

~Semantic

~Phonetic

Early stage, 1:

pig could either mean pig (kutofi), or be read as a phonetic symbol (P), ku(t) or sometimes kuto(f).

house either meant house (lap) or was read as a P, la(p).

star either meant star (asem) or was read as a P, a(s) or sometimes ase(m) or even se(m).

The combination *pig**star* could phonetically be kua, kuas, kuta, or kutas; kuase, kuasem, kutase, kutasem, kutoa, kutoas, kutofa, kutofas; kuse, kutse, kusem, kutsem.... but by itself it could also be kul, meaning be distant, or even esexoq, meaning be stubborn.

*pig**star**house* means kkuse, build (a building).

Ca syllables could also just be their C; as a phonetic sequence, *pig**house* could be kuto(f)la(p), ku(t)la(p), kutol, or kul.

There was a lot of ambiguity in Vs, Cs, syllables, and words. Affixes/modifiers were almost never represented.

Writing order varied: in a line down, sometimes a line across, sometimes a block. S symbol position, and sometimes number, varied too.

pp p, tt t, kk k, qq q, s f, m, n ng ny, v w, y, x ch ts, r h/hh, l/ł ly

a, e, i, ɔ, u, o
ai, au, oi, ou, ei, eu

Base words commonly reached three syllables or even more.

Somewhat more than 72 (12*6) symbols for phonetic symbols (Ps), ~144 in scattered, somewhat common use; they were drawn pretty freely from the pool of semantic determiners (Ss), and so different symbols were often used for the same sound, or for same-group Cs, or sometimes for a different tone, although tone was usually left unspecified. More sounds than symbols, though, because of moving vowels and C grouping (which was variable in its presence, but fairly consistent in which Cs were grouped; the main exception was v, which was sometimes grouped with w and sometimes with s and f). A lot more Ss than that, much more irregular.

Later, 2:

Longer Ps were assumed to shorten, so that *pig* was ku(t).

There was lots of variation in how many syllables of the word were represented, but vowels were rarely outright skipped, just left unrepresented at the end (of base word). Syllable-final Cs might be skipped or inaccurately represented. Moving vowels were either represented with an extra (V, i or u) P or left unspecified (if an i or u was meant to be a new syllable instead of diphthonging, this was usually not apparent). There was occasional variation in having more than one S per word.

Ss were most often placed alongside the

l and ł diverged: ł had been an allophone that showed up 1-to-1 with syllable-final position, but (base) words dropped some vowels so that l could end syllables too (oIV and ɔIV kept their following vowels).

v and w merged: word-initial v had changed to f, all others now changed to w. This resulted in a syllable-final v merging with its preceding vowel, in a pattern of av>au, ev>eu, ov>ou, iv>ɔ, ɔv>ɔ, uv>u. (w (and now v) was/became pronounced more like vw than w.)

Base words longer than 3 syllables were less common now.

direction of writing, but there was considerable variation in word format. They might be differentiated by being drawn larger / with more detail than syllables. Spaces were sometimes present between words.

Affixes/modifiers (Ms) were sometimes added for clarification, undifferentiated from Ps. If an M affected the pronunciation of the base word, that change might or might not be represented in the symbols of the base word itself.

pig alone was read as ku (meaning direct perception); pig (now kutof) was represented with *pig*(^)pig*, or *pig*to*(^)pig*, or *pig*tofa*(^)pig*.

Ps settled into a pretty consistent inventory of around ~108, with the extra symbols usually read as including a certain long vowel or tone or ending syllable kipi. Ss started to consolidate a little, but still lots of them, ~360 in the very commonest use.

Later, 3:

Settled on one determiner (S) per word, and one, two, or three Ps, occasionally four (zero was an option if representing one of the base categories itself). If one P symbol was considered clear enough, a second one to clarify additional Cs or Vs or syllables was purely optional. Vowels were almost never skipped (dropped at the end (of base word), yes). The S was consistently set to the side of the Ps, although exact format varied; drawing Ss larger / with more detail than syllables was common. P symbols had become simplified. Spaces were common to separate words.

As number of Ps was cut down, *pig* spread to solidly cover ku(C), not just ku(t). *pig**star* (now zem), when phonetic, was read as ku(C)ze(C). Also, Ps began to be flipped to indicate their reverse reading; flipping *pig* changed it from ku to uk (flipped solo Vs were less used and varied in intended reading). These flipped symbols were essentially optional and used according to individual discretion.

Ms were fairly common, and often differentiated by coming after the S, in a form such as:

P
P
PS
M
M
M

or maybe a block:
PS

q^h (already rare) dropped out entirely: merged sometimes with kk (syllable-initial if not following C), otherwise with q

h and hh diverged: h had shown up word-initially and following a C, hh word-finally and between vowels, and now some vowels were dropped so that hh could start words as well. (Intervocalic hh then shifted to h.)

s and z diverged: z had shown up between vowels, and the vowel dropping meant that now it could start and end words also.

Base words longer than 2 syllables became rare.

A lot of consolidation at this stage. Ps were cut down and, when called for, replaced with a different symbol that fit better (often from the common Ss) till there were ~72 symbols, with only a few outliers inconsistently used. Ss have consolidated a lot too, mostly by doubling up on the same category and being replaced with P symbols wherever reasonable, to about ~96 now.

PM
PM
M

Compounds were appended similarly, but with their own S. There could be ambiguity in the line between compounds, as well as in discerning whether an add-on was a compound or an M.

Ms were tending toward one M-symbol per modifier, as often as possible; their pronunciation therefore was often slightly different from the corresponding P. They might be distinguished from Ps through position (being more likely to follow the S) or occasionally through an inconsistent diacritic, or not at all. If an M affected the pronunciation of the base word, that change was probably not represented in the symbols of the base word itself.

pig was still represented with *pig**^pig*, or *pig*to*^pig*, or *pig*tofa*^pig*.

Later, 4:

Each word still used one, two, or sometimes three (rarely four) Ps. Vowels were not skipped, although they could still be left underspecified (if moving Vs) or, at the end (of base word), unrepresented. If a word was longer than a simple (C)V, it took at least two Ps.

The meaning of flipped symbols was now fairly regular: CV went to VC, va/ve/vo went to au/eu/ou, a/e/o usually went to ai/ei/oi; flipped i or u, though, indicated a new syllable (rather than a diphthong). When iC or uC followed a/e/o, they might mean a diphthong or a new syllable; when VC followed a matching V, it might mean an ending C for that syllable or a new syllable. Flipped symbols were now used mostly at the end of final-C words, but also optionally when there were two vowels in a row, optionally when the word started with VC, and optionally to clarify intermediate C clusters (by repeating the V, which was ambiguous between CVC and C[movingV]VC and sometimes CVyVC).

Blocks were the most common word format, with a couple other arrangements in use. Ps were pretty simplified/abstracted by now, and Ss had lagged behind but followed suit: they were usually only differentiated by

aw became ah and o sometimes became aw; this resulted in the pronunciation of 'qaw' changing to 'kah', so that 'kah'(i) was now represented by both ka(i) and qa(i) in different words (and 'ahk', when syllable-final, by both ak and aq). There were already, and were still, no such syllables as qe or qi (or qei; or, when syllable final, eq or iq or aiq or eiq or oiq).

There were still ~72 Ps, with only a few outliers inconsistently used; most of them doubled as Ms, but some Ms had instead taken the symbol of an S that matched the sound more closely (in a later syllable). At this point, almost all common Ss were those that doubled as Ps, but there were ~16 extra ones that stuck around (see record): ones that duplicated (or close enough, same consonant group) the relevant sounds of another S.

placement, not drawing style.

The inclusion of Ms was typical, and they were settling into pronunciations that were unique for each M, one M per modifier, with flipped symbols providing more options. Ms were typically distinguished from Ps by being positioned after the S, although variations with no distinction still cropped up occasionally; the diacritic had pretty much dropped. Ms that didn't fit in the block with the S formed a second block next to it with no space between. If an M affected the pronunciation of the base word, it was almost always squeezed within the block with the S, and the change was rarely represented in the symbols of the base word itself.

*pig*to*^pig* or *pig*tofa*^pig* meant pig.
*star*ma*^star* meant star.

Current, 5:

Standardized character format:

P (P)

S (M)

The first P is always present, and is only flipped if doing so fully represents the first syllable (moving vowels can be unspecified). This happens with a [movingV] syllable, and also when a VC syllable either ends the word or is followed by a CV(C) syllable. (Cs fall at the beginning of syllables whenever possible: so, for example, a VCVC word breaks into V-CVC and is represented with unflipped Ps as V-CV.)

The second P is present except in a single-syllable (base) word that has been entirely represented by the first P, including moving vowels. It is unflipped by default, representing the (C)V of the next syllable (except for solo i or u, which diphthong); it flips only if doing so fully represents the second syllable, by the same rules as those for the first P, or if it finishes specifying a one-syllable word by means of diphthong and/or ending C. A VC that repeats the previous V is read as just its C, the identical Vs being redundant; iC or uC always diphthong when applicable. Otherwise, Vs add a second syllable, which can leave the first V unspecified. If the rare base word is more than two syllables, the extra

p pp, t tt, k kk, q, s f z, m, n ng ny, v, y, ts x ch, h r hh, l † ly

a, e, i, o, u, o
ai, au, ei, eu, oi, ou

Base words are rarely longer than two syllables.

There are a total of 72 (12*6) standard symbols, each flippable, some of which don't apply for all three readings. Each modifier has been assigned to one of these symbols, even where the pronunciation could not be closely matched.

All Ss have been shifted to fit within this 72-symbol framework; obsolete Ss are deprecated and more and more unlikely to be recognized. The extra Ss were removed partly through the same old combining and repurposing of Ps (now with more tenuous connections), but also, for 6 of them, through applying a flip; the flipped S has a meaning related to the unflipped version usually through diminution.

Symbols are referred to as their corresponding P syllable. So, Ps are referred to as CV, or VC if flipped; a flipped vV is pronounced Vvu, a flipped V is pronounced Vyu. Ms are referred to as 'P as (M pronunciation)'; Ss are referred to as 'P,

syllable(s) are not represented.

Flipped symbols: a/e/o to ai/ei/oi, va/ve/vo to au/eu/ou, other CV to VC; i or u to i or u of a new syllable (rather than a diphthong). Flipped versions of vi, vu, v̄, and v̄̄ are not used. VCs have an optional y, as Vs do.

Spelling examples:

so(y)em or zoi(y)em or fou(y)em: so-em.

fom: so-om.

zoi(y)om or sou(y)om: so-o.

soum: so-um.

zoi(y)um or foyum: so-u(flipped).

zou(y)im or soyim: so-i(flipped)

oim: oi-im.

Pure Ps are still somewhat ambiguous; the S clarifies which C of their group they represent (or presence/absence of y before Vs), whether they include syllable-final Cs and which ones, any moving Vs if unspecified, word tone, and any (rare) extra syllables.

With the S, no ambiguity! (Ideally.) The S (drawn the same as the Ps) is always present (except in a few one-syllable conjunctions), and exactly one is considered correct for each word.

The M is used whenever a modifier is present. It represents one or two syllables (up to three if an a is added for pronunciation; Ms are morphemic rather than phonemic), each M with a unique pronunciation based on their equivalent P (some of them identical). If the M affects the pronunciation of the base word, the change is not represented in the symbols of the base word itself, but only deduced from the M.

The most inherent M (closest to the base word) is the one that fills the spot for the fourth symbol. Additional Ms combine into (an) additional block(s) and follow the base word (before a space). These additional blocks can have up to four symbols, but all of them are Ms. Only context distinguishes them from compounds. When an additional block is formed from two Ms, they fill the spots of the first P and the S, taking up less room.

Just as some words have no second P, and/or no M, some small function words (some preps, conjs, kipi) have no S. Words simply have a blank space where a symbol

meaning S'. (The two extra Ss are simply referred to by their meaning, and when used as Ms, as 'S as high/low tone'). A word is spelled by simply pronouncing the symbols as Ps, left-right top-down, including a null for an absent second P.

When new words arise, they typically grab a combination of symbols that's not already in common use, so as to avoid exact homographs - or else combine existing (compound/modifier).

Eventually, if widespread literacy, for the occasional homophone people start sometimes pronouncing the Ss (after M(s) if present).

It's all very regular! There are only really two spelling irregularities at this point. One is the qa/ka merge. One is that r drops to h before a C, and in the main dialect the h has moved to the beginning of the syllable: that is, arves is now pronounced haves, but still spelled a-ve.

As the language diverges and/or the writing system spreads, the Ss will remain the same. The Ps and Ms will: remain (close to) the same, or:

mean different sounds but still match each word closely, or:

mean different sounds and not match closely, so that the script is more logographic and leans heavier on memorization, or:

mean different sounds and so be reshuffled to better represent the phonetics, so that the script no longer represents both languages/dialects.

is absent.

Spaces are standard between words.

72, plus more with diacritics and minus some by happenstance, is the standardized base number of both Ss and Ps. Because of the missing syllables qe and qi, there are actually 70 (unflipped) Ps (a total of 136 including flipped, with vi, vu, v̄, and v̄ unused); while there are exactly 72 unflipped Ss, flipping has extended that to 78 categories, into which all words (except for conjunctions) are sorted. There are 72 unflipped Ms (the 70 Ps plus the two extra Ss) and 24 flipped, for a total of 96 (productive suffixes, somewhat arbitrarily decided(?); others(?) are treated either as compounds or part of the base word (set per morpheme, not changeable)).

Each symbol has up to three readings, position-dependent: in the first two spots as a P, ((C)V)(C); in the third slot, as a (silent) S; in the fourth slot, as an M (idiosyncratic pronunciation).

(q̄tsou means sapling; uqu means inclined; achu means become.)

'p̄o' 't̄a'
(q̄tsou)
ppottar, live

'p̄o' 't̄a'
(q̄tsou) 'uqu'
ppottaruqu, be lively

'p̄o' 't̄a'
(q̄tsou) 'achu'
ppottarchu, be born / come alive