

Homework 2: Writing Systems

Language and Religion: E103, Fall, 2007

Print out this page and do the problems turning them in at the lecture on September 17.

1. *Ideographic symbol systems* were probably first developed to facilitate memorization of texts. They are not yet really 'writing' systems. Here is a short text from the Zen tradition. Assume you had to recite this 4-line text and wanted a series of 4 symbols that are easy to draw, one for each line, that you think would help you remember the complete text. (It is OK to lean on American cultural traditions in your selection of figures.) Draw your reminder symbol (ideogram) after each line below. If you would like to use 2 or 3 symbols per line, you may do so.

Birth and death is a grave event.

How transient is life!

Every minute is to be grudged,

Time waits for nobody.

2. It was noted in the lecture that *syllabic writing systems* were invented independently a number of times, but that alphabet writing was developed (or invented) only once by the Phoenicians. Here is a syllabic system invented by a Cherokee Indian named *Sequoya* in 1821 for writing his native language. Apparently he had had some contact with European writing since some of his symbols look like European printed and cursive letters. This alphabet was widely used by Cherokee speakers for many years in

newspapers and books.

D	a	R	e	T	i	ᵐ	o	ᵒ	u	ᵏ	ʌ	
f	ga	ᵏ	ge	ᵑ	gi	A	go	J	gu	E	ga	
ᵒ	ha	ᵑ	he	A	hi	ᵒ	ho	ᵒ	hu	ᵒ	ha	
W	la	ᵑ	le	P	li	ᵒ	lo	M	lu	ᵑ	la	ᵑ ka
ᵑ	ma	ᵒ	me	H	mi	ᵑ	mo	ᵑ	mu			ᵑ hna
ᵒ	na	ᵑ	ne	ᵏ	ni	Z	no	ᵑ	nu	ᵒ	na	ᵑ nah
I	gwa	ᵑ	gwe	ᵑ	gwi	ᵑ	gwo	ᵑ	gwu	ᵑ	gwa	ᵑ s
ᵒ	sa	ᵑ	se	b	si	ᵑ	so	ᵑ	su	R	sa	ᵑ ta
ᵑ	da	f	de	ᵑ	di	ᵑ	do	S	du	ᵑ	da	ᵑ ti
ᵑ	dla	L	dle	ᵑ	dli	ᵑ	dlo	ᵑ	dlu	P	dla	ᵑ tla
ᵑ	dza	ᵑ	dze	ᵑ	dzi	K	dzo	J	dzu	ᵑ	dza	
ᵑ	wa	ᵑ	we	ᵑ	wi	ᵑ	wo	ᵑ	wu	ᵑ	wa	
ᵑ	ya	ᵑ	ye	ᵑ	yi	ᵑ	yo	ᵑ	yu	B	ya	

The Cherokee Syllabary

Below are 5 words written in the Cherokee syllabary. The words mean (1) 'a Cherokee person', (2) 'Sequoya' (personal name), (3) 'October' (or harvest month), (4) 'instantly' and (5) 'war club'. Write them below using the transliterations in the Latin alphabet shown above.

1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____

4. _____ 5. _____

- ᵑWY
- ᵑᵑᵑ
- SᵑZᵑ
- ᵑᵑᵑᵑᵑ
- Dᵑᵑ

END