

## THE EVOLUTION OF SYMBOLS IN EARLY CULTURES

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**Annotation:** *This article is devoted to the rise of early communicative symbols in ancient civilizations. Also, the use of colors, shapes and symbols for human self-realization and information exchange in early societies is described and analyzed in this article. It is argued that symbols played an important role in shaping the basic concepts of humanity, such as language, culture, religion, personality and memory. This study outlines the importance of early symbols in the progress of human civilization.*

**Key words:** *symbols, writing system, communication, ancient civilizations, communicative symbols.*

### **Introduction:**

From pigments to printing presses, symbols changed humans' lives and provided new ways to communicate with constantly changing world.

Ancient people used color, words, signs and sound to produce the artifacts you see now. Humans could plan, record information, and communicate to each other which helped them to survive as climates fluctuated strongly and this could become life-threatening.

Using colors was the necessity of communication in ancient civilizations. By 350 000 years ago, our ancestors marked objects and probably their skin with bright pigments. Colors were used as symbols by which people identified themselves and their group. Humans may have first used ocher either as an adhesive or a pigment, and later to make artistic drawings and different paintings. Flattened areas on these pieces of pigment are signs of grinding or rubbing, telling us that they were held and

used roughly like chunky crayons. This suggests that how it was well thought out.

A civilization is a complex society that creates agricultural surpluses, allowing for specialized labor, social hierarchy, and the establishment of cities. Developments such as writing, complex religious systems, and centralized political power have been suggested as identifying markers of civilization, as well. When we see these changes occur, we should stop and ask, "Did humans institute these practices because they were beneficial, or were they forced on them?" Historians debate this question, trying to determine whether civilization was a bottom-up or top-down development. Most likely, it was a bit of both.

**Main part:**

In the Neolithic and Bronze Age British Isles, rock art was produced across various parts of the islands. Petroglyphic in nature, the majority of such carvings are abstract in design, usually cup and ring marks, although examples of spirals or figurative depictions of weaponry are also known. Only one form of rock art in Europe, this late prehistoric tradition had connections with others along Atlantic Europe, particularly in Galicia.



1. Typical cup and ring marks at Weetwood Moor, in the English county of Northumberland.



2. A replica of an unusual cup-and-ring-marked stone from Dalgarven, North Ayrshire, Scotland.

The study of rock art in the British Isles was largely initiated by amateur researchers rather than academics or other archaeologists.

Surviving examples of rock art in the British Isles are believed to represent only a small sample of that which had been produced in the Neolithic and Bronze Ages. Many examples of petroglyphs would have eroded, thereby being lost to contemporary scholarship.[1] In other samples, images might have been painted onto rock, or marked onto less permanent surfaces, such as wood, livestock or the human body, thereby also failing to survive into the present.

Sumer (/lsu:mar/) is the earliest known civilization, located in the historical region of southern Mesopotamia (now south-central Iraq), emerging during the Chalcolithic and early Bronze Ages between the sixth and fifth millennium BC. Like nearby Elam, it is one of the cradles of civilization, along with Egypt, the Indus Valley, the Erligang culture of the Yellow River valley, Caral-Supe, and Mesoamerica. Living along the valleys of the Tigris and

Euphrates Rivers, Sumerian farmers grew an abundance of grain and other crops, a surplus that enabled them to form urban settlements. The world's earliest known texts come from the Sumerian cities of Uruk and Jemdet Nasr, and date to

between c. 3350 - c. 2500 BC, following a period of proto-writing c. 4000 - c. 2500 BC.

The word symbol comes from the late Middle French masculine noun symbol, which appeared around 1380 in a theological sense signifying a formula used in the Roman Catholic Church as a sort of synonym for 'the credo'; by extension, in the early Renaissance it came to mean 'a maxim' or 'the external sign of a sacrament'; these meanings were lost in social contexts. It was during the Renaissance in the mid-16th century that the word took on the meaning that is dominant today, that of a natural fact or object evoking by its form or its nature an association of ideas with something abstract or absent'; this appears, for example, in François Rabelais, *Le Quart Livre*, in 1552.[1] This French word derives from Latin, where both the masculine noun symbolus and the neuter noun symbolum refer to "a mark or sign as a means of recognition." [2] The Latin word derives from Ancient Greek: οὐβόαov, from a verb meaning 'put together', 'compare', alluding to the Classical practice of breaking a piece of ceramic in two and giving one half to the person who would receive a future message, and one half to the person who would send it: when the two fit perfectly together, the receiver could be sure that the messenger bearing it did indeed also carry a genuine message from the intended person.[3] A literary or artistic symbol as an "outward sign" of something else is a metaphorical extension of this notion of a message from a sender to a recipient. In English, the meaning "something which stands for something else" was first recorded in 1590, in Edmund Spenser's *Faerie Queene*.

Ancient Egyptian hieroglyphs were the formal writing system used in Ancient Egypt for writing the Egyptian language[1][2]. Hieroglyphs combine ideographic, logographic, syllabic and alphabetic elements, with more than 1,000 distinct characters.[3][4]. The later hieratic and demotic Egyptian scripts were derived from hieroglyphic writing, as was the Proto-Sinaitic script that later evolved into the Phoenician alphabet. [5] Egyptian hieroglyphs are the ultimate descent of the Phoenician alphabet, the first widely adopted phonetic writing system. Moreover, owing in large part to the Greek and Aramaic scripts that descended from



Phoenician, the majority of the worlds living writing systems are descendants of Egyptian hieroglyphs—most prominently the Latin and Cyrillic scripts through Greek, and the Arabic and Brahmic scripts through Aramaic.

The Indus script, also known as the Harappan script and the Indus Valley script, is a collection of symbols produced by the Indus Valley Civilisation. Most inscriptions containing these symbols are extremely short, making it difficult to judge whether or not they constituted a writing system used to record a Harappan language, any of which are yet to be identified.[3] Despite many attempts,[4] the "script" has not yet been deciphered. There is no known bilingual inscription to help decipher the script,[5] which shows no significant changes over time. However, some of the syntax (if that is what it may be termed) varies depending on location.

Yin and yang (English: /jrn/, /jaen/), also yinyang or yin-yang, is a concept that originated in Chinese philosophy, describing an opposite but interconnected, self-perpetuating cycle. Yin and yang can be thought of as complementary and at the same time opposing forces that interact to form a dynamic system in which the whole is greater than the assembled parts and the parts are important for the cohesion of the whole.

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**Conclusion:**

Ultimately symbols have always played a key role in humans' world understanding and communication. Beginning with prehistoric pigments and ending with complex writing. Moreover, symbols gave shape to humans' thoughts and beliefs.

Even before written language humans used colors to mark objects and themselves for signaling identity. It's also used to know shifting climates and environments.

Symbols not only helped ancient people survive and thrive but also laid the foundation for language, culture, religion, identity, and memory, shaping the course of human civilization.

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