



# Ol Chiki script

(Redirected from Santali script)

The **Ol Chiki** (ଓଡ଼ ଉଚିକି) script, also known as **Ol Chemet** (ଓଡ଼ ଉଚିକି, *ol* 'writing', *chemet* 'learning'), **Ol Ciki**, **Ol**, and sometimes as the **Santali alphabet** is the official writing system for Santali, an Austroasiatic language recognized as an official regional language in India. It was invented by Pandit Raghunath Murmu in 1925. It has 30 letters, the design of which is intended to evoke natural shapes. The script is written from left to right, and has two styles (the print *Chapa* style and cursive *Usara* style). Unicode does not maintain a distinction between these two, as is typical for print and cursive variants of a script. In both styles, the script is unicameral (that is, it does not have separate sets of uppercase and lowercase letters).

The shapes of the letters are not arbitrary, but reflect the names for the letters, which are words, usually the names of objects or actions representing conventionalized form in the pictorial shape of the characters.

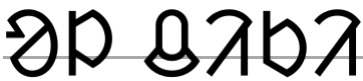
—Norman Zide, A portal for Santals<sup>[1]</sup>

## History

The Ol Chiki script was created in 1925 by Raghunath Murmu for the Santali language, and publicized first in 1939 at a Mayurbhanj State exhibition.<sup>[2]</sup> Unlike most Indic scripts, Ol Chiki is not an abugida, but is a true alphabet: giving the vowels equal representation with the consonants.

Before the invention of Ol Chiki script, Santali was written in Bangla, Devanagari, Kalinga and Latin script. However, Santali is not an Indo-Aryan language and Indic scripts did not have letters for all of Santal's phonemes, especially its stop consonants and vowels, which make it difficult to write the language accurately in an unmodified Indic script.

Ol Chiki  
ଓଡ଼ ଉଚିକି



<b>Script type</b>	Alphabet
<b>Creator</b>	<u>Raghunath Murmu</u>
<b>Time period</b>	1925–present
<b>Direction</b>	Left-to-right
<b>Languages</b>	<u>Santali language</u>
<b>ISO 15924</b>	
<b>ISO 15924</b>	0lck (261), Ol Chiki (Ol Cemet', Ol, Santali)
<b>Unicode</b>	
<b>Unicode alias</b>	Ol Chiki
<b>Unicode range</b>	U+1C50–U+1C7F ( <a href="https://www.unicode.org/charts/PDF/U1C50.pdf">https://www.unicode.org/charts/PDF/U1C50.pdf</a> )

For example, when missionary and linguist Paul Olaf Bodding, a Norwegian, studied the Santali language and needed to decide how to transcribe it (in producing his widely followed and widely respected reference books such as *A Santal Dictionary*), he decided to transcribe Santhali in the Roman alphabet: despite his observation that Roman script lacks many of the advantages of the Indic scripts, he concluded that the Indic scripts could not adequately serve the Santali language because the Indic scripts lack a way to indicate important features of Santali pronunciation (such as glottalization, combined glottalization and nasalization, and check stops) which can be more easily represented in the Roman alphabet through the use of diacritics.<sup>[3]</sup>

The phonology of the Santali language had also been similarly analyzed by various other authors, including Byomkes Chakrabarti in *Comparative Study of Santali and Bengali* and Baghrai Charan Hembram in *A Glimpse of Santali Grammar*. However, the Ol Chiki alphabet is considered (by many Santali) to be even more appropriate for the language, because its letter-shapes are derived from the sounds of common Santali words and other frequent Santali morphemes:<sup>[a]</sup> nouns, demonstratives, adjectives, and verb roots in the Santali language.<sup>[4]</sup> In other words, each Santali letter's name is, or is derived from, a common word or other element of the Santali language, and each letter's shape is derived from a simple drawing of the meaning of that word or other element. For example, the Santali letter “ol” (representing the sound /l/) is written with a shape originally derived from a simplified outline drawing of a hand holding a pen, because the name of this letter is also the Santali word for “writing.”



Raghunath Murmu, Creator of Ol Chiki script

## Print and cursive styles

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The existence of these two styles of Ol Chiki was mentioned by the script's creator: Guru Gonke Pandit Raghunath Murmu (also known as Pandit Murmu) in his book *Ol Chemed*<sup>[5]</sup> which explains and teaches the Ol Chiki script.<sup>[b]</sup> *Chhapa* (Santali for 'print') is used for publication, while *usaraà* (Santali for 'quick') is used for handwriting.

### *Chhapa* hand

Ol Chiki *chhapa*, or print style, is the more common style for digital fonts, and is used in the printing of books and newspapers.

## ***Usaraà* hand**

*Usaraà* or *usaraà ol* is the cursive style, and is largely limited to pen and paper, though there are digital *usaraà* typefaces. Differences include the diacritic *ahad*, which in print style is used with ᱚ, ᱛ, ᱜ, ᱝ, and ᱞ, all of which can form ligatures with ᱟ in cursive.<sup>[6]</sup> Further, cursive *usaraà* seldom uses several letter-shapes which are formed by combining the letter ᱜ and the four semi-consonants ᱚ, ᱛ, ᱝ, and ᱞ with *ahad*; instead, these are generally written in a shorter form, as ᱟ.

## **Letters**

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The values of the Ol Chiki letters are as follows:

Letter	Name	IPA <sup>[7]</sup>	Transliteration					Shape <sup>[1]</sup>
			ALA-LC <sup>[8]</sup>	Zide <sup>[7]</sup>	Deva. <sup>[6]</sup>	Beng. <sup>[6]</sup>	Odia <sup>[6]</sup>	
𑂔	la	/ɔ/	a	o	अ	অ	ଅ	burning fire
𑂕	at	/t/	t	t	त	ত	ଡ	the Earth
𑂖	ag	/kʰ/, /g/	g	kʰ	ग	গ	ଗ	vomiting mouth, which produces the same sound as the name of the letter
𑂗	ang	/ŋ/	m̐	n̐	ं	ং	ଂ	blowing air
𑂘	al	/l/	l	l	ल	ল	ଲ	writing
𑂙	laa	/a/	ā	a	आ	আ	ଆ	working in the field with a spade
𑂚	aak	/k/	k	k	क	ক	କ	bird (sound of a swan)
𑂛	aaj	/cʰ/, /ɟ/	j	cʰ	ज	জ	ଞ	person pointing towards a third person with the right hand (saying “he”)
𑂜	aam	/m/	m	m	म	ম	ମ	person pointing towards a second person with the left hand (saying “you”)
𑂝	aaw	/w/, /v/	w	w	व	ওয়	ଝ	opening lips
𑂞	li	/i/	i	i	इ	ই	ଈ	bending tree
𑂟	is	/s/	s	s	स	স	ସ	plow
𑂠	ih	/ʔ/, /h/	h̐	h	ह	হ	ହ	hands up
𑂡	iny	/ɲ/	ñ	ñ	ञ	ঞ	ଞ୍ଜ	person pointing towards himself/herself with the left hand
𑂢	ir	/r/	r	r	र	র	ର	sickle used for cutting or reaping
𑂣	lu	/u/	u	u	उ	উ	ଉ	vessel used for preparing food



ଠ	uch	/c/	c	c	च	छ	ꣳ	peak of a mountain which is usually high
ଡ	ud	/tʰ/, /d/	d	tʰ	द	ढ	ꣴ	mushroom or umbrella
ମ	unn	/ŋ/	ṇ	ṇ	ण	𑂔	ꣶ	picture of a flying bee (which is described by Santali speakers as making this sound)
ଢ	uy	/j/	y	y	य	य़	ꣷ	a man bending towards the ground to cut something
ଢ	le	/e/	e	e	ए	ଏ	ଏ	overflowing rivers changing course
ଢ	ep	/p/	p	p	प	𑂔	꣹	person receiving with both hands
ଢ	edd	/d/	ḍ	ḍ	ड	ड़	꣺	a man with two legs stretching towards his chest and mouth
ଢ	en	/n/	n	n	न	ऩ	ꣻ	threshing grains with two legs
ଢ	err	/ɾ/	ɾ	ɾ	ड़	ड़़	꣼	a path that turns to avoid an obstruction or a danger
ଢ	lo	/o/	o	o	ओ	ଓ	ଓ	a mouth when sounding this letter
ଢ	ott	/t/	ṭ	ṭ	ट	ट़	ꣽ	camel hump
ଢ	ob	/pʰ/, /b/	b	pʰ	ब	ब़	ꣾ	curly hair
ଢ	ov	/w̃/	ṁ	w̃	ड	ड	ꣿ	nasalized
ଢ	oh	/ʰ/	h	(C)h	ह	ह़	ꣿ	a man throwing something with one hand

The image shows Ol Chiki Chapa/print and Usara/cursive styles, with the *chapa* style of each letter written in the first row, and the corresponding *usara* style in the second row

Aspirated consonants are written as digraphs with the letter ଢ:<sup>[9][6]</sup> ଠଢ /tʰ/, ଢଢ /gʰ/, ଢଢ /kʰ/, ଠଢ /jʰ/, ଠଢ /cʰ/, ଠଢ /dʰ/, ଠଢ /pʰ/, ଠଢ /dʰ/, ଠଢ /ɾʰ/, ଠଢ /tʰ/, and ଠଢ /bʰ/.

# Other marks

Ol Chiki employs several marks which are placed after the letter they modify (there are no combining characters):

Mark	Name	Description
•	gāhlă ṭuḍăġ	This baseline dot is used to extend three vowel letters for the Santal Parganas dialect of Santali: <sup>[9]</sup> 𑒧. ă /ɔ/, 𑒧. ă /ə/, and 𑒧. ă /ɛ/. The phonetic difference between 𑒧 and 𑒧. is not clearly defined and there may be only a marginal phonemic difference between the two. 𑒧. is rarely used. ALA-LC transliterates 𑒧. as "ā". <sup>[8]</sup>
•	mū ṭuḍăġ	This raised dot indicates <u>nasalization</u> of the preceding vowel: 𑒧̣ /ɔ̃/, 𑒧̣ /ẵ/, 𑒧̣ /ɛ̃/, and 𑒧̣ /ō̃/. ALA-LC transliteration uses "ṃ" after the affected vowel. <sup>[8]</sup>
:	mū gāhlă ṭuḍăġ	This colon-like mark is used to mark a nasalized extended vowel. It is a combination of <i>mū ṭuḍăġ</i> and <i>gāhlă ṭuḍăġ</i> : 𑒧̣: /ɔ̃:/, 𑒧̣: /ẵ:/, and 𑒧̣: /ɛ̃:/.
~	relă	This tilde-like mark indicates the prolongation of any oral or nasalized vowel. Compare 𑒧 /e/ with 𑒧~ /e:/. It comes after the <i>gāhlă ṭuḍăġ</i> for extended vowels: 𑒧~. /e:/̃/. It is omitted in ALA-LC transliteration. <sup>[8]</sup>
𑒧	ahad	This special letter indicates the deglottalization of a consonant in the word-final position. It preserves the <u>morphophonemic</u> relationship between the <u>glottalized (ejective)</u> and <u>voiced</u> equivalents of consonants. <sup>[9]</sup> For example, 𑒧 represents a voiced /g/ when word initial but an ejective /k'/ when in the word-final position. A voiced /g/ in the word-final position is written as 𑒧𑒧. The <i>ahad</i> is used with 𑒧, 𑒧, 𑒧, 𑒧, and 𑒧 which can form cursive ligatures with 𑒧 in handwriting (but not usually in printed text). <sup>[6]</sup> ALA-LC transliteration uses an apostrophe (') to represent an <i>ahad</i> . <sup>[8]</sup>
-	phārkā	This hyphen-like mark serves as a glottal protector (the opposite function as the <i>ahad</i> .) It preserves the ejective sound, even in the word-initial position. Compare 𑒧𑒧 /gɔ/ with 𑒧-𑒧 /k'ɔ/. The <i>phārkā</i> is only used with 𑒧, 𑒧, 𑒧, and 𑒧. It is omitted in ALA-LC transliteration. <sup>[8]</sup>

# Numerals

Ol Chiki has its own numerals:

Hindu-Arabic numerals	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Ol Chiki	𑒐	𑒑	𑒒	𑒓	𑒔	𑒕	𑒖	𑒗	𑒘	𑒙

# Punctuation

Some Western-style punctuation marks are used with Ol Chiki: the comma (,), exclamation mark (!), question mark (?), and quotation marks (“ and ”).

The period/fullstop (.) is not used, because it is visually confusable with the gāhlă țuḍăg mark (.);<sup>[6]</sup> therefore, instead of periods, the script uses single or two *Ol Chiki* short dandas:

- Ꞥ (mucăd) marks a minor break
- ꞥ (double mucăd) marks a major break

# Computing

## Unicode

Ol Chiki script was added to the Unicode Standard in April, 2008 with the release of version 5.1.

The Unicode block for Ol Chiki is U+1C50–U+1C7F:

Ol Chiki <sup>[1]</sup>																
Official Unicode Consortium code chart (https://www.unicode.org/charts/PDF/U1C50.pdf) (PDF)																
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	A	B	C	D	E	F
U+1C5x	Ꞁ	ꞁ	Ꞃ	ꞃ	Ꞅ	ꞅ	Ꞇ	ꞇ	ꞈ	꞉	꞊	Ꞌ	ꞌ	Ɥ	ꞎ	ꞏ
U+1C6x	Ꞑ	ꞑ	Ꞓ	ꞓ	ꞔ	ꞕ	Ꞗ	ꞗ	Ꞙ	ꞙ	Ꞛ	ꞛ	Ꞝ	ꞝ	Ꞟ	ꞟ
U+1C7x	Ꞡ	ꞡ	Ꞣ	ꞣ	Ꞥ	ꞥ	Ꞧ	ꞧ	Ꞩ	ꞩ	Ɦ	Ɜ	Ɡ	Ɬ	Ɪ	ꞯ
Notes																
1.^ As of Unicode version 16.0																

## Fonts

- Google's Noto Sans Ol Chiki.<sup>[10]</sup>
- Microsoft's font family Nirmala UI.<sup>[11]</sup>

## Mixing the two letter styles

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Although Ol Chiki (Chapa) and Ol Chiki (Usara) are normally never mixed, and the original inventor never mentioned mixing these letter styles, there have been some works that mix both forms, using them like English capital and small letters. However, this innovation is yet to be accepted officially.<sup>[12]</sup>

## The invention of a lower case for Ol Chiki

Since 2017, Santali graphic designer, typographer, and film producer Sudip Iglesias Murmu has been working on design principles to provide a lowercase alphabet form for Ol Chiki, which would permit Ol Chiki writing and keyboarding to use a two-case, or bicameral, format (Using both uppercase and lowercase), as is done in many other written languages, including the Roman-alphabet languages such as English (all of which were once unicameral scripts, but evolved into a bicameral stage over time). As the development of a lowercase form is contributed to developing a standardized cursive form (in those writing systems which use one), the evolution of lowercase is likely to allow standardizing cursive to the point of making it type able alongside more rigid "block" printed letterforms forms So far, only Ol Chiki (Chapa) letters are used in keyboarding, typesetting, and publishing (in effect, producing capitals-only text for the entirety of all printed or keyboarded documents). In writing quickly by hand, Ol Chiki (Usara) is used: but, despite Ol Usara's potential for reaching high speed, the circulation of Ol Usara documents is negligible, and Ol Usara is yet to receive Unicode standardization, thus leaving it still neglected.

In hopes to remedy this situation and to harmonize the two scripts, Sudip Iglesias Murmu has innovated by creating a series of lowercase letters, which he has integrated with the already existing font of Ol Chiki. According to him, providing lowercase letters increases the efficiency of keyboarding, both for Ol Chiki (Chapa) and for Ol Chiki (Usara), and allows keyboarding to reach the same speed that can be obtained when typing Santali in Roman-alphabet letters, which are likewise case-sensitive. However, his work is yet to be accepted officially.<sup>[13]</sup>

## See also

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- Byomkes Chakrabarti (a Bengali research worker on ethnic languages)
- Santali Latin alphabet



- Turia Chand Baskey

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- a. smallest unit of meaningful speech sound
  - b. The process is described in *Ol Chemed (A Santali Primer)*, and also in his book *Ronod (A Santali Grammar in Santali)*, in his description of Ol Chiki's *chapa* and *usara* styles.
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