

WELCOME

# EPIGRAPHY

## Evolution of Scripts

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# Introduction

The study on the origin of writing exhibits the art of writing of the prehistoric nomads. It gives an Idea about the scratching pictures of the prehistoric men that evolved into cuneiform, hieroglyphic, pictographic writings. It led to the development of alphabet. Hence it is believed that knowledge of paleography is required for a historian to understand the ancient past. In this unit, the history of paleography is described.

# PALEOGRAPHY

Paleography means the study of ancient handwriting. The paleographer spread old inscriptions and manuscripts by carefully examining the letter forms used in writings. They can detect forgeries as lie is familiar with really old forms of writing. Dating and signatures. The art of writing had its birth in the simple rock drawings which communicated some message.

# Origin of writing

- ❖ The pre-historic man had been scratching pictures on the walls of caves and on animal bones in order to communicate his ideas.
- ❖ Anthropologists view that these cave drawings were done by artist – Magicians who hoped that by making a picture of a bison or reindeer on the cave wall, the real animal would be made to fall to the spears of the hunters. So that there would be food for the tribe.

# PICTOGRAPHY

- ❖ Pictography is the most natural means of written communication. It must have originated independently among different peoples. So there is no single system of pictography.
- ❖ In simple pictography a figure stands for the object it represents. A figure of a snake means only a snake. But later it becomes a symbol for something else.

# IDEOGRAPHY

- ❖ Ideography means 'Idea Writing'. It is a drawing which expresses a group of ideas without any clear connection with any language.
- ❖ We may not know the spoken language of the people who drew it. Still we can understand the message of this picture, road, signs are ideograms. This way of expressing ideas, not necessarily in words, is called ideography.

# PHONOGRAPHY

- ❖ The Sumerian was made up largely of mono Syllable words. So it was easy for them to work out a syllabary of about 100 phonetic signs or phonograms.
- ❖ For instance the word for mouth was ka, so they made the picture of mouth which stood for the sound for ka.



# LOGOGRAPHY

- ❖ There is a picture with two drawings, one showing a man with a crown, holding a spear in hand, and the other showing a lion. Ideographically, the message is the king killed a lion. Logographically it stands for the name of the person “Raja Simha”.
- ❖ the Sumerians were the first to employ logography when they had difficulty in writing names and abstract ideas. In this system simple entries as 10 arrows 5 cows were personal names. In this arrow stands for words that sounded similar. For example the word ‘kodiyan’ in Tamil arts a ‘cruel-fellow.

# CUNIFORM

- ❖ Cuneiform, or Sumero-Akkadian cuneiform, was one of the earliest systems of writing, invented by sumerians in ancient Mesopotyamia.
- ❖ It is distinguished by its wedge-shaped marks on clay tablets, made by means of a blunt reed for a stylus. The name cuneiform itself simply means wedge shaped.

# HIEROGLYPH

- ❖ The first type called the hieroglyphic script was like the early Sumerian writing, composed of picture symbols, with conventional meanings assigned to them. It was used for monumental inscriptions and sacred literature.
- ❖ The Second type called historic script (meaning of the priests) was simpler than the first. Though at first it was used for sacred literature, due to its simplicity and speed, it was later used for all kinds of government records.
- ❖ The third type, simpler than the second, was called demotic (from the Greek word demos, meaning of the people) and was used by traders

# LET US SUM UP

- ▣ Writing arose out of great social necessity long before in the world. In order to communicate their ideas the prehistoric men scratched pictures on the available mediums. The origin of writing dates back to about 3500 BC in sumeria. Pictograms, ideograms, logograms and phonograms are the different stages of the development of writing.

THANK YOU