

Timeline of Writing Systems' Graphical Evolution

Modern Era (timescale change)

East Asia

Legend

Hellenic: Scripts derived from Greek

Chinese: Scripts derived from Oracle Bone

Northern Brahmi: Scripts derived from Brahmi in North India

Southern Brahmi: Scripts derived from Brahmi in South India

Semitic: Scripts derived from Proto-Sinaitic

Other: Independently derived scripts (graphically)

Over 10 million users

Over 100 million users

Not in Unicode

Script extinction then revival:

Writing direction

Logograph: Words are distinct characters

Syllabary: Syllables are distinct characters

Alphabets: Consonants are distinct characters

True alphabet: Vowels are on par with consonants

Abugida: Vowels are secondary, usually diacritics

Abjad: Vowels are optional or non-existent

Southeast Asia

South Asia

Central & West Asia

Africa

Europe, Anatolia, & Caucasus

Americas

The diagram illustrates the graphical evolution of writing systems across five major regions: East Asia, Southeast Asia, South Asia, Central & West Asia, and the Americas. The timeline spans from 2000 BC to 2000 AD, with a significant timescale change in the Modern Era (1800 AD onwards).

East Asia: Shows the evolution of Chinese scripts from Oracle Bone to Modern Chinese (Simplified and Traditional). It also includes the development of Japanese (Katakana, Hiragana) and Korean (Hangul) scripts.

Southeast Asia: Displays the development of scripts like Khmer, Thai, and various indigenous languages such as Tagbanwa, Hanunó'o, Baybayin, Batak, Lontara, Makasar, Javanese, Old Sundanese, Ulu, Balinese, and Rejang.

South Asia: Traces the lineage from Brahmi through Grantha, Tamil, and various regional scripts like Pali, Sinhala, and others, leading to modern scripts like Devanagari and others.

Central & West Asia: Shows the Semitic script family, including Phoenician, Hebrew, Arabic, and others, along with other regional scripts like Sogdian, Kharosthi, and others.

Americas: Illustrates the development of indigenous writing systems like Mayan, Aztec, and others, as well as the influence of European scripts like Spanish and others.

Legend: Provides a key for the color-coded script families and symbols used throughout the timeline. It includes information on user base, Unicode status, and script characteristics.