

## Chinese writing



A story is told how, once upon a time, in ancient China, a very wise man was strolling through the forest one day. He observed the footprints of many birds and animals. He was inspired to draw pictures to represent the animals.

4000 years ago ...

... Today

马



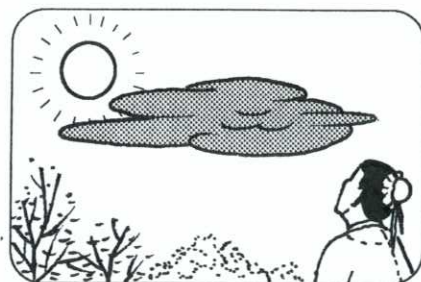
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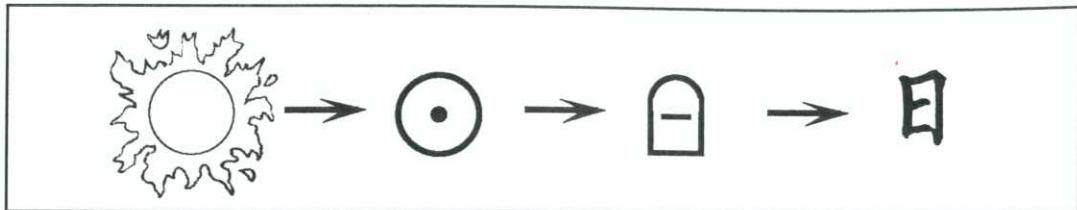


The wise man is then said to have developed more symbols to represent other objects and ideas.

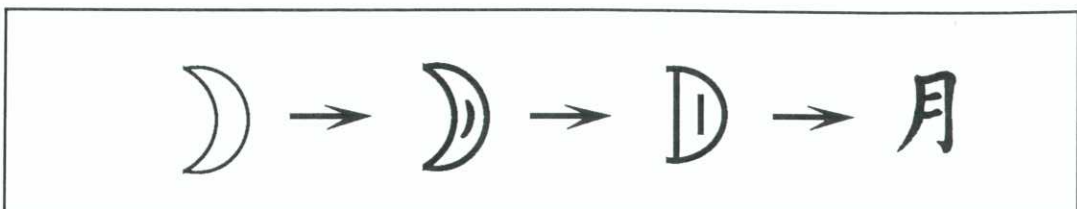
4000 years ago ...

... Today

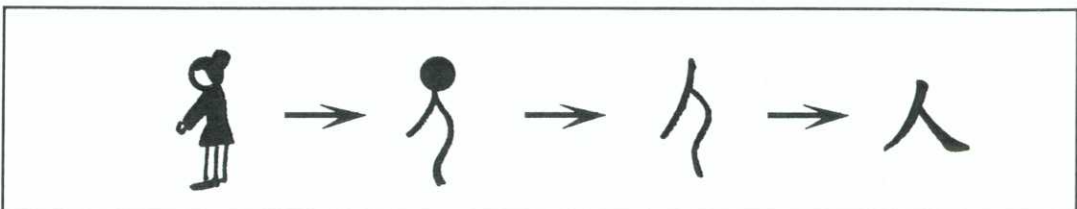
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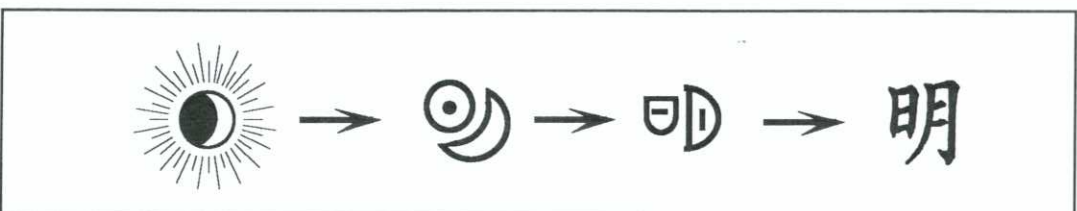
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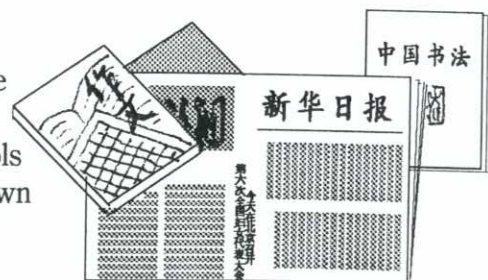


The earliest Chinese symbols we know about were engraved on bones and tortoise shells about four thousand years ago. The messages they contained were like prayers to gods and the dead from the leaders of the people.



Over the thousands of years since then, these simple pictures have changed, and many more symbols have been added. About two thousand years ago, the Chinese began writing with brushes on paper and silk. The style became softer and more curved. The leaders were not the only ones who could write; all the scholars could, too — and not just to dead people and gods, but to all living people who could read.

Nowadays, there are thousands of symbols representing all the objects, ideas and abstract words people need in order to communicate with each other in writing. Because these symbols began as pictures and later became writing, they are now known as *pictographs*.



**Acknowledgement**

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