



# Written Language:

## Storing knowledge

### Ancient scripts

#### Dongba script

Dongba is a system based on small pictures that represent words or ideas. These are called pictograms. It is over a thousand years old and was developed by the Naxi people living near Tibet. It is the only pictogram-based writing still used today and runs from left to right as with modern English.

The Naxi call their script *sen jiuli sen* which means 'seeing wood, draw wood'. So the symbols look like the thing they are describing.



Person



Cup



Hair comb



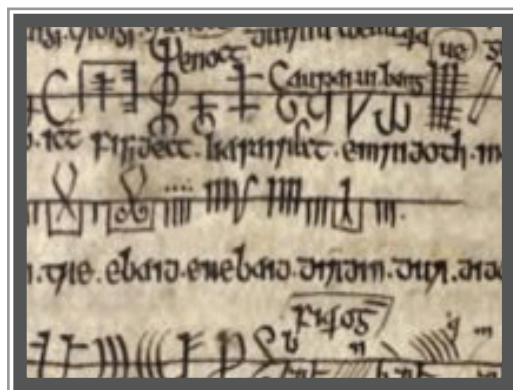
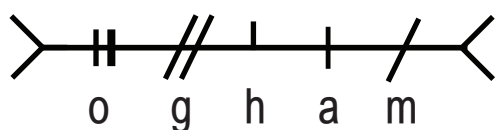
House



#### Ogham script

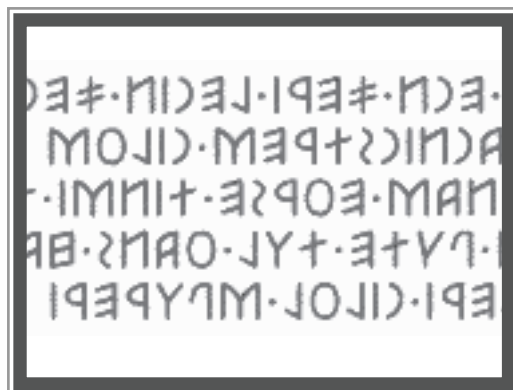
The Ogham alphabet comes from Ireland and was common from 400 to 700 AD.

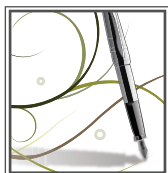
It has 25 letters. The letters are linked by a single horizontal line and run from left to right. The beginnings and ends of sentences are shown by special marks.



#### Ancient Etruscan

The Etruscans lived in an area just north of Rome. The earliest Etruscan script comes from over 2,500 years ago. The letters run from right to left - opposite to modern English script. Etruscan script is not used today but many samples can be seen on ancient vases, statues, gravestones and jewellery.





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#### Mandarin

Mandarin is the most common language in the world spoken today by 1,330 million Chinese. Mandarin is written using characters. These started rather like Dongba script many years ago but have changed over the years. The connection between the shape of the character and the thing it stands for is now almost lost. A Chinese person will know about 20,000 different characters.

They can be written vertically downwards or left to right - the writer can choose which looks more beautiful!

语拼音方案是什么时候产生的?  
关文字改革史的著作在讲到第-  
外地沿袭着这样的说法:1605年  
切的,存在着很多含混不清的地  
方案的历史渊源,所以它在文改  
有必要把它弄得更加清楚。笔者  
的研究者和写作者参考。

天空 sky

医院 hospital

喝酒 drink



- 1 Give two reasons why a way to write things down is so important.
- 2 a Sort these scripts into a timeline. Start with the oldest and end with the youngest.

Dongba, Etruscan, Mandarin, Ogham.

- b Which of the four scripts run right to left?
- c Which script can run vertically?
- d Which way does modern English writing run?
- 3 a Suggest one advantage of a pictogram system for writing.
- b Suggest one advantage of a letter-based system for writing.
- 4 What do each of the following characters mean?

𠂇 喝酒 𠂇 #



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### Decoding a Dongba script

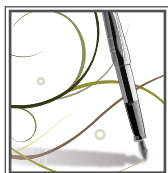
- 1 The following shows a message in Dongba script. Use the Dongba dictionary to decode it. Try to tell the story of the message, don't just write down an exact translation of the symbols.



- 2 Dongba script has under 2,000 traditional pictograms. Design a pictogram for five modern items that you think the script needs - perhaps a computer, an iPod or a mobile phone.

### Dongba dictionary





# Written Language:

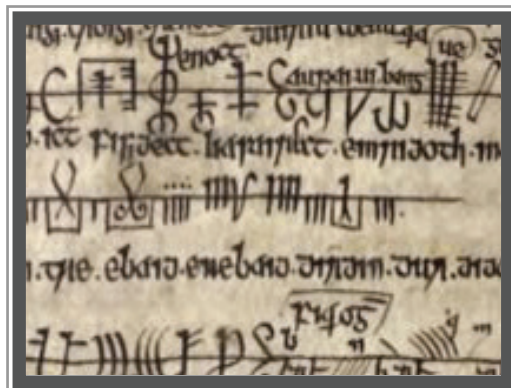
## Storing knowledge

### Decoding Ogham script

- 1 The following shows a message in Ogham script. Use the Ogham dictionary to decode it. Ogham does not have symbols for every letter in the English alphabet so you will have to use clues in the message to make guesses.



- 2 Ogham does not have symbols for j, k, v, x or y. Design a symbol for each of these letters. Try to make the style match the rest of the script.



### Ogham dictionary

|    |    |     |      |       |   |                                                              |       |                                                          |       |
|----|----|-----|------|-------|---|--------------------------------------------------------------|-------|----------------------------------------------------------|-------|
| T  | Π  | ΠΠ  | ΠΠΠ  | ΠΠΠΠ  | ┐ | ┐┐                                                           | ┐┐┐   | ┐┐┐┐                                                     | ┐┐┐┐┐ |
| b  | l  | f   | s    | n     | h | d                                                            | t     | c                                                        | q     |
| /  | // | /// | //// | ///// | + | ++                                                           | +++   | ++++                                                     | +++++ |
| m  | g  | ng  | z    | r     | a | o                                                            | u     | e                                                        | i     |
| *  | ◇  | └   | ⌘    | ▬     | = | ┐                                                            | —     | ┐                                                        |       |
| ea | oi | ui  | ia   | ae    | p | 'feather'<br>used at the<br>beginning<br>of each<br>sentence | space | 'reverse feather'<br>used at the end<br>of each sentence |       |