An Outline of the History of Yoga

There are six schools of orthodox Hindu philosophy which regard the Veda as a root source of knowledge

Nyaya: logic (how do we know what we know? what is thought?)
Vaisesika: metaphysics (what is this? Begins the classification of material)
Samkhya: enumeration (philosophy of dualism)
Yoga: Patanjali (practice of dualism)
Mimamsa: tradition of Vedic exegesis, with emphasis on Vedic ritual (old)
Vedanta: Upanishadic tradition (emphasis on Vedic philosophy, Shankara, Brahman, Atman)

~3000 BC seals from the Indus Valley depict postures that look to be meditative postures.

Vedas 4500-2500 BCE The four groups of texts: Rig, Sama, Yajur and Atharva Vedas are hymns to God that outline specific practices (i.e. sacrifices and fire ceremonies) to solicit favors from the gods. This was a very practical, non-spiritual, materially oriented practice.

Upanishads 1500 – 1000 BCE (oral tradition, often put forth as a conversation between two people or even two animals) meaning “sitting, down, near” also implies “sitting near to God”. The ~200+ Upanishads are drawn from the Vedas. They are a refinement of vedic religion and texts with the addition of the idea of an “inner” sacrifice. The following terms are introduced in the Upanishads:
Brahman - the infinite Source and fabric and core and destiny of all existence, both manifest and unmanifest and the formless infinite from which the universe has grown
Atman - immortal perfect Spirit of every living creature
Aum - the cosmic vibration that underlies all existence

Earliest references to “yoga” are in the Middle Upanishads (~400BCE)
Example from the Shvetashvatara Upanishad:

"When earth, water, fire, air and akasha arise, when the five attributes of the elements, mentioned in the books on yoga, become manifest then the yogi’s body becomes purified by the fire of yoga and he is free from illness, old age and death." (Verse 2.12).

Next came the integration and differentiation of psychospiritual paths via texts such as the Mahabarata (which includes the Baghavad Gita), and the Ramayana (Ram, Sita and Hanuman fight Ravana).
Also arising at this time:
Samkhya
Yoga
Jainism – rejection of sacrifice (strong adherence to Ahimsa)
Buddhism – rejection of birth-right, caste system and priestly hierarchy
Samkhya – based on the Samkhya Karika (auth. Kapila) circa, 200 CE, it is one of the oldest philosophical systems of India. It is not a modern school of practice but rather a basic theoretical exposition of human nature, enumerating and defining its elements. It provides the starting point of discussion to the following schools. It regards the universe as consisting of two realities: Purusha and Prakriti.

Purusha (consciousness, the experiencer) absolute, independent, free, imperceptible, unknowable through other agencies, above any experience by mind or senses and beyond any words or explanations.
Prakriti (phenomenal realm of matter, the experienced) is the first cause of the manifest material universe—of everything except the Puruṣa.

Samkhya’s divides the world and phenomena into twenty-five tattvas or principles:
- Purusha meaning Self or consciousness,
- Prakriti (primal nature)
- Buddhi (intellect or will)
- Ahamkara (ego)
- Manas (mind)
- five buddhindriyas (sensory capabilities)
- five karmendriyas (action-capabilities)
- ten elements

All matter/experience is composed of the three gunas:
  - sattva – poise, fineness, lightness, illumination, and joy;
  - rajas – dynamism, activity, excitation, and pain;
  - tamas – inertia, coarseness, heaviness, obstruction, and sloth

Yoga
Patanjali (150BCE) author of the Yoga Sutras, which is considered the defining text of Raja Yoga.
Patanjali was widely regarded as the compiler of the formal Yoga philosophy
Defines the word "yoga” in his second sutra, which is the definitional sutra for his entire work:

yogaś citta-vṛtti-nirodhaḥ (Yoga Sutras 1.2)
Yoga is the inhibition/cessation (niruddha) of the modifications/fluctuations (vṛtti) of the mind (citta)

The Yoga Sutras contain 4 chapters (196 aphorisms total) as follows:

Samadhi Pada (51 sutras)
Samadhi refers to a blissful state where the yogi is absorbed into the One. The author describes yoga and then the nature and the means to attaining samādhi.

Sadhana Pada (55 sutras)
Sadhana is the Sanskrit word for "practice" or "discipline". Here the author outlines two forms of Yoga: Kriya Yoga (Action Yoga) and Ashtanga Yoga (Eightfold or Eightlimbed Yoga).
Kriya yoga, sometimes called Karma Yoga, is also expounded in Chapter 3 of the Bhagavad Gita, where Arjuna is encouraged by Krishna to act without attachment to the results or fruit of action and activity. It is the yoga of selfless action and service. Ashtanga Yoga describes the eight limbs that together constitute Raja Yoga.

**Vibhuti Pada (56 sutras)**
Vibhuti is the Sanskrit word for "power" or "manifestation". 'Supra-normal powers' (Sanskrit: siddhi) are acquired by the practice of yoga. The temptation of these powers should be avoided and the attention should be fixed only on liberation.

**Kaivalya Pada (34 sutras)**
Kaivalya literally means "isolation", but as used in the Sutras stands for emancipation, liberation and used interchangeably with moksha (liberation), which is the goal of Yoga. The Kaivalya Pada describes the process of liberation and the reality of the transcendental ego.

This section provides the basis of Ashtanga Yoga (the Eight-Limbed Path). This eight-limbed concept derived from the 29th Sutra of the 2nd book, and is a core characteristic of practically every Raja yoga variation taught today. The Eight Limbs are:

1. **Yamas** (Restraints, actions best avoided):
   - Ahimsa (non-violence)
   - Satya (Truth, non-lying)
   - Asteya (non-covetousness)
   - Brahmacharya (non-sensuality, celibacy)
   - Aparigraha (non-possessiveness).

2. **Niyama** (Observances, positive actions to cultivate):
   - Shaucha (purity)
   - Santosha (contentment)
   - Tapas (austerity)
   - Svadhyaya (study of the Vedic scriptures to know about God and the soul)
   - Ishvara-Pranidhana (surrender to God).

3. **Asana**: Literally means "seat", and in Patanjali’s Sutras refers to the seated position used for meditation.

4. **Pranayama** (Suspending Breath): Prāna, breath, "āyāma", to restrain or stop. Also interpreted as control of the life force.

5. **Pratyahara** (Abstraction): Withdrawal of the sense organs from external objects.

6. **Dharana** (Concentration): Fixing the attention on a single object.

7. **Dhyana** (Meditation): Intense contemplation of the nature of the object of meditation.

8. **Samādhi** (Liberation): merging consciousness with the object of meditation.
**Bhagavad Gītā** (Vyasa, 200 BCE and 200 CE, 400 BCE or 3012 BCE, ) An 18 chapter sub-story within the Mahābhārata
Introduces the three additional types of yoga
*Karma yoga:* The yoga of action.
*Bhakti yoga:* The yoga of devotion
*Jnana yoga:* The yoga of knowledge.
(*Raja Yoga* is often included in this list, this is Patanjali’s yoga of meditation)

**Vedanta** (the evolution and commentaries on the Upanishad/vedic texts)
Advaita - Shankara consolidated this school ~800 CE, (many say the commentaries that compose Advaita Vedanta are infused with philosophical terminology of Buddhism, and use Buddhist arguments and analogies). The phenomenal world is an illusion (māyā)
Dvaita - Madhvacharya founded ~1100 CE (two mutually irreducible substances that constitute reality, but only one – God, is independent)
Vishishtadvaita - Ramanuja ~1100 CE "qualified non-dualism"  (God is the inner-Self as well as transcendent)

**Tantra** (to loom, stretch or expand)
An inter-religious spiritual movement that arose in medieval India in the fifth century CE
It impacted every major Asian religion extant in the early medieval period (c. 500 - 1200 CE): thus Shaivism, Buddhism, Vaishnavism, Jainism and even Islam developed a Tantric dimension.

(Tibetan Buddhism and sects of Hinduism such as Sri Vidya and Kashmir Shivism)
Abhinavagupta 950 - 1020 AD Father of modern Tantric yoga and author of the Tantraloka

A rejection of the renunciant values of classical yoga. A world-embracing vision of the whole of reality as the self-expression of a single, free and joyous Divine Consciousness.
The practical consequence of this view was that householders could aspire to spiritual liberation in the Tantric system, not only monks. "Nothing exists that is not Divine"

Tantra is an accumulation of practices and ideas, characterized by ritual that seeks to access the supra-mundane through the mundane, identifying the microcosm with the macrocosm. The Tantric practitioner seeks to use prana, an energy that flows through the universe (including one’s own body) to attain goals that may be spiritual, material or both.

Schools of tantra:
*Kashmir Shaivism* - Consciousness is the underlying stuff of the universe, everything is a play of Consciousness.
Svātantrya – we all have free will but can be ignorant of this power. Ignorance too is a force projected by svātantrya itself upon the creation and can only be removed by svātantrya.
Maya - limiting veil of cosmic illusion
*Shri Vidya* (Goddess based)
*[Rajanaka (Douglas Brooks), often used in Anusara philosophy]*
Hatha Yoga arose out of the Shaiva-based tantric traditions. The three main texts of Hatha Yoga are:

**Hatha Yoga Pradipika** 15th cen. CE
asanas, pranayama, chakras, kundalini, bandhas, kriyas, shakti, nadis and mudras

**Gheranda Samhita** 17th cen

**Shiva Samhita** 17th or 18th cen

Yoga as it has been inherited in the modern world has its roots in Tantric ritual and in secondary passages within Tantric scriptures, The practices of mantra, āsana, sense-withdrawal (pratyāhāra), breath-regulation (prānāyāma), mental fixation (dhāranā), meditation (dhyāna), mudrā, the subtle body with its energy centers (chakras, granthis, etc.) and channels (nādīs), as well as the phenomenon of Kundalinī Shakti are but a few of the tenets that comprise Tantric Yoga. While some of these derive from earlier, pre-Tantric sources, such as the Hindu Upanishads and the Yoga Sūtra, they were greatly expanded upon, ritualized, and philosophically contextualized in these medieval Tantras.

Sir John Woodroffe (1865–1936), wrote about Tantra under the pen name Arthur Avalon. He is generally held as the founding father of Tantric studies.

**Hinduism in the west**
Swami Vivekananda 1893 spoke at the Parliament of the World’s Religions in Chicago and is credited with introducing Vedantic Hinduism to the west and reviving the modern practice of Vedanta in India.

**Modern hatha yoga**
Paramahansa Yogananda (Autobiography of a Yogi, 1946) Kriya Yoga
T. Krishnamacharya from Mysore combined breath with movement, taught asana
  - K. Pattabhi Jois (Ashtanga Yoga 1948)
  - B.K.S. Iyengar (Iyengar Yoga)
  - T.K.V. Desikachar (Viniyoga)
  - Indra Devi (Asana – later in South America)