

## **Scripts Used in *Ozhuku* (Land Records)**

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### **Introduction**

Ozhukus are palm leaf documents (Manuscript). An Ozhuku contains detailed information in respect of landed properties. Ozhuku records are written in cadjan (palm leaf) and they are called as churunas (scrolls of palm leaf). Ozhukus are classified into four types such as huzur ozhuku, Nilam ozhuku, Taluk ozhuku and Puthuval ozhuku. Ozhuku records which were originally preserved in the huzur cutcherry are termed as huzur ozhukus. Nilam ozhuku consists of information relating to wet land (paddy fields). In the nilam ozhukus, the extent, boundaries and other allied in respect of each property are indicated. All lands, waste and unoccupied at the time of survey and occupied and brought under cultivation since 1837 are known in the accounts as Puthuval and records of puthuval lands are known as puthuval ozhuku.

### **Scripts**

One of the most important stages of cultural progress is the formation of language and the letters that are the symbols on which it is written. palaeography is an important branch of Indian culture, as the study of scripts not only enhances the knowledge of Indian culture, but also provides a direct reading of the scriptures and a better understanding of history and culture. There are different types of scripts. They include **Brahmi Lipi, Vattezhuttu Script/Kolezhuthu, Grantha Script, Malayaanma/ Malayayma, Tamil Script.**

### **Brahmi Lipi**

Brahmi is the basis of most of the Indian scripts. Its origin is still a mystery. According to Buhler, this was a script that originated in the eighth century BC and was completed in the fifth century. The origin of Brahmi script is most controversial problem in Indian epigraphy. Ever since its

decipherment by James Prinsep, it is a major debate in scholarly circles. Different scholars have different views upon this, but we can classify their theories in basically two groups.

One is indigenous theory and the other extraneous derivation/ foreign derivation. One of the early theories suggesting the origin is by Alexander Cunningham who said that Brahmi had its root from a pictographic -logographic script.

Brahmi is the originator of most of the present Indian scripts, including Devanagari, Bengali, Tamil, and Malayalam, etc. It developed into two broad types in Northern and Southern India, in the Northern one being more angular, and the Southern one being more circular. It was deciphered in 1838 by James Prinsep. The best-known Brahmi inscriptions are the rock-cut edicts of Ashoka in north-central India, dated to 250–232 BCE.

### **Vattezhuttu Script/ Kolezhuthu**

It was a script derived from the Brahmi and was used in the Southern part of India. It was used to write Tamil and Malayalam. It removed those signs from Brahmi, which were not needed for writing the Southern languages. Presently, both Tamil and Malayalam have moved on to their own Grantha derived scripts.

Vattezhuthu is a script that belonged to the Malayalam language. It also has some other names as Vattezhuthu was prevalent only in Malayalam. Southern Malayalam (thekkam malayalam) and Nanam Monam (namo narayana). Kolezhuthu script was the script used in Travancore, Kochi and Malabar along with the vattezhuth script. Malayanna or malayayma script was also used to write Malayalam.

Kolezhuthu was more popular in the Kochi and Malabar areas. Both ‘Vattezhuthu’ and ‘Kolezhuthu’ are similar script systems. (Jaleel, K. A., Lipikalum Manava Samskarangalum p. 267)

### **Grantha Script**

It is one of the earliest Southern scripts to originate from Brahmi. It branched off into Tamil and Malayalam scripts, which are still used to write those languages. It was used in Tamil Nadu to write the Sanskrit Granthas and, hence, was named Grantha. The Grantha script was widely used between the sixth century and the 20th centuries by Tamil speakers in South India, particularly in

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Tamil Nadu and Kerala, to write Sanskrit, and is still in restricted use in traditional Vedic schools. It is a Brahmic script, having evolved from the Brahmi script in Tamil Nadu. Malayalam script is a direct descendant of Grantha.

### **Malayaanma/ Malayayma**

‘Malayanma’ is an ancient script used to write Malayalam language. A detailed description on this script is given by the famous linguist L. A. Ravi Varma. The Malayanma script developed as a mixture of the two ancient scripts ‘Vattezhuthu’ and ‘Kolezhuthu’. Research scholars have opined that this script is not related to the famous Grandha script. Though Malayanma script also has no consonants like the ‘Vattezhuthu’ and ‘Kolezhuthu’ scripts, it has some special alphabets which are suited to write Dravidian languages. It is believed that the three scripts - Vattezhuthu, Kolezhuthu and Malayanma - developed from the same family.

In his famous Grammar book ‘Kerala Paanineeyam’, A.R. Raja Raja Varma opines that the word ‘Malayanma’ was used to represent the language of ‘Malayala Nadu’ (Kerala). He called the period between AD 1325 to AD 1625 as ‘Malayanma Kaalam’ (the age of Malayanma), the period when there was tremendous progress in the language. He also assumes that the Tamil spoken in Kerala was termed as ‘Malayaaam Tamil’ and this was reduced to ‘Malayanma’.

### **Tamil Script**

Buhler suggests that the beginning of the Tamil script goes back to 4<sup>th</sup> century. The Tamil writing system arose from the Brahmi script. Tamil-Brahmi, also known as Tamil or Damili, was a South Indian variant of the Brahmi script. Inscriptions in an early form of Old Tamil were written on it. The Tamil-Brahmi scripts date paleographically and stratigraphically between the 3rd and 1st centuries CE. It is the oldest writing system in many parts of Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, and Sri Lanka. The letter shape evolved, eventually stabilising with the introduction of printing in the 16th century CE. Although a few letters with irregular shapes were standardised during the modern period, the incorporation of Grantha letters to write unassimilated Sanskrit words was a significant addition to the alphabet.

### **Scripts Used in Ozhuku (Land Records)**

Government records from the 8th century onwards were written in Kolezhuth, Malayanma and Tamil script. Royal proclamations and official records of government land purchase and sale were written on palm leaves using Malayanma, Kolezhuth, Tamil and Old Malayalam scripts.

In ozhuku, they used the Tamil script to write documents and rarely used the old Malayalam scripts. Some of the scripts are similar to old Malayalam scripts.

Eight vowels and 19 consonants were found in ozhuku record during the Malayalam era 1042-1043.

The long vowels ē,ō are not seen in ozhuku record. Similarly, Anuswaram is written as ma. Later in the system of writing ē and ō long vowels were printed in the journal Jnananikshepam in 1849.

Writing Anuswaram with a zero is generally a creation of the modern Malayalam.

### **Vowels**

There are four short vowel and four long vowels found in ozhuku record. They are a ā i ī u ū e o.

Eg: ara (pakuthi) half

raama (god)

ithinum (and for this), etc.

Long vowel ē and ō are absent in this record.

Eg: cernnu (cērnnu) which means joined,

Cerikkal (cērikkal) which means government property.

Purayıattoṭu (purayıattōṭu) to the backyard

toṭṭinum (tōṭṭinum)

### **Consonants**

Malayalam consonants (as in all Brahmi script alphabets) are ordered according to the place and manner of articulation.

There are 19 consonants found in ozhuku record.

Position →→ Man	കണ്ഠ (Velar)	താലവ (Palatal)	മൂർദ്ധന (Retroflex)	വർത്ത (Alveolar)	ദന്ത (Dental)	ഓഷ്ഠ (Labial)	ഘോഷ (Glottal)
ഖരം (Plosive,	ക	ച	ട		ത	പ	
അതിഖരം (Plos							
മൃദു (Plosive,							
ഘോഷം (Plosiv							
അനുനാസിക (Nasal)	ങ	ഞ	ണ	ണ	ന	മ	
മദ്ധ്യമം (Approx./Lateral		യ	ര		ല	വ	
ഘോഷാക്കൾ (Fricatives)					സ		
ദ്രാവിഡമദ്ധ്യമ (Approx./Lateral			റ ഴ	ള			

The graphemes for alveolar nasal (ᳵ) are not seen in regular Malayalam text usage. ᳵ is described as alveolar nasal by all sources. But the grapheme ᳶ is not popular in regular usage or literature. But in ozhuku, ᳶ is used to write, eg., miinaccal (place name), tanatu

The main reason ancient documents and palm-leaf manuscripts cannot be used appropriately is the peculiarity of the script and language used in them. This work aims to provide basic knowledge about the scripts used in palm-leaf manuscripts.

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