

WRITING PROOFS OF 3000 YEARS OF CHINESE EVOLUTION

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Abstract

History of forming Chinese characters through centuries are considered.

Keywords: Chinese characters, Oracle Bone Script, Metal Characters, Large Seal, Small Seal, Clerical Script, Simplified Chinese .

Анотація

Розглянуто історію утворення китайських ієрогліфів скрізь віки .

Ключові слова: китайські ієрогліфи, писемність китайських гральних кісток, металеві ієрогліфи, писемність великої печаті, писемність малої печаті, клерикальна писемність, спрощена китайська писемність .

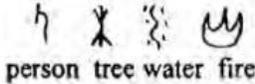
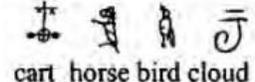
Introduction

Entire humanity has seen Chinese characters before, whether on the menu of local Chinese restaurants, on the somebody's back as a tattoo or while buying some stuffs including technics where there is instruction manual about using device which were written on Chinese or print with characters in the clothing, etc. Everyone can acknowledge the appeal these logograms have due to Chinese writings are beautifully designed and have an air of wisdom to them, however there is more to Chinese characters than aesthetic, there is a reflection of 3000 years of cultural evolution.

Research results

Only Chinese characters are still in use today, having been lost along with other ancient languages from Egypt, India, and Sumerian symbols over time. They made a substantial contribution to the linguistic and cultural advancement of China. This article aims to illustrate the creation of Chinese characters and their evolution from an archaic writing system to a more abstract one.[1]

Earliest signs and symbols in China in their initial forms were appropriately reflected images in the minds of ancient Chinese that complied with their understanding of reality and firstly engraved on pottery, turtle's shells and bones . The Shang Dynasty (1711–1066 BC) inscriptions on animal bones and tortoise shells are known as oracle bone writing (Chinese: 甲骨文, Pinyin: jiǎgǔwén). Farmers in Xiaotun Village, Anyang, Henan Province, initially dug it up. Over 4,500 unique characters have been discovered among the 150,000 animal bones and tortoise shell fragments that have been discovered from the remains of Yin and other locations. Despite being in their early stages of development, several characters in the oracle bone script could still be recognized by humans due to its strong pictograph and ideograph properties.[2] In the picture 1 we can how first Chinese characters looked like. They looked like the “direct” translation of the word itself. Ancient Chinese portrayed what they saw by own eyes.

Major Forms	Most Popular Times	Characteristics	Examples
Oracle Bone Script 甲骨文	The Shang Dynasty (1711–1066 BC)	Character size and textual format are not consistent. Character form is complicated with pictographic and directive compounds.	 person tree water fire  cart horse bird cloud

Pic.1

At the conclusion of the Shang Dynasty, in the Bronze Age, characters started to be carved or cast into bronze. These were referred to as "metal characters" (Jīn wén 金文). [3] They shared the Oracle Bones Script's shape and structure, but as the usage of molds increased, the characters' structure thickened and became more structured. Thousands of bronze objects, including bells, cauldrons, and ceremonial objects with cast inscriptions, have been found by archaeologists. Of these, the bulk are from the Zhou Dynasty (1046 BCE – 256 BCE), with maybe a quarter from the late Shang Dynasty. Characters embarked on looking less picture-like and more in symbolic way.

Bronze Script 金文	The Zhou Dynasty (1066–256 BC)	Character size and formation are more fixed. Strokes are fuller and more rounded. Characters are more simplified.	
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Pic.2

The period after the Western Zhou Dynasty is the 500 years of the Spring and Autumn Period that was a period of economic and culture growing. At the same time, Seal Script or Zhuànshū 篆书 evolved out of Bronze Writing and it caused Chinese characters becoming the more standardized script and eventually the official script of Qin Dynasty. The main feature of this character was that they were more elongated than earlier forms. [4] There were two main styles of Seal Script: Dàzhuàn 大篆 or Large Seal style and Xiǎozhuàn 小篆 or Small Seal. Unlike the Oracle Bone Script and metal characters, they had less ways of form and instead became the established 'rhombus-shape' characters.

Seal Script 篆书	The late Zhou Dynasty and the Qin Dynasty (221–106 BC)	Character form is more simplified. Writing method is consistent, and the Character pattern is more orderly. Many of the strokes are lengthened, curved and complicated. All characters are roughly square in shape.	
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Pic.3

During the Han Dynasty (202 BCE to 220 AD) the Clerical Script or Lìshū 隶书 became the dominant script. The most obvious transition from the Small Seal Script to the Clerical Script was the way the characters were symbolically represented, departing from the earlier practice of representing actual objects. [5] There are more straight lines became one more feature in the Clerical Script. This was because of the fact that The Seal Script style has the rounded shapes in the characters and though aesthetically pleasing to eye that was difficult to write. [2]

Clerical Script 隶书	The Qin Dynasty and the Han Dynasty (206 BC – 220 AD)	Characters are no longer pictographic, but more abstract ideographic symbols. Strokes are less curved, and their amount is reduced. Many of the components are simplified.	
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Pic.4

Regular Script or Kǎishū 楷书 came to the end of the Han Dynasty. Writing style was way too complicated and hard to read. This style is still used in Traditional Chinese writing nowadays in Taiwan and Hong Kong. [6]

Regular Script 楷书	From the late Han Dynasty to 1955	Characters strokes are straighter and smoother. Characters are clear and easy to write and read.	
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Pic.5

Simplified Chinese writing system was public used in 1956. This writing style reduced a lot of strokes for each characters , especially when we are talking about high usage words, making it much easier to learn,read and to write characters.

Conclusions

In conclusion, Chinese characters it is not just about strokes, it is not just ‘a picture’ or something, that is historical heritage of China. Each of characters have passed a huge way in 3000 years for being in that way as we can see characters nowadays. Every period in the development of Chinese characters has its unique history and underlying reasons for the evolution of the writing system. These periods, characterized by different scripts and calligraphic styles, serve as windows into the cultural, political, and social changes that shaped China over millennia.

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