

## **The Development of Writing System from Ancient to Modern Era**

by

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### **Abstract:**

This paper tries to explore the development of the writing systems from the ancient to the modern era in an analytical manner. This is done mainly in a two-dimensional framework. In one framework, various definitions of writing systems are analyzed in a historical manner and other dimension looks into the various types of the development of writing system. This paper presents its findings on the basis of the above discussed two dimensions to present a logical interpretation of different writing systems of the world.

**Key words:** 1) writing      2) history      3) development      4) brain      5) pen

### **SECTION-I**

The Section I deals with the introduction, definition and history of writing system, the details are discussed as follows:

#### **1.0 Introduction:**

The development of writing was one of the great inventions. Writing allows us to transcend time and space. It is the wheel of our words, the time machine of our thoughts. Millions of people in the world speak languages with no written form. Among these people oral literature abounds, and crucial knowledge is memorized and passed between generations. But human memory is short-lived, and the brains storage capacity is finite. Writing overcome such problems and allowed communication across the miles through the years. Writing system brings ability to message becomes it encodes spoken language into physically preserable system.

#### **1.1 What is Writing?**

Writing is the record or the recorded form of speech. It is a medium of communication that represents language through the inscription of signs and symbols. The development of writing, as we know it, is a relatively recent phenomenon.

## **1.2 The History of Writing:**

When we consider the development of writing, we should bear in mind that a very large number of languages of the world today that exist only in the spoken form and do not have a written form. For these languages that do have writing system, the development of writing is a recent phenomenon. The age of the languages have been put back to at least 6500BC and 2900BC. We may trace human attempts to represent information visually back to cave drawings which were made at least 20,000 years ago or to clay tokens from about 10,000 years ago. Writing which is based on some type of alphabetic script can only be traced back to inscriptions dated around 3,000 years ago. Much of the evidence used in the reconstruction of ancient writing systems comes from inscriptions on stone or tablets found in the rubble of ruined cities.

The spoken and written forms are fundamentally different in nature---

- a) Speech developed in us
- b) Writing had to be invented

Writing is not language, but merely a way of recording language by means of visible marks. In some countries such as China, Egypt and Mesopotamia writing was practiced thousand years ago. In order to study writing, we must know something about languages and we have to use great care in interpreting the written symbols into terms of actual speech.

## **SECTION- II**

The Section II in this paper represents the various steps of the development of writing system, the detailed studies are presented in the following sub sections.

### **2.0 Systems of Writing:**

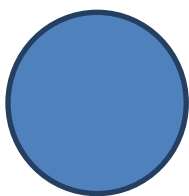
An account of the early history gradually emerged but it comprises many gaps and ambiguities. It is difficult to decide whether a piece of graphic expression should be taken as an artistic image or as a symbol of primitive writing. The effort to discover the writing system had lit us to find the following types of writing system.

## **2.1 Pictographic:**

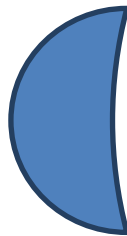
A system of pictorial representation in which pictures actually reproduce familiar objects can be considered as the most primitive way of representing and conveying thought. When some of the “pictures” come to represent particular images in a consistent way, we can begin to describe the product as forms of picture-writing, or pictograms.

Pictogram may be language-independent, but they do not seem to be culture-independent.

### Ancient Example:



Stands for “Sun”



Stands for “Moon”

### Modern Example:



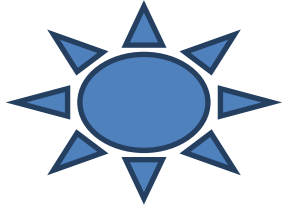
(Warning against swimming because of crocodiles)

Pictographic writing has been found among people throughout the world, ancient and modern, among Africans types, American types, American-Indian, Alaskan, Eskimos etc. The more “picture-like” forms are pictograms.

## **2.2 Ideographic:**

A stage when the symbols do not actually represent objects is called ideographic stage of writing. Ideograms is defined as the representation of an IDEA, and this definition is often interpreted as implying that they (symbols) have no direct connection with spoken expressions. The more obstruct, derived forms are ideograms.

For Example:



This symbol may mean or express the idea of “*Sun is very Hot*”.




"No Dogs!" sign in Spain. The dog illustration is a pictogram. The red circle and bar is an ideogram representing the idea of "no" or "not allowed"

The Chinese is the typical example of a writing system which is supposed to be ideographic.

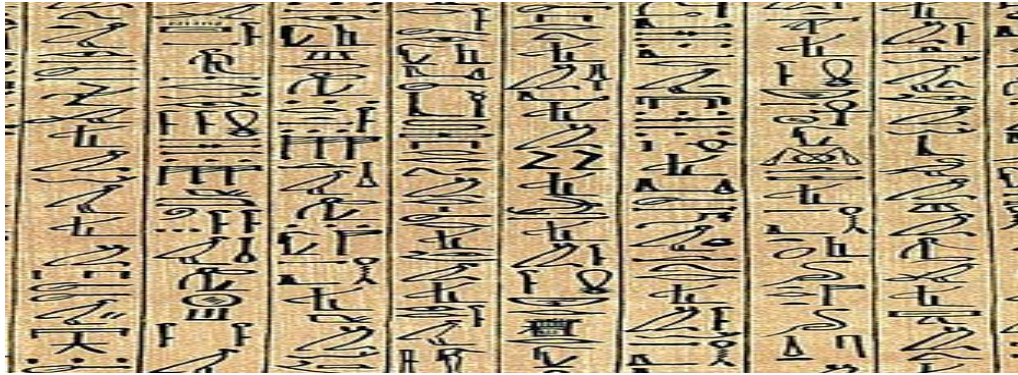
### **2.3 Logographic:**

The term derived from the Greek word ‘logos’ means *word*. Since the words of any language are structural elements that represent concept, the written symbols of logographic systems are equivalent to words. The each character used for a word as a whole and not for any of the sounds that make up the word.

Logographic writing systems have been developed independently in separate parts of the world and are the oldest type of writing system.

Logographic writing system was first used by the Sumerians, in the southern part of the modern Iraq between 5000 and 6000 years ago in the form of Cuneiform writing which means (wedge-shaped) and the inscriptions used by the Sumerians were produced by pressing a wedge shaped implement into soft clay tablets, resulting in forms in forms like  the relationship between the written form and the object it represents has become arbitrary. In a logogram each sign corresponds to a word.

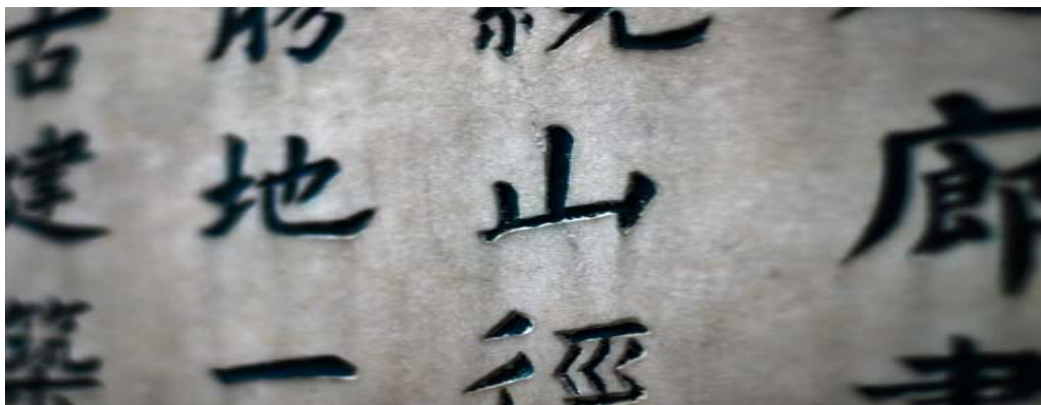
For example:



(The 'Hieroglyphic' writing of ancient Egypt)

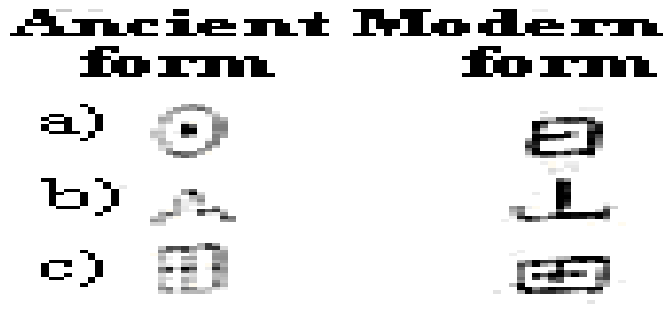


(The 'Cuneiform' writing of ancient Mesopotamia and)



(The Chinese writing system were all logographic in their earliest form).

All three writing systems were invented at least 5 thousand years ago and survived for thousands of years. Modern Chinese writing system is also logographic. We can compare the ideogram for (a) “sun”, “day” (b) ‘mountain’, “*shan*” and (c) “ field” , “*tian*”



### 2.3. (i) Disadvantage:

1. An enormous number of symbols must be memorized.
2. A person must learn approximately 5000 characters in order to learn newspaper printed in Chinese.

### 2.3. (ii) Advantage:

1. No need to know how to pronounce the language represented by the writing system in order to learn to read the messages written in it.
2. Imagine that English word house was represented by a stylized drawing of a house



.If this symbol was read as [haws]. We could say that English had a logographic writing system.

## 2.4 Syllabic Writing System

When a writing system employs a set of symbols which represents the pronunciation of the symbol, it is described as syllabic writing. Thus a character is attached a purely phonetic value.

The syllabic writing generally represents a consonant and a vowel. The total set of characters that are used for a given language is referred to as a syllabary.

For examples:

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century an American invented a syllabic writing system, which was used by the Cherokee Indians to produce written messages from spoken language.

### 2.4 (i) Advantage:



It is more economical, in the sense that requires far less memorization and learning time.



## 2.5 Alphabetic Writing Systems:

An alphabetic writing system employs a character or combination of characters to represent the speech sounds used by that language. Each of the syllables that make up the words of a language since there are just a limited number of speeches sounds used by any given language. We must say “typically” because greater or lesser departures are almost universal. Ideally an alphabetic system should have a one-to-one correspondence between phonemes and graphemes. That is, each grapheme represents one phoneme and each phoneme would represent one grapheme.

In the Cyrillic alphabet, the ‘hard sign’ and ‘soft sign’ usually have no pronunciation of their own. They indicate something about the preceding consonant.



Many of the languages of such a system Sanskrit, Marathi, Nepali, and others use a writing system called 'Devanagari'.

क कलम कलम	kalam 	ख खाना खाना	khaana 	ग गाई गाई	gaai 
च चुरोट चुरोट	churoT 	छ छ छ	chha - 6 	ज जुता जुता	juttaa 

## 2.6 Phonetic Writing System:

These are the modern writing system based on I.P.A. (International Phonetic Alphabet) symbols. In which there are proper one to one correspondence between sounds and letters. Spoken form does not require in teaching of sounds. Spoken is not permanent.it is ephemeral as compared to writing system which is permanent.

These IPA gives us uniform international medium of studying and transcribing the sounds of all the languages of the world. Many languages of the world have no written form at all. It has been made possible to study such languages with this alphabet.

In other words, the IPA is a precise and universal means of writing down the spoken form of utterances as they are spoken without reference to their written representation, grammatical status or meaning.



In reading English the IPA helps us in establishing and maintaining international intelligibility and uniformity in the pronunciation of English. With the help of IPA we can easily teach the pronunciation of English or of any other language. The teachers and readers of English (or of any other) can improve their pronunciation and can overcome (of) the confusion created by the spelling with the help of International Phonetic Alphabet writing system

b	b	l	l	sh	ʃ	a	æ	oh	oʊ
p	p	r	r	zh	ʒ	ah	aɪ	oa	oʊ
d	d	m	m	th	θ	ay	e	u	u
t	t	n	n	h	h	e	ɛ	uh	ʌ
f	f	s	s	w	w	ee	i	oo	u
v	v	z	z	y	j	i	ɪ	oi	ɔj
g	g	ch	tʃ	ng	ŋ	iy	aɪ	ow	aw
k	k	j	dʒ			o	ɑ		

## 2.7 Conclusion:

Reading and writing has some advantages over someone do not know to read and write. It is writing which makes us accessible to others. At the level of civilization and learning writing system is more important.

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