INTRODUCTION
INTRODUCTION

The scientific study of old script is called “Palaeography”. It may be taken for granted that the scripts are very much symbolic and convey the thoughts of man. It is not confined to the study of the shapes of letters but endeavours to go beyond the mere shapes and search for the different traditions on account of particular techniques. It deals with the art of writing which distinguish men from animals and provides the former with an instrument for transmission of racial tradition from generation to generation. It has the greatest practical importance for textual criticism of all kinds of classical philology, ancient and mediaeval history and for other branches of classical sciences. Writing has been the foundation for the development of the consciousness and intellect of man. The history of art of writing in India is still in a melting pot and a number of conflicting views are held on it. There is no doubt that the discovery of Indus seals containing writing pushed the Indian inscriptions back to the 3rd millenium B.C. though no final word has been said. Although this writing has not yet been deciphered successfully, it shows the earliest expression of thought in the pictographic methods. After the Indus script till the period of Aśoka (3rd century B.C.) nothing is known about the system of writing. However the earliest decipherable

1. The earliest script of the Indo-Pakistan Sub continent, known from discoveries of seals first at Harappa in the Montgomery district of Punjab (Pakistan), and later at Mohenjodaro in the Larkana district of Sind, is termed here the “Indus script”. The way in which the horizontal, vertical or slanting strokes, are added to the original object symbols such as fish sign and Jar. sign against taking the addition of strokes to the original sign which is one of the chief characteristics of the Indus scripts.
scripts are the Brāhmī\textsuperscript{2} and the Kharoṣṭhī\textsuperscript{3}. These were used in the inscriptions issued by a king who bore the title Devānampiya Piyadasi, belonged to Magadha (South Bihar). Throughout the vast empire of Aśoka the inscriptions were written in these two scripts - the Kharoṣṭhī used in the Indus valley zone and the Brāhmī in the remaining parts. Our knowledge of Brāhmī script over hundreds of years prior to its use in Aśokan edicts is very much limited. Since these edicts were engraved everywhere, they were definitely meant to be read, understood and conveyed to every body. Brāhmī script appearing for the first time in the Aśokan inscriptions (3rd century B.C.) is the mother of all the scripts of present India.

The study of Orissan Palaeography is a part of the study of Indian Palaeography which grew out of the necessity for deciphering the large number of inscriptions found in this sub continent. The present state

2. The story, according to which in particular, the Indian script running from the left to the right is an invention of Brahmā. This is termed so as the same is initially and locally called as Brahmā lipi. The evidence of this script is found as early as the Aśokan period and as late as the Ikshavāku period (350 B.C. to 300 A.D.)

3. The ancient Indian alphabet written from right to left is known as “Kharoṣṭhī”. The majority of the Kharoṣṭhī inscription have been found in the ancient province of Gandhara, the modern Eastern Afghanistan and the Northern Punjab. It is highly cursive by the absence of long vowels. The earliest tradition about the name is recorded in the Fa-Wan-shu-lin aChinese work in 668 A.D., according to which the script is so called, because it was invented by a person who bore that name Kharoṣṭha. The script may have been called so due to the fact that most of the Kharoṣṭhī characters are irregular elongated curves and they look like the moving lipe of an aṣ. It is known by various names and it was formerly called, Indo-Bactrian, Aryanian, North-Western Indian and Kabulian.
Orissa lies along the east coast of India and is bounded by north latitudes 17° 49' and 22° 34' and east longitudes 81° 23' and 87° 29', and is comparatively rich in epigraphic materials for the study of Orissan Palaeography from the time of Asoka to the down of the Hindu rule in about A.D. 1568. The Oriya script, which is traceable to the earliest decipherable alphabet of India, called Brāhmī, passed through different stages of development from about the 3rd century B.C. to about the 14th century of the Christian era, when it assumed the shape of cursive Oriya script, with curves forming at the top of letters and then finally came to the present form. The evolution of Orissan scripts can be traced, by the study of large number of inscriptions ranging from the earliest historical period up to about the 16th century A.D., which have been discovered from all parts of Orissa. The modern Oriya script can be co-related with the earliest Brāhmī script through the intermediate stages, such as the scripts called Siddhamātrikā, 'kuṭila', Nāgarī.


5. The letters of the Kuṭila variety have shallwedges or just horizontal strokes on top. The script is sometimes designated as acute angled alphabet also. The name kuṭila is probably given on account of the flourishing matras and the left ward slant of the verticals of the letters. That variety was prevalent throughout the Northern India and Nepal from the sixth to the ninth century A.D.

6. Nāgarī script is prevalent in a large part of the Indian Sub-continent and employed for writing different regional languages. It was developed ultimately from the script popularly called the Mauryan Brāhmī and it appears about the end of the 10th century A.D. and approaches mature Nāgarī form by the 13th century A.D. It is characterised in full covering head line and straight vertical. A.C. Burnell., Elements of South Indian Palaeography, London, p. 52) is inclined believe that it was Nāga lipi.
Gaudiya⁷, the traditional Oriya or the proto-Oriya⁸ and other northern as well as southern varieties of scripts, all of which are represented in the Orissan inscriptions.

Although in Orissa a large number of inscriptions have been discovered and deciphered but there are very few pioneering works on Orissan Palaeography made by European and Indian scholars during the 19th century and early part of the 20th century. A number of scholars like G. Buhler⁹, G. H. Ojha¹⁰, A. H. Dani¹¹, C. Sivaram Murti¹², D. C. Sircar¹³ and R. D. Banarji¹⁴ partly touch the Orissan Palaeography in the course of discussing Indian Palaeography on the

7. It is mentioned along with other regional alphabets and it is also called Gauri which is said to have been used in Purvadesa or the Eastern India. D.C. Sircar for instance justifies this designation in El. Vol. XX, VIII, p. 236 ff.

8. In Orissa the proto-Oriya (proto-Bengali of Buhler) is represented by the Charters of the later princes of the Somavamśins, Bhañjas and Imperial Gañga records (G.H. Ojha, Prachina Bharatiya Lipimala, 1918. page 79 and 131.) It has gradually transformed into the Modern Oriya script.

11. Indian Palaeography, New Delhi, 1986, chapter 4, 5, 7p 190, 53 - 59
whole. Another scholar named Ajaya Mitra Sastri very recently done a epigraphic work and he slightly focuses the Palaeography of Sarabhapurīyas, Pāṇḍuvāṃśins and Somavāṃśins inscriptions. This only partly provides an idea include certain characteristics on the scripts available in this records of these ruling families of Orissa. Of the scholars of Orissa S. N. Rajguru studied the inscriptions of Orissa on chronological basis but his works do not exclusively deals with Palaeography. However one of his Oriya book furnish brief idea about the origin and development of Oriya script but it is not sufficient to gain knowledge from this small book for covering the whole period of Orissan Palaeography. It does not fulfill the desire of the scholars who do not belong to this nativity to know on Orissan Palaeography as it is written in regional language. Besides him K. B. Tripathy has also made an attempt to show the development of Oriya script. He has given more importance to the Oriya letters and over looked the gradual modification of each alphabet on the course of her development touching various scripts available in Orissa. Dr. (Mrs.) Snigdha Tripathy has done research work on Orissan inscriptions and from her works some knowledge on Orissan Palaeography can be obtained. But still now no serious and critical work on Orissan Palaeography from the earliest time to the development of present Oriya form has not been undertaken by any scholars so far. Therefore a detailed study of the Palaeography of Orissan inscriptions is absolutely necessary for the history and culture of Orissa.

15. *Inscriptions of the Sarabhapurīyas, Pāṇḍuvāṃśins and Somavāṃśins*, Delhi, 1992, pp. 7, 10, 22, 23, 30, 32, 42, 43, 54, 57
The present work “The Palaeography of Orissan inscriptions from circa 3rd century B.C. to circa 16th century A.D aims at tracing the development of Orissan scripts through stages. The study is mainly based on the original epigraphic records on stone and metallic objects, so far discovered in Orissa and the neighbouring states.

The present thesis is divided into six chapters besides introduction and conclusion. The first chapter discusses the Palaeography of Orissan inscriptions from the 3rd century B.C. to the C. 3rd century A.D. The existence of early script in Orissa and its use in the Orissan inscriptions have been discussed. The technical development and gradual modification of each alphabet are analysed in great detail in this chapter.

The second chapter highlights the scripts prevalent in the Southern, Northern and Western Orissa, ranging from the 4th century to the 7th century A.D., on copper plates and stones. In this chapter the development of each script from the 4th to the 7th century A.D. is systematically analysed on the region wise giving reference to plates. A brief comparative study of each alphabet is clearly presented.

A detailed study of the Palaeography of Orissan inscriptions from 7th century to 10th century A.D. has been done in the third chapter. The development of each alphabet has been shown through the study of the Śailodbhavas, Bhaumakaras, Gaṅgas of Svetakas and Gaṅgas of Kaliṅganagaras records. This chapter points out how the northern letters are influenced by the southern character. The proto-Nāgari and proto-Karṇaḍi character are also presented in this chapter.

The fourth chapter focuses on the development of scripts in Orissa from the 10th to the 14th century A.D. The gradual modification of alphabets has been shown through a thorough study of both the copper plates and lithic records issued by the Somavaṁśins, Bhañjas and
Imperial Gaṅgas. The development of Nāgari, Gaudiya, early Oriya and Proto-Bengali forms are somehow exhibited in this chapter.

The fifth chapter is exclusively devoted to the study of Suryavarṇaśi Gajapati inscriptions of Orissa of the 15th - 16th centuries A.D. Here the final development of early Oriya character has been discussed.

The last chapter deals on the origin and development of medial signs such as ā, ō,ū, u, ū, e, aī, o and au from circa 3rd century B.C. to circa 16th century A.D. Each medial sign is discussed through comparison with other inscriptions.

The work also includes one hundred and nineteen plates of Orissan scripts and medial signs showing their gradual development through ages. The photo copies of various Orissan inscriptions belonged to different periods are also attached in the thesis.