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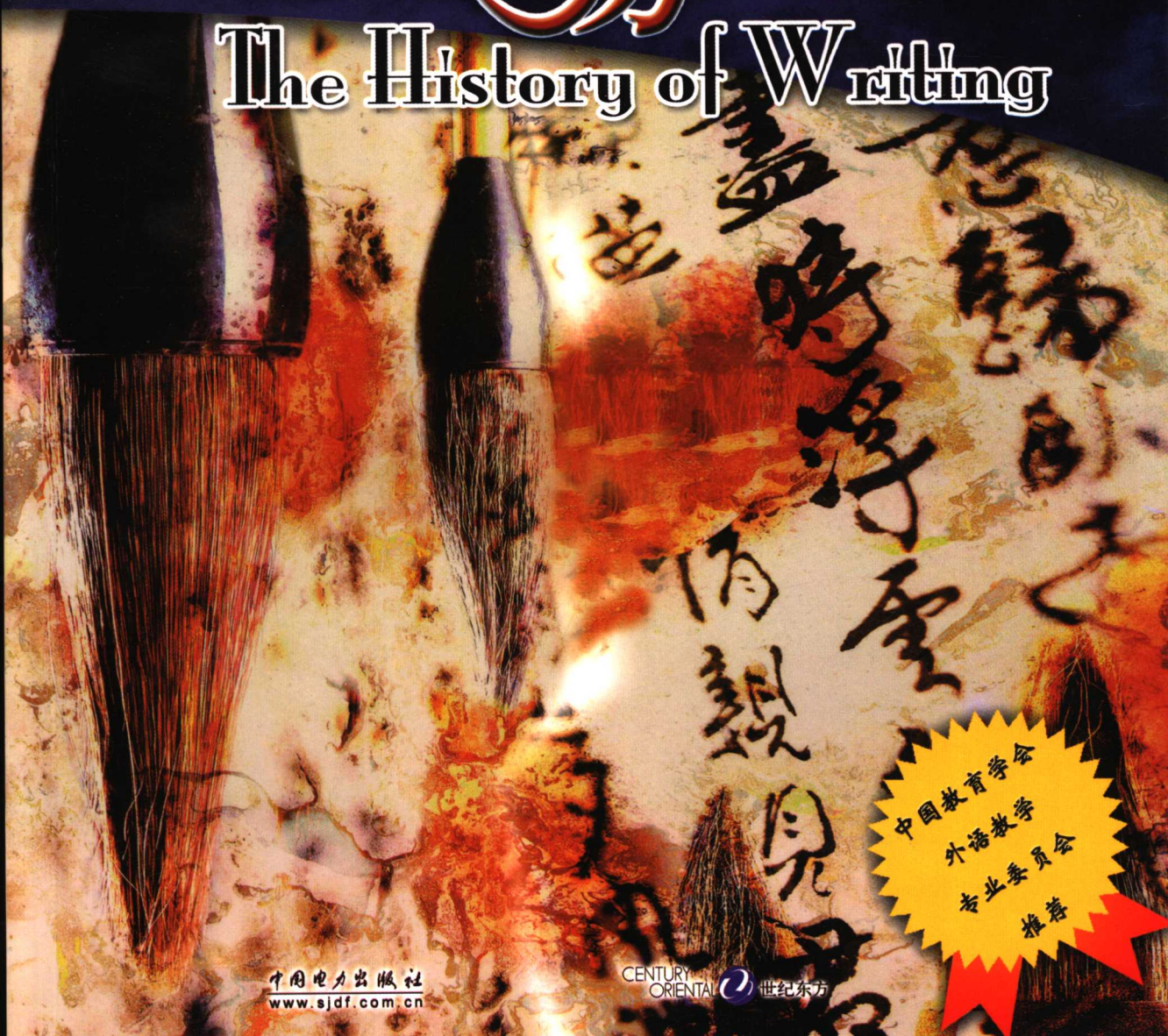
书写的历史

The History of Writing



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韩 杨 译

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书写的历史

原著：**Brenda S. Cox** 等

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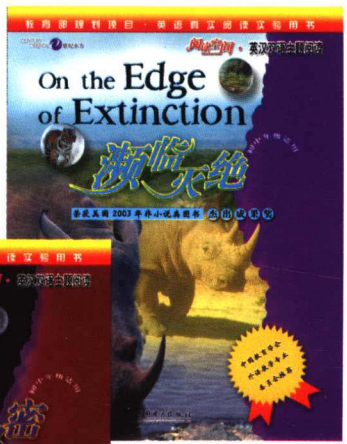

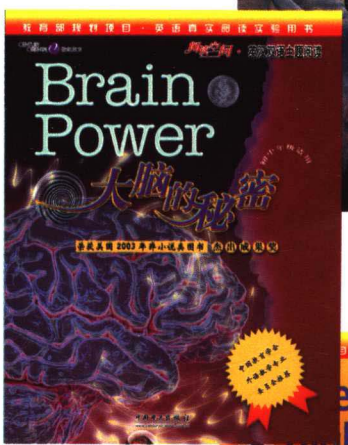

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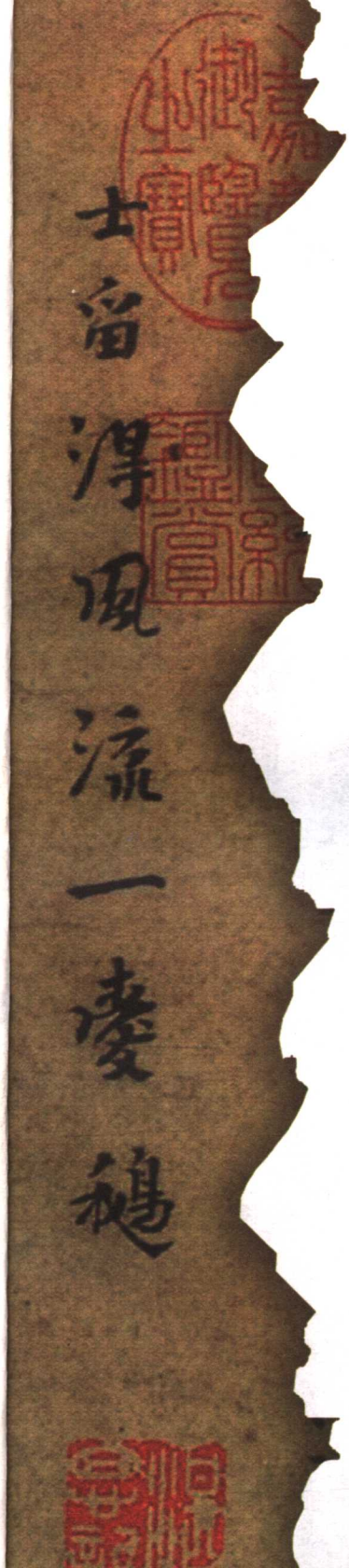

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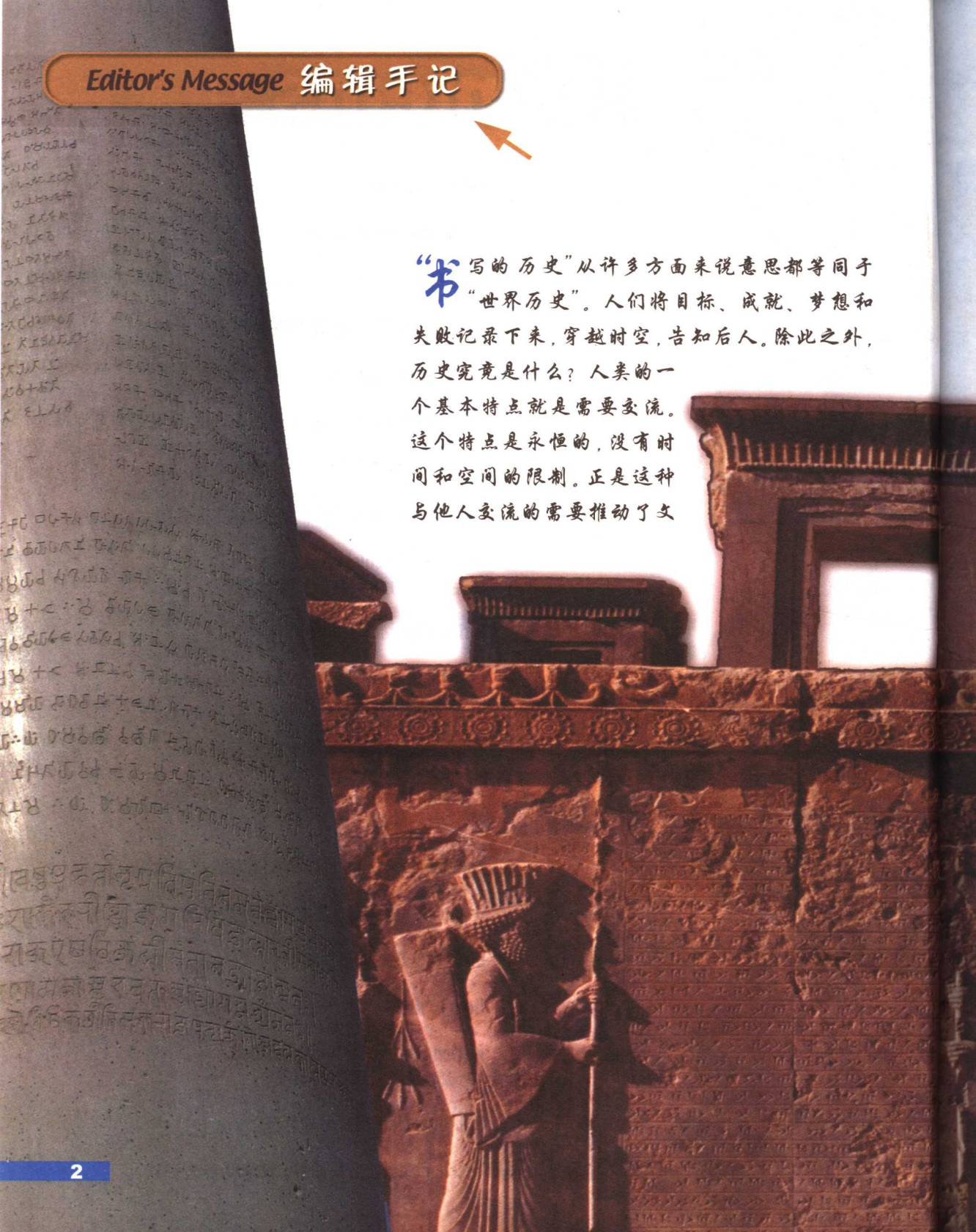
Editor's Message 编辑手记

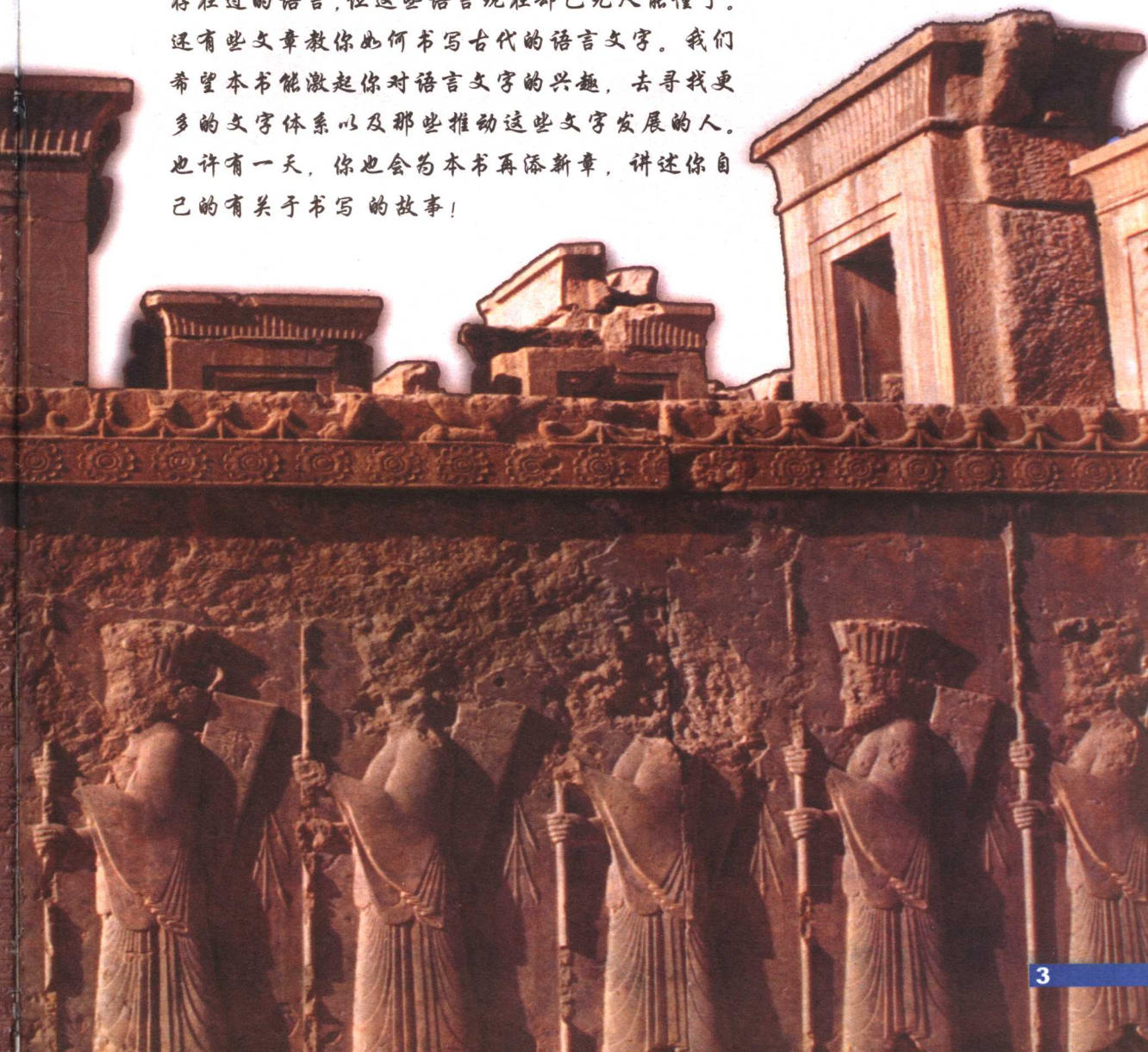
“书写的历史”从许多方面来说意思都等同于“世界历史”。人们将目标、成就、梦想和失败记录下来，穿越时空，告知后人。除此之外，历史究竟是什么？人类的一个基本特点就是需要交流。这个特点是永恒的，没有时间和空间的限制。正是这种与他人交流的需要推动了文



睿智地思考是写出美丽的文字之灵感来源

——古罗马作家 贺瑞斯 （公元前65—8年）

字的发展，也增加了人们对寻找新的、更好的交流方式的渴望。在本书中，你一定会看到从未见过甚至也不曾知其存在的语言。你也会看到一些曾经存在过的语言，但这些语言现在却已无人能懂了。还有些文章教你如何书写古代的语言文字。我们希望本书能激起你对语言文字的兴趣，去寻找更多的文字体系以及那些推动这些文字发展的人。也许有一天，你也会为本书再添新章，讲述你自己的有关于书写的故事！



从图形到字母

by Brenda S. Cox

You have an idea. How can you share it with your friends? You tell them, using whatever language you speak. But what if your friends are far away? Or perhaps you want to remember your idea later. Then, you write it down!

Thousands of years ago, people like you wanted to send messages and record information. First, they drew simple pictures called pictograms. A scribe might draw three cows to show how much tax a man paid. But if he wanted to show that the man still owed more, he had to create a symbol meaning "owe." So pictograms developed into logograms, symbols that each represented a word. These symbols were then simplified to be written more quickly and easily. To simplify the process further, people had another idea. They took a symbol or small picture and used it to stand for its beginning sound. Thus, a simplified symbol for lion might represent the sound of "L."

Using this manner of thinking, the Semitic people of the eastern Mediterranean invented a writing system in which each symbol stood for the sound of a consonant. Phoenician traders carried this early alphabet of consonants with them around the Mediterranean Sea. As a result, other peoples began adapting it to their own languages.

如果你想出了一个主意，怎么样才能让朋友们知道并且与你一同分享呢？你会用语言讲出来，告诉他们。可是，如果你的朋友不在身边，那该怎么办呢？或者如果你想要以后能够记住这个主意，那又该怎么办呢？在这种情况下，你可以把它写下来！

几千年前，人们也跟你一样，需要传送信息、记录消息。最开始，人们画一些简单的图形。这些图形叫做象形文字。画图的人可能会画下三头奶牛来表示某个人该交多少税。但是，如果他想表示这个人还欠更多的税，那么他就要发明一种新的记号来表示“欠债”。因此，象形文字后来就发展成了语标符号和一些记号。每个符号代表一个字。这些符号渐渐地简化，写起来更快更容易。为了进一步简化书写，人们又发明了新方法。他们用一个符号或者小图形代表这个符号或图形的开始的发音。比如，“狮子”这个词的简化符号可能会代表着“L”的发音。

居住在东方的地中海一带的闪族人就是用这种方式发明了一种文字体系。这种文字体系规定：一个符号代表一个辅音。腓尼基(地中海东岸古国)商人把这些早期的辅音字母传播到了地中海各地。结果，其他地区的居民把这些字母发展成了自己的语言。

From Pictures to

Below are examples of languages that do not use the Roman alphabet. The phrases are the equivalent of "How are you?" in each language.

下面列举了一些不使用罗马字母的语言。列举的几种语言文字都是"你好"的意思。

Logographic Script 语标符号	
Chinese 汉语	你好
Logographic/Syllabic Combination 语标符号或音节组合	
Japanese 日语	お元気ですか
Syllabic Scripts 音节符号	
Cherokee 彻罗基语（彻罗基族为北美易洛魁人的一支）	ᏙᎯᏧ
Amharic (Ethiopia) 阿姆哈拉语（埃塞俄比亚语）	እንዳምን ነህ
Alphabetic, written left to right 字母文字：由左至右书写	
Greek 希腊语	Τι κανετε
Russian 俄语	Как вы поживает
Korean 朝鲜语	안녕하세요
Burmese 缅甸语	နေ ကောင်း လား
Hindi (India) 印地语（印度）	आप कैसे हैं
Alphabetic, written right to left 字母文字：由右至左书写	
Urdu (Pakistan) 乌尔都语（巴基斯坦）	آپ کا کیا مال ہے
Arabic 阿拉伯语	كيف حالك
Farsi (Iran, Afghanistan) 波斯语（伊朗、阿富汗）	حال شما چطور است
Hebrew 希伯来语	מָה שְׁלוֹמֵךְ

Letters

Other scripts include vowel sounds. In Cherokee and Japanese, syllables almost always consist of one consonant and one vowel. These languages use syllabic scripts, in which each symbol represents a syllable such as "ba" or "bi," for example.

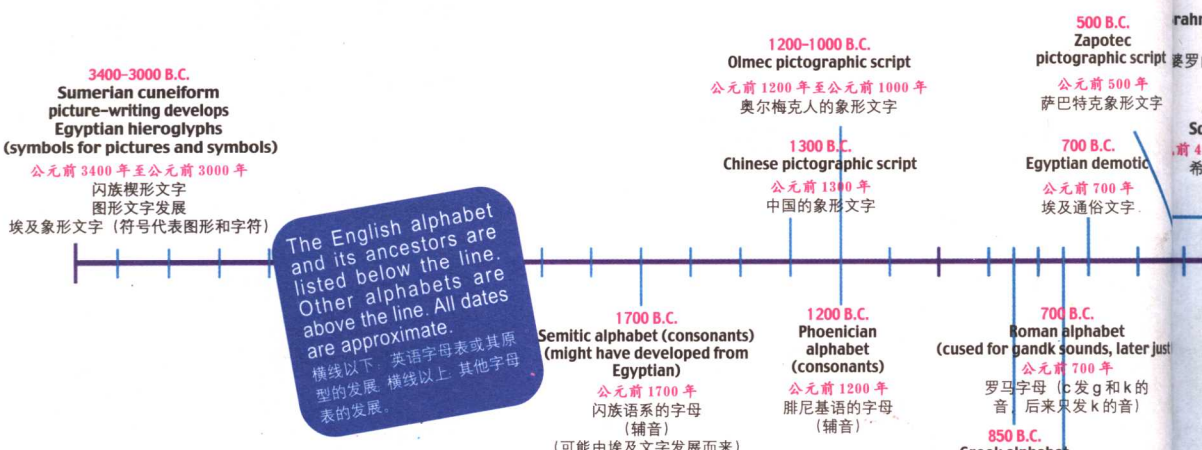
Languages can also be written in different directions. Some early Greek writing was in boustrophedon, which translates literally as "ox-plowing." Using this style, people wrote from left to right on the first line, right to left on the second line, left to right on the third, and so on. Hence, the name was appropriate as this back-and-forth pattern resembled the manner in which an ox travels when plowing a field. Some languages—modern Greek and English, for example—are written from left to right; others, such as Arabic, go from right to left.

Trade, military conquest, and religious and cultural influences all helped spread writing systems. Vietnam, Korea, and Japan adopted the writing system of China, which, through the ages, has been culturally and militarily the most powerful nation in east Asia. As the religion of Islam spread, it carried the Arabic alphabet and many Arabic words throughout the Middle East and North

其他语言文字中还包括元音。彻罗基语和日语中音节几乎都是由一个辅音和一个元音组成。这些语言都是音节文字，每个符号代表一个音节，比如说"ba"和"bi"。

语言文字还可以从各个方向书写。一些早期的希腊文字可以"boustrophedon"这种方式书写，这个词的字面意思为"老牛耕地"也就是右行左行交互写法。人们用这种方法书写时，第一行从左向右写；第二行由右至左写；第三行又从左至右写，这样以此类推。这种书写方法与老牛耕地的方式一样，来来回回，因此而得名。有些语言，比如说现代希腊语和英语，是由左至右书写；还有些语言，比如说阿拉伯语，是由右至左书写的。

贸易往来、军事侵略、宗教文化影响都有助于文字体系的传播。越南、朝鲜和日本都采用了中国的文字体系。因为中国一直以来都是东亚文化和军事上最具影响力的大国。随着伊斯兰教的传



Time Line 大事年表

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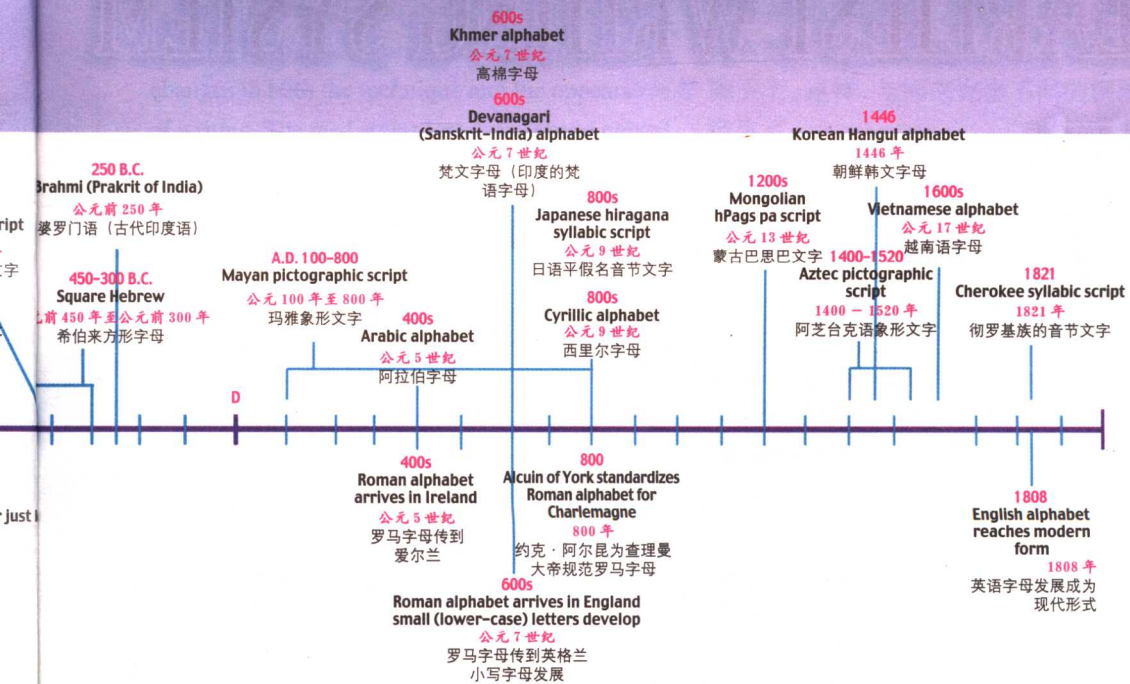
Africa. The Cyrillic alphabet traveled first with Eastern Orthodox Christianity and then with the political influence of the Soviet Union. Christian missionaries also carried the Roman alphabet to

Today, a wide variety of writing systems are used, ranging from the Chinese logographic system with a symbol for each word, to the

在墨西哥的圣安德列斯岛(San Andres)上居住的奥尔梅克人(居住在墨西哥东南部的有高度文化的古印第安人)遗址中，考古学家发现了一枚大约公元前650年的陶制印章。印章有拳头大小，上印有细小图案。印章着上墨，并在布料上滚动，这样便能制成带有花纹的衣服。一般在一些仪式上，首领要穿这种衣服。插图是这个印章上的象形图案的展开图。其中一个图形的意思是"三个Ajaw"。三个Ajaw"是中美洲日历（一年为260天）中的一个日子的名称。

播，阿拉伯字母和一些阿拉伯词汇传遍了整个中东地区和北非。西里尔字母首先随着东正教得以传播，后来苏联的政治影响也促进了它的传播。基督教传教士也把罗马字母带到了世界各地，一些传教士还帮助没有文字的偏远的种族部落以罗马字母为基础，发展具有本族语言特点的文字。

现在，世界上的语言体系各种各样。其中包括汉语的语标体系，一个符号代表一个字；阿



Amharic syllabic system with a symbol for each syllable, to alphabets such as ours with a symbol for each sound. Only a few alphabets—Spanish and Finnish, for example—come close to being "perfect" alphabets, with exactly one symbol for each sound. English is far from perfect. For example, "sh" is a combination of two symbols representing one sound, and "o" is one symbol for several sounds, as in "one," "to," "ton," "tot," and "tone." However, each writing system enables speakers of a language to communicate their thoughts to people in another place or time.

姆哈拉语的音节体系，一个符号代表一个音节；还有像我们所使用的这种文字的字母体系，一个符号代表一个发音。只有少数的字母文字近似于“完美”文字。这些文字中一个符号只代表一个发音。西班牙语和芬兰语就是这种语言文字。英语并不完美。“sh”是两个符号的组合，却发成一个音；而“o”是一个符号，却有几个发音：在“one”，“to”，“ton”，“tone”中发音各不相同。即使这样，每种文字体系都能使讲这种语言的人与不同时代和不同地区的人交流思想。

THE EARLIEST WRITING SYSTEM

最早的文字体系

by Elizabeth E. Payne

Writing was invented in Uruk, a Sumerian city-state on the banks of the Euphrates River, around 3400 B.C., but this was not the first attempt to record information. Cylinder seals had long been used to identify officials who witnessed a transaction. Small tokens were used to count objects as they changed hands. No one knows specifically who invented writing, but the idea caught on very quickly.

文字起源于公元前3400年，幼发拉底河岸边有座闪族人的城邦 —— Uruk，那里的居民发明了文字。但他们发明文字最早的目的并不是为记录信息。官员们处理事务时，圆柱形图章是他们身份的证明。官员们交班时用些小标记来记录物体。具体是谁发明了文字，无人知晓。但这一记载事务的想法却很快流行开来。

The earliest writing in the area between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, often referred to as Mesopotamia (present-day Iraq and part of Iran), used some signs that were pictures and some that were abstract. These were drawn on clay tablets with a reed whose end had been carved to a fine point. Most of these early economic texts contained only a few signs and numbers. They were probably written in the Sumerian language.

When discussing Mesopotamia, a distinction must be made between its language and its script. Language refers to the vocabulary and grammar used to communicate ideas, while script is the collection of symbols used to represent a spoken language in written form. So, while script and language are often studied together, they are not the same. The script of Mesopotamia is called cuneiform; the languages were Sumerian and Akkadian.

On tablets that date to about 3100 B.C., scholars can begin to read words. In time, there were changes in both the technique and the appearance of writing. The reed stylus lost its point and gained

底格里斯河和幼发拉底河流域之间地区通常就是指美索不达米亚即现在的伊拉克和伊朗的部分地区。那里出现的最早的文字就是使用符号：一些是图画，还有些是抽象符号。这些符号是用芦苇的一端画在粘土板上的。这些早期的有关于经济的记录大部分都只是些符号和数字，这些符号和数字可能是闪族人的语言。

关于美索不达米亚，我们必须将其语言和文字区分开。语言是指一些用来交流思想的词汇和语法；而文字则是指所有符号的集合，是口语的文字形式。因此，一起研究语言与文字的时候，这两个概念并不相同。美索不达米亚的文字称为楔形文字；而那里的语言为闪族语和阿卡得语。

在公元前3100年的石板或土板上，学者们才开始能够读懂上面的文字。那时的文字，无论是书写技术还是书写形式都有所改变。原来的芦苇笔一端很尖。后来，芦苇笔的一端没有尖，而变成角了。那些文字符号也不再是画在陶土上了，而是把芦苇铁笔的一边压在陶土上。这样，与原来完全不同的楔形的文字产生了。

an angular tip. Signs were no longer drawn on clay, but were made by pressing the edge of the stylus into the clay. In this way, the distinctive wedge-shaped cuneiform signs were created.

The cuneiform script used in Mesopotamia contains almost 600 signs. These signs were used to represent both words and syllables and could be used to mark objects as belonging to a specific class.

This script has an extremely long history throughout which the principles of writing that were present since its invention remained constant. Well-established by the end of the fourth millennium B.C., it remained in use for more than 3,000 years. The last dated text is from A. D. 75, and some scholars believe that cuneiform sources were still read, although not produced, as late as the third century A.D. In addition to Sumerian and Akkadian, this writing was used for Elamite, Hittite, Hurrian, and Urartian.

美索不达米亚人使用的楔形文字共有约600个符号。这些符号既代表文字又代表音节，它们还有可能用来表示属于一个特殊阶层的物件。

这种文字有着相当长的历史，从出现的那天开始，其书写规则就在不断地发展。到公元前第四个千年末为止，这种文字已经发展成了最成熟的形式。至此，楔形文字已经使用了三千余年。至今发现的最后一篇用楔形文字记载的文章写于公元75年。一些学者认为：尽管楔形文字已经不再继续发展了，但还是有人阅读它。人们使用楔形文字一直到公元3世纪。除闪语和阿卡得语外，埃兰语、希泰语、胡利安语和乌拉提语也使用楔形文字。

Egyptian Hieroglyphs

埃及象形文字

by Emily Teeter

The ancient Egyptian language was written in a picture script, called hieroglyphs. It was in the form of objects—animals, plants, and household items—that the ancient Egyptians saw around them every day. Hieroglyphs were known as early as 3100 B.C., and the last inscription dates to A.D. 394. Soon after 394, the knowledge of how to read hieroglyphs was lost.

In the following centuries, people tried to decipher the script in order to understand more about ancient Egypt. Some of the earliest scholars tried to read the signs strictly according to the shape of the hieroglyph, while others believed that the signs were entirely symbolic. These early attempts failed because scholars did not understand that most of the signs were used for their phonetic (sound) values, not for what they represented. For example, the owl ( ) is simply the sign for the sound "m," and a foot and leg ( ) is "b." Words were written by combining the signs that represent the sounds that make up each word,

古埃及的语言是用图画来表示的，称为象形文字。这种文字是用各种物体的形象来表达，比如动物、植物，还有日常的生活用品，这些都是古埃及人生活中常见的。象形文字早在公元前3100年就出现了，一直发展使用到公元394年。公元394年之后不久，便没有人知道象形文字该如何辨识、解读了。

之后的几千年里，人们努力地译解这些象形文字，以便更多地了解古代埃及。最早的一些学者严格按照象形文字的形状来解读含义；而另外一些学者却相信这些符号完全具有象征意义。事实上，这些符号是根据语音（即读音）而设计并规定下来的，与其形状没有关系。由于早期的那些学者并不知道其中的奥秘，所以他们都没有能够破译这些符号的真正含义。举例如下："猫头鹰(owl)" 这个符号就是根据其读音"m"所设定的；"脚和腿" 的发音则是"b"，这个符号也是根据其发音而设定

象形文字可以从左至右书写，也可以从右至左书写，可以竖着写，也可以横着写。图形文字都朝向一行字的行首。右图中的符号表示的是泰蒂国王（大约公元前2400年）的名字和头衔。这些符号是从左至右横着书写的。

regardless of what the signs looked like. An example in English would be to combine , which we would pronounce "I saw," although the pictures have no relationship to the meaning of the words.

A major step in deciphering hieroglyphs was the discovery in 1799 of a slab of granite at Rosetta on the north coast of Egypt. The stone was covered with three types of writing. One was Greek, which could be translated. Above the Greek was demotic, another script that was used to write the ancient Egyptian language. Above the demotic were hieroglyphs. Scholars did not immediately start studying the hieroglyphs because they still thought that they were symbolic rather than a real phonetic language.

The key was the frequently repeated name of the king. Scholars identified the Greek royal name *Ptolemaios* in the demotic text. Then, in 1816, an Englishman named Thomas Young compared that name to a word written in hieroglyphs within an oval called a cartouche, which we now know surrounds royal names. He concluded that the name *Ptolemaios* as written in Greek (ΠΤΟΛΕΜΑΙΟΣ) was the same as the hieroglyphic writing . However, Young never progressed further in the decipherment. Although he correctly concluded that the royal name was written alphabetically, he assumed that the other hieroglyphs were symbolic.

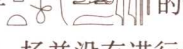
The man credited with the final decipherment is the French linguist Jean-François Champollion, who had access to additional bilingual inscriptions. Again working with names, he matched the signs in "Ptolemy" on the Rosetta Stone to the name that he found on another monument. He was able to read:

? + l + e + o + p + a + t/d + ? + a

He guessed correctly that the second name was Cleopatra. In 1822, he presented his thesis that hieroglyphs were a combination of phonetic signs and nonphonetic signs, and that the script was related to Coptic. Today, Egyptologists can read almost any hieroglyphic text. The only problem lies with words whose meaning is no more precise than, for example, "a variety of flower." There may be no specifics to identify

的。句子则是把代表每个单词的读音的符号组合起来，不管符号是什么样的，只要把它们并在一起，便成了表述某种意思的句子。用英语来举例说明：如果想表达 "I saw"（"我看见了"），则可以将 这两个符号连在一起，尽管这两个符号所代表的单词的含义没有任何联系。

1799年，人们在埃及北海岸的罗塞塔发现了一块花岗岩，上面刻有象形文字。这块石上的文字对于象形文字的解读研究起到了很大的促进作用。石面上有三种不同的文字。一种是希腊语，这种文字人们能够看懂；希腊语上面是一种通俗文字，用来书写古埃及语言。这种通俗文字上面是象形文字。发现了这块岩石后，学者们并没有立即开始研究这些象形文字，因为他们仍以为这些文字是些象形的符号，而不是代表语音的符号。

学者们在通俗希腊文字中发现了 "Ptolemaios"，并确定了这是希腊王室的名字。就是这个反复出现的国王的名字成为了解开象形文字的秘密的关键。1816年，一位名叫托马斯·杨的英国人把这个名字与象形文字中的一个符号作了比较，符号用一个椭圆形的边饰围着。现在我们都知道皇家的名字都围在这种椭圆形的边饰里。通过比较，他得出了这样的结论：希腊语的 "Ptolemaios" 写成（ΠΤΟΛΕΜΑΙΟΣ），这与象形文字  的含义是相同的。然而，杨并没有进行进一步的研究。他认为这个皇室的名字是字母文字，这一推断是正确的。尽管如此，他还是认为其他的符号都是象形的。

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