

THE IMPORTANCE OF INTER-CIVILIZATIONAL INFLUENCE IN THE FORMATION OF THE FIRST WRITING SYSTEMS

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Abstract:

One of the most significant developments in human history was the invention of writing. A key factor in the emergence of writing was the human capacity for conceptual thinking, as writing — that is, a system of signs — is directly linked to thought processes. Writing typically originates in a specific region and spreads to other regions through cultural contacts.

Keywords: Uruk, Ur, Girsu, Jemdet Nasr, Nippur, Purzish-Dagan, Fara, economic management, cultural, Sumerian cuneiform writings, pictographic system of ancient Turan.

Introduction

The creation of writing is one of the most important intellectual milestones in the social development of humanity. The emergence of writing not only expanded the ability to store and transmit information but also fundamentally transformed the economic, political, and administrative systems of society. The formation of early writing systems is not a random process; rather, it is a complex historical phenomenon connected to the economic, cultural, and ideological experiences of multiple interrelated civilizations. Scholars do not agree on the exact time or people who invented writing. However, over more than a century of archaeological research, it has been confirmed that ancient peoples in Mesopotamia, Egypt, China, India, Iran, and the Turan region used pictographic signs.

According to some scholars, the emergence of city-states, temples, and writing played a central role in the development of civilization. Another group of scholars emphasizes that writing itself was the key factor in the formation of civilization. Yet another perspective suggests that social stratification in certain communities, the development of crafts, and the existence of cities, temples, and writing systems collectively constitute the main indicators of civilization. Socio-economic factors played an important role in the emergence of class relations.

According to T. Sh. Shirinov, “In communities that strictly followed customs, where oral creativity was developed but state administration was underdeveloped, the presence of writing is considered a secondary feature of the first cities.” Sh. B. Shaydullayev argues that the earliest cities and the first states, which arose simultaneously with urban development, could not exist without an initial writing system — that is, a means for humans to express their

thoughts. The accumulation of wealth required record-keeping, while the increasing complexity of economic management created the need for such systems.

According to I. J. Gelb, writing systems emerge only in the context of civilizations, and civilizations cannot exist without writing. The scholar continues by arguing that the comprehensive development of irrigation systems led to the advancement of agriculture, the accumulation of surplus production and wealth in the state treasury, which in turn created the need to account for collected property and systematize the calculation of goods delivered to cities and villages.

Firstly, regarding the nature and functions of writing:

A writing system develops within the framework of a specific language. There is a strong and reciprocal relationship between language and a particular writing system. Language is considered one of the primary factors that shape human cognitive ability. The essential connection between writing and thought can be expressed as: "thought → language → writing."

A writing system can only develop within the context of a particular language, as its symbols are used to express abstract and general concepts. Writing serves as a means of communication alongside speech. While speech enables interpersonal communication over short distances, writing allows communication across long distances and preserves information about specific events for posterity, which can be observed as humanity progresses.

A primary distinction between writing and speech sounds is that writing uses symbols represented through specific visual forms. This characteristic gives writing some resemblance to visual art. However, it is not accurate to claim that writing is directly analogous to visual art. The main function of writing is to facilitate communication over distances using symbols, while visual art primarily aims to convey specific artistic representations. Therefore, it is important to note the strong connection between writing symbols and language.

Through writing, humanity can preserve knowledge from the past, enabling future generations to study historical information, draw correct conclusions, and apply those insights to contemporary development.

The main functions of the earliest writing systems: The primary function was administrative and economic. Among nearly all ancient civilizations with writing, writing systems initially addressed the practical needs of administration and economic management.

For example, ancient Sumerian clay tablets primarily contain administrative and economic records. These include records from the ruins of Uruk, Ur, Girsu, Jemdet Nasr, Nippur, Purzish-Dagan, and Fara. Similarly, ancient Egyptian hieroglyphs on papyrus often document administrative and economic activities during various dynastic periods, including findings from El-Lahun, Deir el-Medina, Tell el-Amarna, and other sites, which also include information related to the activities of religious priests.

In the ruins of the ancient Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro civilizations, pictographic symbols depict humans, warriors with bows, priests, plants, and animals, indicating the connection between these symbols and the administrative and economic activities of these urban centers.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The formation of early writing systems was a complex process closely linked to social, cultural, and economic development. Various civilizations — Sumer, Egypt, Indus, Elam, and Bronze Age Central Asian cultures — developed distinct forms of writing according to their economic needs, religious beliefs, and governance systems. Trade, migration, ideological influences, and the exchange of technological experience between these civilizations significantly contributed to the development of writing.

Based on this conclusion, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. Expand comparative interregional studies.
2. Digitize archaeological findings and create open-access databases.
3. Conduct deeper research on the social functions of writing.

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