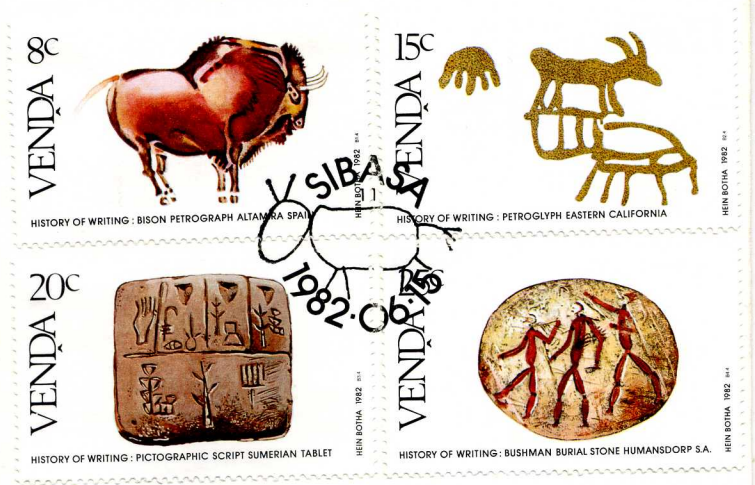


## THE HISTORY OF WRITING 1-11



### THE HISTORY OF WRITING

The first prehistoric rock-paintings to be discovered were those found at Altamira in Southern Spain in 1879. In these 20 000-year-old paintings Stone Age hunters left a pictorial commentary of their daily activities. These paintings are examples of man's first attempts at expressing his thoughts and feelings in a timeless form.

Visual means of communicating with the help of objects are well-known and almost unlimited. An example of communication by means of a system of mnemonic signs is the "quipu" writing of the Peruvian Incas in which accounts concerning objects and beings were recorded through different knots in strings of various lengths and colours. Writing however, is expressed, not by objects themselves, but by specific signs and marks drawn, painted, scratched or incised on objects and other materials.

Throughout Southern Africa, Europe and North America, Paleolithic man left his marks on rocks and in caves. For primitive man a picture satisfied, in a crude way, the needs fulfilled in

modern times by writing. Such pictures or series of pictures normally had no clear connection with any linguistic form.

Drawn or painted pictures are known as petrograms, and incised or carved pictures as petroglyphs. These pictures usually depict men and animals in their varying relationships with each other, as found in Bushman paintings.

Among the forerunners of writing, pictographic and ideographic writing are the most widely used forms of writing. Such writing is best represented by the American Indians. A more advanced form of writing is the logography or word signs found on the clay ledger tablets from Uruk in Sumer. These signs were limited to the expression of numerals, objects and personal names.

The need to express words and sounds that could not be adequately indicated by pictures or combinations of pictures gave rise to the next stage of development, phonetization. New possibilities were thus opened for the expression of all linguistic forms, no matter how abstract, by means of written symbols.