



The Evolution Of Symbolic Communication Into Comprehensive Writing Systems

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Abstract: The article explores the development of symbolic communication into full-fledged writing systems, from primitive signs to modern alphabets. Key stages of writing development in different cultures, including Mesopotamia, Egypt, China and MesoAmerica are considered. It analyzes the prerequisites of the origin of the letter, its function and influence on the development of human civilization.

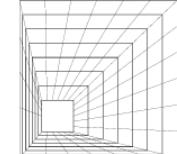
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Writing is one of the greatest achievements of mankind, allowing to preserve and transmit information throughout the ages. The evolution from simple symbols to complex writing systems reflects the development of human thinking, society and culture. This article examines the main stages of this process, from symbolic communication to the formation of alphabetic systems.

Prior to the invention of writing, people for millennia developed ways of transmitting information through visual symbols.^[1] These forms of symbolic communication served for the fixation, memorization and transmission of knowledge, religious beliefs, social norms and economic operations. They predated the writing, but already represented a nascent form of graphic representation of thought.

Pictograms are the earliest form of symbolic writing.^[2] They are simple drawings depicting objects or actions. For example, a picture of the sun, man, animal or tree. Such images can be found in cave paintings of the Palaeolithic era (for example, in the caves of Lasko and Altamir), where hunting scenes and animal images could convey information about prey, spiritual practices or initiation rites. Pictographic systems were used not only in prehistoric times, but also by peoples such as the Indians of North America, the Australian aborigines, and in the early stages of writing in Mesopotamia and Egypt. However, the pictograms had a number of limitations: they poorly conveyed abstract concepts, emotions, grammatical connections and sequence of actions. This made the image context-dependent and limited in its universal use. The next step was ideograms - symbols that expressed not a specific object, but an idea or concept. For example, a circle with lines could indicate the sun as a source of light, heat and time. Such signs began to perform a more abstract function - not just "depict" but "signify". An ideogram is no longer just a "drawing of the object", but a sign that has received a conditional value.^[3] The transition from pictograms to ideograms became an important stage in symbolic evolution, as it allowed people to express more complex categories: time, power, death, birth, number. An example is the Chinese script, where ideograms still play a key role.

In addition to pictograms and ideograms, mnemonic systems were an important form of symbolic communication - tools for remembering information. An example is the Inca's kipu:



rope records made of multicolored threads with knots. The location, color, length and shape of the nodes transmitted numerical and possibly even semantic data. The Kipu were used for keeping records, censuses, registration of prayers and storage of traditions. Despite the absence of written signs in the usual sense, this system performed functions close to writing. Similarly, speaking drums were used in Africa to transmit coded messages through rhythms, and in Polynesia rongo-rongo tablets may have had their own mnemonic or ideographic system, although it has not yet been deciphered.

The main functions of symbolic communication were: recording of information (hunting, astronomy, rituals); simplification of memorization (through visual images); transfer of knowledge and traditions (in oral culture); regulation of social life (rituals, taboos, labels). However, such systems were limited: contextuality: the meaning depended on the cultural environment and visual surroundings; limited dictionary: difficult to express grammar, time forms, abstract ideas; complexity in interpretation: without a trained mediator (shaman, chief) the signs could be misunderstood.

Thus, symbolic communication, despite its primitiveness, created the basis for the emergence of writing. People began to realize that with the help of graphic signs you cannot just draw, but also «speak on paper». This transition - from image to sign, from concrete to abstract - was a turning point in the history of human thinking.

Cunostia as the first complete system of writing emerged in Mesopotamia. Mesopotamia (modern territory of Iraq and Syria) is considered the cradle of writing. It was here, around 3200 BC, that the Sumerians - one of the first known civilizations - developed a system that was later called the cunozite. It was the first fully-fledged writing system to go beyond symbolic communication. The development of writing in Mesopotamia was closely related to: the development of urban civilization - population growth, trade, resource management required accounting; administrative and economic needs - there was a need to fix the number of grain, livestock, workers; temple and religious centers - priests kept records of gifts to the gods, sacrifice lists, taxes and calendar dates.

Originally these records were made with tokens - small clay figures, each of which marked a certain commodity. In order not to lose the tokens, they were placed in clay balls (boules) on the surface of which were printed with tokens. Over time, people realized that they could do without the tokens themselves, just by depicting them on clay - this was the first step to writing. The cleavage got its name from the shape of the signs: they were applied to the moist clay with a cane stylus (pisal), which left wedge-shaped prints. Such signs were conveniently produced in series and quickly.

The script developed from: icons (drawings of objects) to ideograms (symbols of concepts); then to the phonetic signs - the syllables that represent the sounds of speech. Thus, the Sumerian nomenclature became not only a system of accounting, but also a way of recording live speech - with all its grammatical and syntactic features.

Over time, the Sumerian language has been adapted by other peoples: Akkads is a Semitic-speaking people who have created their own literary tradition on the basis of cuneiform writing. The Babylonians and Assyrians developed epic and administrative texts. The Hittites and the Elamites - used adapted versions of the cuneiform in Anatolia and Iran. The calligraphy has existed for more than 3,000 years, making it one of the longest-lived writing systems in history.

The clinotype was a turning point in human history, because: created a universal way of recording speech; overcome the limitations of pictography, introducing syllabic language transmission; became the first example of functional writing, applicable in different spheres of life; laid the foundations for subsequent writing systems. Thus, the writing from the accounting mode has become a means of thinking, storing and transmitting culture.



The next key term in evolution of writing symbols are Egyptian Hieroglyphics, sacral letters and their role in culture. In parallel with the development of cuneiform writing in Mesopotamia, in ancient Egypt emerged its own system of writing - hieroglyphics that appeared around 3100 BC. Egyptian hieroglyphs became not only a means of recording, but also an essential element of culture, religion and political power. Their significance went far beyond utilitarian communication - they were «words of the gods», linking earthly and heavenly.

According to one theory, the Egyptian script developed independently of the Sumerian, but under the influence of common civilization processes in fertile river valleys. The oldest hieroglyphic inscriptions are found in Abydos and date from about 3300-3100 BC. BC.

As with cuneiform, hieroglyphics have gone from the pictorial images to more complex forms: Pictograms: image of the object (for example, a picture of a bird for the word «bird»). Ideograms: a sign representing an abstract concept (for example, the heart as a symbol of joy or love). Phonograms: signs representing sounds, syllables or whole words. The hieroglyphic system included three types of signs: phonetic signs - denoted sounds (one-, two- and three consonants); logos - denoted whole words; determinants - not read, but pointed to the meaning category of the word (for example, the sign of a person indicated that the word is related to people). The letter could be written horizontally or vertically, from right to left or from left to right, depending on the direction in which «look» the figures in the hieroglyphics.

Hieroglyphics in ancient Egypt were used predominantly in official, religious and ritual contexts: temple architecture - inscriptions on walls, columns, obelisks; tombs and sarcophagi - texts of the Book of the dead, magic spells, biographies of the deceased; papyrus - administrative documents, medical and astrological treatises; monuments - records about the acts of pharaohs, victories, construction projects. There was also hieratic writing (hieratics) - a written form of characters for everyday administrative and literary use, and demotic - simplified folk style of writing.

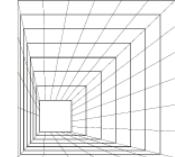
The Egyptians themselves called the hieroglyphics «medu netcher» - «words of god». The letter was considered a gift of God Tota - patron of wisdom and letters. The ability to read and write was the prerogative of priests and writers and had a high social status. Thus, the letter performed not only a function of storage and transmission of information, but also a sacred mission - the maintenance of maat (general order and harmony), inscribed in the structure of peace.

Until the 19th century, Egyptian writing remained undeciphered. The breakthrough occurred after the discovery of the Rosetta Stone (1799), on which was a text in three languages: Greek, Demotic and Hieroglyphic. In 1822, Jean-François Champollion deciphered the alphabetical basis of Egyptian hieroglyphics, giving rise to modern Egyptology.[4]

The Egyptian script illustrates: the relationship between writing and religion - text as a magical and ritual act; the function of preserving historical memory - pharaohs are «eternal», as long as their name is written; social stratification - access to writing as a form of power; stability of the written tradition - the hieroglyphics have been used for more than 3000 years. Thus, the Egyptian script not only documented reality, but also shaped it, strengthening the sacred power of the pharaohs and the concept of eternal life through texts.

The evolution of symbolic communication into full-fledged writing systems represents one of the greatest achievements of mankind. From primitive pictograms and ideograms to complex phonetic systems - this path reflects not only the growth of human cognitive and cultural capabilities, but also the deepening of social and political organization of society.

Writing has allowed humanity to go beyond the oral tradition. It has provided: accumulation and transfer of knowledge between generations; development of legislation, economy, science and religion; consolidation of the power and identity of the state through official inscriptions,



chronicles and documents; the birth of literature and philosophy, that is, a secondary, personal form of thinking.

Different civilizations - Mesopotamia, Egypt, China, Maya - went to writing their own ways, but in each case the letter became the core of culture. It did not simply reflect reality, but shaped it - through the text a model of the world was built, the boundaries of sacred and secular were defined, history was ordered.

With the transition from symbol to sign, from image to sound, from object to abstraction, humanity has taken a decisive step towards the creation of complex societies, educational systems, states and science. Without the letter, there would be no archives, libraries, universities or modern data storage technologies.

Thus, the letter is not just a means of communication, but the basis of civilization. It has fixed human memory and turned it into culture.

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