of two or more signs may create a complete word or a sentence of several words and grammatical indicators. For example pictographs of a fish and a man holding a bow are used individually. These signs represented the idea, word and entire stories. The use of graphemes indicates that the Indus script is combined with logo syllabic and ideographic systems at the same time that reflects the experimental nature of script and its use by newly emerging elites (Kenoyer, 1998). Two scripts were developed. The one is Kharoshti¹³. In the northwest which was based on Aramiac¹⁴, the language of Achaemenid¹⁵. Persian

¹³ Script, which is believed to have been developed in the area of Pakistan, 15th century B.C. under the Persians who used the Aamic script as the official language of their empire. Kharoshti: Khar means Donkey and Oshti means Lips, it means Donkey Lips. This kind of script was found from Texilla, Pakistan

¹⁴ Aramaic; is a family of languages or dialects, belonging to the Semitic family. More specifically, it is a part of the Northwest Semitic subfamily, which also

Empire and it was written from right to left. The other one is known as Brahmi¹⁶. Script in south Asia around the 8th century B.C. India, it was written from left to right. These have been commissioned by Brahmans who were well versed in literature and in phonetic. The base of linkage between Sindhi and Sanskrit is developed in same area and land which made an authentic link in between these two languages.

Another major development in writing and calligraphy system was started with Arab conquest of Sindh in 92 A.H. The conquest of Sindh by Arabs brought about new changes in society. The Arabic language and culture influenced the language and culture of Sindh in many ways. For instance, Islamic system of calligraphy reshaped the calligraphic designs in Sindh. Calligraphers from Thatta, Rohri, Sehwan, Khudabad and other places have contributed a lot in this field. The inscription on tombs, graves, gateways as well as manuscripts are found all over Sindh. The oldest specimen of Kufic Khat (*letter*) has been found from the Jam-e-Masjid of Bhanbhore (249 A.H./906 A.D.) which shows that the art of calligraphy was highly developed as early as 3rd century A.H. The tradition would appear to have continued on, and eventually it flourished in city of Thatta which was founded in 14th century A.D. and remained the capital of Sindh. Mir Ali Sher Qani'u in his books "Tuhfat-ul-Kiram" and "Maqalat-al-Shuara" has given numerous references about calligraphers who flourished in Thatta during the rule of Sammas, the Arghuns, The Tarkhans, the Mughals, Kalhoras, and Talpurs.

includes Canaanite languages such as Hebrew and Phoenician. The Aramaic script was widely adopted for other languages and is ancestral to both the Arabic and modern Hebrew alphabets

¹⁵ The Achaemenid Empire or First Persian Empire was an empire in Western and Central Asia, founded in the 6th century BC by Cyrus the Great.[11] The dynasty draws its name from king Achaemenes, who ruled Persis between 705 BC and 675 BC. The empire expanded to eventually rule over significant portions of the ancient world, which at around 500 BC stretched from the Indus Valley in the east to Thrace and Macedon on the northeastern border of Greece

¹⁶ Brāhmī is the modern name given to the one of the oldest scripts used on the Indian Subcontinent and in Central Asia, during the final centuries BCE and the early centuries CE. Like its contemporary, Kharoṣṭhī, which were used in what is now known as Afghanistan, Pakistan and North India. The best-known Brahmi inscriptions are the rock-cut edicts of Ashoka in north-central India, dated to 250-232 BCE

Calligraphy in Sindh started with Khat-e-Kufi, later on in 4th century Hijra, Khat-e-Naskh was implied, which became the particular Khat for Sindhi script. Khat-e-Naskh continued its development during the 16th and 19th century A.D. Richard Burton observed that the people of Sindh were at one time celebrated for their skills in calligraphy. At present they have only three hands-Naskh, Nasta'liq and Shikastah. I have seen some excellent specimen of Naskh and generally speaking, their character is well written in Sindhi. It is fact that inscriptions have played very significant role in decorating various building in Sindh. Similarly it can be studied as example of writing. The art of calligraphy including Sindhi calligraphy was widely practiced in Sindh.

In the time of Kalhora rule the Sindhi calligraphy was promoted and same was continued during Talpur rulers. Naskh Khat was adopted for the writing and calligraphy in Sindh. A large number of professional calligraphers from Iran and some parts of India also assembled in their courts. Among the Iranians Syed Ali Sherazi, Mir Hassan Ali Naqqash, Ali Bab Sherazi, Ghulam Ahmed Khattat, Ali Murad Khattat and Syed Muhammad Raz Hussaini, Mushkin Qalam is prominent (Ghafoor, 2004:47). The Iranian Calligraphers emphasized on Khat-e-Nasta'liq. The earliest dated specimens of Naskh in Sindh are on the tombs of Mubarak Khan or Darya Khan. The gate and tomb stones are carved with Quranic and historical inscriptions in an elegant Naskh. The two bands of Quranic inscriptions on stone wall of Jam Nizamuddin Nindu in build Naskh on the monumental examples of vitality of script for its use as a decorative design. The inscription on the gate and Mehrab of tomb is in Small Naskh. The elegant stroke and the artistic forms of letters indicate that it was drafted and written by renowned calligraphers but unfortunately, the names of calligraphers are not written. After the British conquest of Sindh, efforts were made to further develop Sindhi language and literature. Now the official alphabet of Sindhi writing is Khat-e-Naskh and also the same is used for the calligraphy along with other design forms.

CONCLUSION

Sindhi language is an ancient language spoken by people of Sindh from prehistoric times. Throughout history, Sindh maintained its cultural relations with other parts of the world. The migrations of populations across continents, the trade routes, and

the spread of religions mixed of many different languages in Sindhi, which combined style and structure of Sindhi Calligraphy. These all contributions had formed solid structure for richest foundation of Sindhi writing and calligraphy. It is witnessed that the innovations may be originated from the practices of other languages and nations but the alphabets, orthography, techniques, style and outlook is totally different than the other neighboring nations. It is revealed from study that both the Arabic language and culture have influenced the language and culture of Sindh in many ways. Islamic calligraphy had tremendous impact on the calligraphy of Sindh.

Sindh has contributed significantly to the field of calligraphy, particularly for the development of Naskh. The literature on calligraphy indicates that Arabic calligraphy influenced the way in which Sindhi writing and calligraphy developed. Economic and social factors played important role in the development of Sindhi language and calligraphy.

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ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय ॥ ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय ॥
 ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय ॥ ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय ॥
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Figure 2 Second Rock Edict of Ashoka at Girnar at Century I B.C. Language: Pali
 The Bahmni Gouze Boli to Shrinath in Likhawat (Gintri Boli) Non Plihon

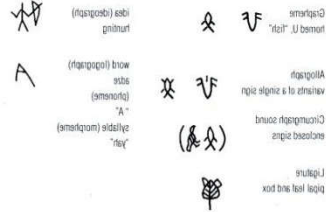


Figure 1 Graphemes (trus) (Gchtri) from Mohanjo Daro
 Gouze Ancient Cities of Indus Valley Civilization

ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय ॥ ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय ॥
 ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय ॥ ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय ॥
 ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय ॥ ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय ॥
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 ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय ॥ ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय ॥

Figure 2 Shrinth Wanti in Gazi dapan in Dva nagri scotri. 1874
 Gouze Boli to Shrinath in Likhawat (Gintri Boli) Non Plihon

ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय ॥ ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय ॥
 ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय ॥ ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय ॥
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 ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय ॥ ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय ॥

Figure 4 Shrinth Wanti in Gazi dapan in Dva nagri scotri. 1873
 Gouze Boli to Shrinath in Likhawat (Gintri Boli) Non Plihon



Figure 3 Kharoshthi Gth Century B.C.



Figure 8 Chitoni, Gwajdar, Miltri, Khar
 Data Gouze 2015



Figure 5 Makli Necropolis, Data Gouze 2015



Figure 6 Makli Necropolis, Data Gouze 2015

ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय ॥ ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय ॥
 ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय ॥ ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय ॥
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 ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय ॥ ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय ॥

Figure 8 Jawahri-u-Lughar, Shrinthi Scotri. 1840



Figure 10 Babnamo, Nandi Ram Sehwanl, 1853

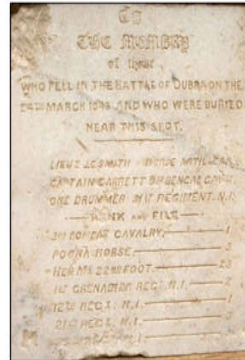


Figure 11 Lieut J.C. Smith, Grave Stone, 1843



Figure 12 Official letter signed by a British Commissioner in Sindh, 1857
Source www.tribune.com.pk



Figure 13. Arabic Script in Sindh



Figure 14. Sindhi Calligraphy, Chitri, Mirpurkhas
data Source 2012

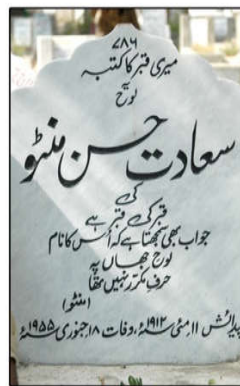


Figure 15. Urdu Calligraphy, data Source 2012