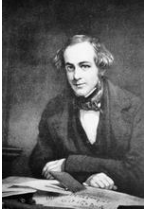


Writing in Ancient Sumer



Henry Rawlinson is credited for unlocking the code of ancient Sumerian Cuneiform.




There is a monument located 300 feet high carved into a rock in Behistun, Iran. The Persian King Darius had it made to tell all how powerful he was and to be sure all understood, it was carved in three different languages: Old Persian, Elamite and Babylonian.

I. Sumerians are credited with inventing writing.

- A. With writing it's possible to preserve thoughts and experiences for future generations.
- B. First written words were pictographs to record inventories.
- C. Later these pictographs were simplified into symbols.
- D. There were over 700 different signs- taking years for a person to learn.
- E. Therefore: Scribes were highly educated and held high offices in the city-state.

II. Tools for writing:

- A. A clay tablet
 1. Baked in the sun or a hot kiln to harden
- B. A reed stylus 
 1. First one had a sharp point on the end
 2. They changed to a blunter point because the sharp one left messy ridges on the sides of the lines.
 3. Finally they invented a stylus with a triangular point that made neat, clear impressions on clay.

III. The process of writing: As writing progressed, change occurred.

- A. They changed the direction of the lines.
 1. From vertical columns starting at the upper right hand corner of the tablet.
 2. To horizontal rows to avoid smudging writing already done.
- B. From pictures to symbols:
 1. As the stylus changed it was impossible to draw lines in many directions.
 2. Symbols involved making simple marks.
 3. With the horizontal rows, pictures were drawn sideways.
 4. The kinds of marks used changed too.

Some possible marks to make with a stylus:



C. From symbols to sounds.

1. There still was a problem:
The drawing of a head could mean..

Head

Person

Think



The drawing of a foot could mean...

Foot

Stand

Walk

Go

But when would they mean which?

The word **TI** meant *ARROW and LIFE*

This word had two sounds. So two symbols were used for the sounds. This started the idea of an alphabet.

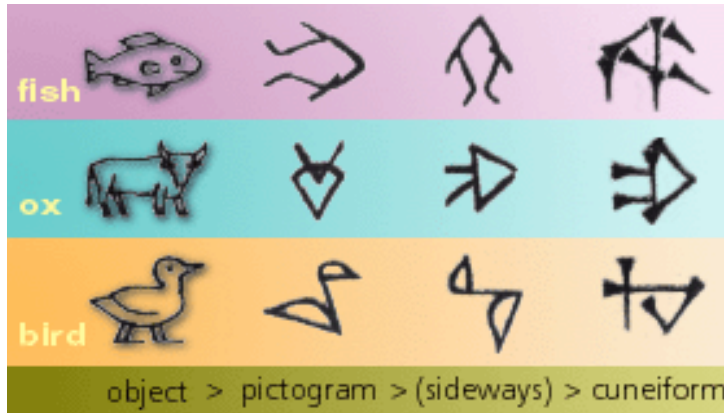
D. As writing developed new materials were produced:

1. Words could be chiseled into stone.
2. Painted on pottery.
3. Engraved in wax coated panels.

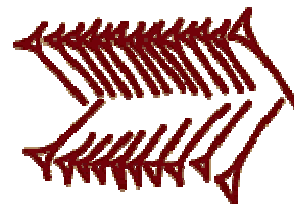
E. Now writing could be used in many new ways:

1. Directions for giving medicine.
2. Law code
3. Literature
4. Historical documents
5. Astronomical tables
6. Messages to and from the gods.

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"Oh, Bob! I love a man in cuneiform!"



Barley Pictograph

Barley Cuneiform

Barley Cuneiform on its side

