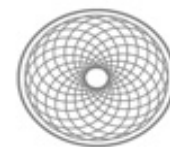


Anthropology of Islam



Nas E. Boutammina

The Kaabaeen

Prototype of writing systems



To Mostafa Chakroun fraternally....

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Introduction

Writing is the graphical representation of language. Using arbitrary visual symbols arranged into a system, writing is a communication process par excellence. From the beginning, man has adopted a comprehensive writing system that allowed him to unequivocally express all the concepts and notions that language could convey.

Concurring with access to knowledge, and according to its degree of certainty, clarity and distinction, writing offers the possibility of surpassing the limits and bounds of perception.

Writing is the representation of language and thought through graphic symbols. Writing is the means to laying down words, laws, testimonies, events and actions.

Signifying a material or spiritual reality using graphic structures appeals to a function of language that requires sufficient motor and cognitive development, attainable only through the process of teaching and learning [role of the instructor].

Not unlike Pre-historians and Anthropologists who maintain that humans evolved over millions of years from a simian ancestor, linguists, semanticists and paleographers attribute the invention of cuneiform writing to the Sumerians of Mesopotamia, and the design of the alphabet to Aramaeans, implying that writing mutates according to changes in the brain function of Homo sapiens. Is such statement not counterintuitive?

Have writing systems not been imparted to humans by the divine? Could this interjection suffer any ambiguity? The teaching of a language results in writing, and the transcribing of that language into graphical signs is made inside that same passed-down idiom.

The organization of the first human administration sparked the need for trained scribes who transmitted along with the written word education and culture to future generations.

The first archaeological and anthropological alphabet that has developed is established and well known. The language it conveys seems at first glance to be fixed in a highly developed form, with precise morphosyntactic constructions and a surprisingly rich vocabulary. It is certainly the culmination of a long history.

This primal alphabet gave rise to four main branches, which, incidentally, are all right-to-left scripts. When communities appropriate an alphabet to write a hitherto unwritten language, they inevitably transform it to adapt to their phonetic system. Pictograms seem to be the writing system adopted by many a human grouping.

All semiotic and scriptural systems [European, Mediterranean, Asian, etc.] display such a systematic correspondence that may only be imputable to a common origin. In other words, all languages and all writings seem to derive from a universal idiom, with variations that are undoubtedly the result of distinct geographical and historical developments. This universal idiom seems to have been spoken over a circumscribed area of land in the distant past of humanity.

Contemporary linguistic, semantic and paleographic classifications are subjective in nature, are they not? Are they not rooted in a mindset and a conception of a bygone era? Should they not be reviewed in the light of other sources of intellection, given that the thematic under study here appears over prehistoric and proto-historic times that are barely interpretable, if at all?

Is it not time to resort to a different version of the genesis of writing systems with innovative ideas?

I - The Kaabaeen

A - Migration of man and of writing

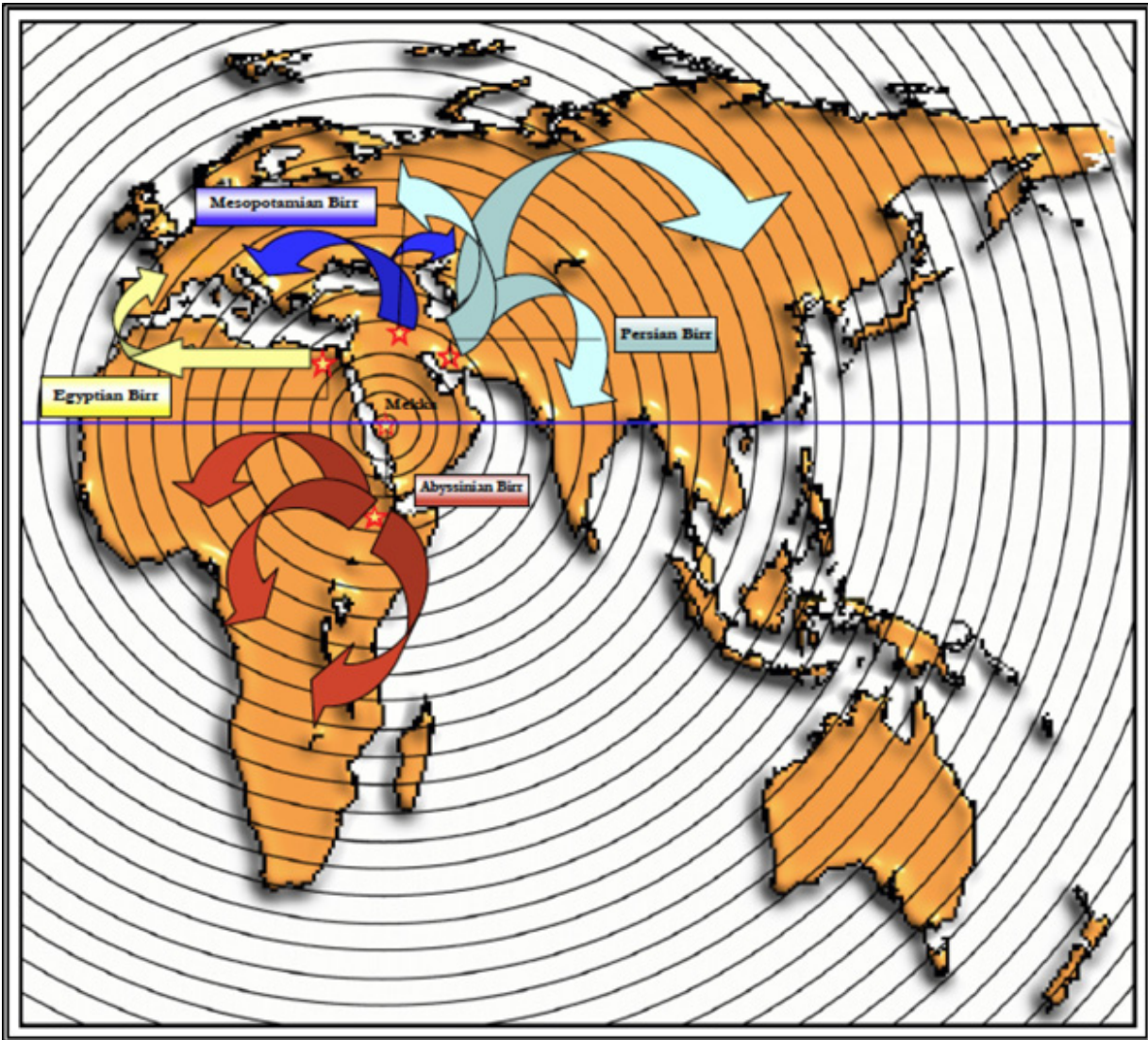
The movement of human populations and groupings for any host of reasons is naturally and intrinsically linked to the movement of language and writing. The latter is by definition the graphical representation of language.

Writing is a method of communication through a set of arbitrary visual symbols that make up a system. The writing of the first man was crafted from complete systems that allowed an unambiguous formulation of any expressible concept.

Kaabaeen graphemes evolved during transmission to descendants, meaning to succeeding alphabets; their sound value changed significantly, either during the creation of these alphabets, or because of changes in the pronunciation of languages. It is evolutionary linguistic specificities. The migration of human as well as its corollaries, i.e. language and writing, from its original epicenter is never a chance event¹.

Therefore, script, which is the focus of this study, despite the historical sequence of events related to its migration, undergoes very few alterations as to the quantity and overall content of its alphabetic system. With the exception of a few subtractions, additions or morphological changes of graphic symptoms, all the letters constituting the original alphabet remain quite similar.

GENERAL GRAPHIC - THE SPREAD OF MAN ON EARTH FROM ITS ORIGINAL CENTER IN WAVE MOTION²



Unlike languages, which undergo continuous unabated transformation throughout time, the gradual transition from one state to another of writing takes place very painstakingly.

With respect to either the geo-linguistic or sociolinguistic norm of *Tawassu* Arabic, there is only ever a slight