Sanskrit Inscription Found in POK

Why in News?

Recently, a 4th century CE **Sanskrit inscription** was found near **Gilgit** in **Pakistan-Occupied Kashmir (POK),** written in **Brahmi script**.

- The inscription found in **Gilgit** mentions "**Pushpasingha**" installing a **Mahesvaralinga** for the merit of his guru (name partially lost).

Note

- Earlier in 2024, a 10th-century CE **Sanskrit and Sharada script (used in Kashmir for Sanskrit and Kashmiri)** inscription was discovered near **Peshawar**, referencing **Buddhist** **Dharini** chants with the mention of "Da(Dha)rini" in line six.
    - **Buddhist Dharini** refers to sacred **mantras** or **chants** used in **Buddhism** for **protection**, **purification**, and invoking **blessings**.
    - These chants are believed to have spiritual power and are often recited in **rituals** to promote **well-being**. Dharinis typically contain sacred **syllables** or phrases.

What is the Importance of Historical Inscriptions?

- **Primary Historical Sources**: Inscriptions are authentic and direct sources for reconstructing **ancient Indian history**, offering evidence free from later interpolations and biases.
    - Dates and events inscribed help in establishing accurate historical timelines.
- **Insight into Political History**: They provide valuable details about **rulers**, **dynasties**, **conquests**, **treaties**, and **administration** in ancient India.
- **Administrative Systems**: **Inscriptions** often include information about **revenue systems**, **land grants**, **taxation**, and **judicial frameworks**.
    - For example, the **Junagarh (Girnar) Inscription** of **Rudradaman** describes the construction and repairs of the **Sudarshana Lake dam**, providing evidence of administrative priorities in water management.
- **Linguistic Evolution**: **Inscriptions** document the development of **languages**, **scripts**, and **literary styles**.
    - The **Ashokan Edicts**, inscribed in **Prakrit**, **Greek**, and **Aramaic**, highlight the linguistic diversity and the use of local scripts to communicate governance effectively.
- **Socio-Economic Structures**: Insights into **trade practices**, **societal norms**, **caste systems**, and **economic transactions** are often gleaned from inscriptions.
    - Inscriptions reveal details about **ancient religions**, **temple construction**, **rituals**, and **royal patronage**.

Some Important Inscriptions of Ancient India

Some Important Inscriptions of Ancient India

- **Political Inscriptions:**
    - **Junagarh (Girnar) Inscription (Rudradaman)**: A 2nd-century CE Sanskrit inscription detailing **Rudradaman's achievements** and mentioning the construction of the **Sudarshana Lake dam** by **Chandragupta Maurya's governor**, **Pushyagupta**.
    - **Bhitari Pillar Inscription**: Chronicles **Skandagupta's military success** against the **Hunas** and his **administrative reforms**.
- **Administrative and Land Grant Inscriptions**
    - **Paharpur Inscription (Buddha Gupta)**: Found in Bangladesh, it highlights land grants and religious patronage during the Gupta period.
    - **Mandsaur Inscription** : Details **Yashodharman's** victory over the Huns, emphasizing his role in restoring stability in the region.
    - **Gwalior Inscription (King Bhoja I)**: Describes **grants to Brahmins** and mentions **Agraharas**, reflecting **socio-economic practices** under the **Gurjara-Pratiharas**.
    - **Banskhera Copper Plate**: Signed by **Harshavardhana**, it provides details about his **ancestry**, **administration**, and **governance**.
    - **Deopara Prashasti**: Celebrates the achievements of **Bengal's Vijay Sena**, providing insights into the **socio-political scenario** of the time.

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INSCRIPTIONS AND ROCK EDICTS

Sohgaura Copper Plate

- Location - Sohgaura, Gorakhpur (UP)
- Mentions - Famine relief efforts
- Language - Prakrit*
- Features - **Mauryan dynasty**
  - Earliest-known copper plate
  - (Rare) **Pre-Ashokan Brahmi inscription**

Ashokan Edicts

- Location - Eastern India
- Mentions - Ashoka's view of Dharma (Buddhist philosophy)
- Language - Magadhi Prakrit*
- Features - 33 inscriptions (pillar edicts, Major rock edicts, Minor rock inscriptions)
  - 1st **tangible evidence of Buddhism**
  - Ashoka as **Devanampiyadasi** "Beloved servant of the God"

Rummindei Pillar Edicts

- Location - Lumbini, Nepal
- Mentions - Ashoka's visit to Lumbini and tax exemptions he made there
- Script - Brahmi
- Features - Minor pillar inscriptions

Prayag-Prashasti (Allahabad Pillar)

- Location - Allahabad Fort (earlier Kaushambi)
- Mentions - Ashoka Stambh but with 4 different inscriptions
- Script - Brahmi
- 4 Inscriptions include –
  - Usual Ashokan Inscriptions
  - Queen's Kaurwaki edict
  - Samudragupta's conquests by Harisena
  - Jahangir's inscriptions in Persian

Mehrauli Inscription (Mehrauli Iron Pillar)

- Location - Qutub Minar complex, Delhi
- Mentions - Credits **Chandragupta II** for the conquest of Vakatakas and Vanga countries
- Script - Brahmi
- Features - **Gupta dynasty**
  - Pillar estd by Chandragupta II as **Vishnupada** (in honor of Lord Vishnu)
  - Notable for rust-resistant metal composition

Kalsi Inscription

- Location - Kalsi town (Uttarakhand)
- Mentions - Ashoka's humane approach in administration, non-violence, spirituality
- Language - Prakrit*
- Features - Only place in north India to have 14 Ashokan rock edicts

Maski Inscription

- Location - Maski (an archaeological site in Karnataka)
- Mentions - Dharma shasana (promotes Buddhist tenets)
- Language - Prakrit*
- Features - 1st edict to contain Ashoka's name instead of Piyadasi.

Kalinga Edicts

- Location - Kalinga, Odisha
- Mentions - Kalinga war turning point for Ashoka
- Language - Magadhi Prakita, Script - Brahmi
- Features - Set of 11 out of 14 rock edicts
  - 2 special rock edicts signifying pacification
  - Ashoka gave up **Digvijaya**, adopted non-violence & Buddhism

Aihole Inscription

- Location - Meguti temple, Karnataka
- Mentions - **Pulakeshin II** defeated Harshavardhana
- Language - Sanskrit; Script - Kannada
- Features - Chalukya victory→Pallavas
  - Capital: **Aihole→Badami**
  - Written by Ravikirti (Pulakeshin II's court poet)
  - Samudragupta's conquests by Harisena

> AIHOLE WAS THE FIRST CAPITAL OF CHALUKYAS

Hathigumpha Inscription (Elephant Cave Inscription)

- Location - Udaygiri-Khandgiri Caves, Odisha
- Mentions - History of King Kharvela - a champion of Jainism
- Language - Prakrit*
- Features - **Mahameghavahana dynasty**

> NOTE: *implies that wherever language is Prakrit, the script is Brahmi

Drishti IAS

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Questions (PYQs)

Prelims:

Q. Who among the following rulers advised his subjects through this inscription? (2020)

"Whosoever praises his religious sect or blames other sects out of excessive devotion to his own sect, with the view of glorifying his own sect, he rather injures his own sect very severely."

(a) Ashoka

(b) Samudragupta

(c) Harshavardhana

(d) Krishanadeva Raya

Ans: (a)

Q. In which of the following relief sculpture inscriptions is 'Ranyo Ashoka' (King Ashoka) mentioned along with the stone portrait of Ashoka? (2019)

(a) Kanganahalli

(b) Sanchi

(c) Shahbazgarhi

(d) Sohgaura

Ans: (a)

Mains:

Q. Discuss the Tandava dance as recorded in the early Indian inscriptions.**(2013)**

PDF Refernece URL: https://www.drishtiias.com/printpdf/sanskrit-inscription-found-in-pok