

# On the Ideograms of Patricia Claro by Kim Veltman



## Alphabets, Elements and Creation: On the Ideograms of Patricia Claro

The work of Patricia Claro is multimedia in a different sense of cross-media. It entails photographs, which become coloured oil paintings, the abstract patterns of which become black/white engravings on paper resembling ideograms. Some of these media are presented in video montages. The sensuous and deeply beautiful colours are themselves a paean to the richness of nature augmented by an artistic eye.

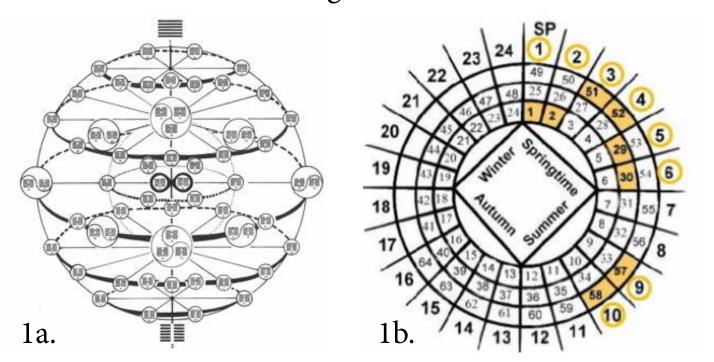
There is an instinctive fascination with the "ideograms": that the seemingly random could produce regular and potentially systematic markings. To a historian of alphabets, they are all the more fascinating because they suggest that the usual sharp distinction between ideographic sign systems (Chinese, cf. Egyptian hieroglyphs) and Western alphabets may have deeper common roots. Scholars have, for instance, noted links between early Chinese signs (e.g. Banpo near Xian, Ban Shan, Machala Yan, Ma Jian), Old Russian syllabaries, Vinca Culture in Southeastern Europe (Serbia, Romania, Bulgaria...) and even the Navajo culture in the Southwestern United States. In an early period, Chinese logograms and Sumerian pictographs were also closely related. The Chinese Yin -Yang symbol recurs as a symbol of Ra in Egypt.

Officially there are 214 Chinese radicals and 412 (a mirror of 214) Chinese syllables which combine to produce c. 100,000 ideograms. Simplified versions have 37 syllables. There are also a series of 8 basic trigrams, which become 8 hexagrams and subsequently the 64 hexagrams of the I Ching. Traditionally these are presented as tables of straight and broken lines. Scholarship of the past century has drawn attention to how these hexagrams imply a three-dimensional I-Ching Sphere, also called a Yi-Globe (figure 1a) and related to the Yi-spiral. The work of Wilhelm Josef Giebels has shown that "the eight hexagrams trigrams constituted of two identical trigrams, representing the Solar periods (SP) 1 to 6 and 9 to 10 in the three different years." (figure 1b). The three years reflect three different pair groups: heaven/earth, heaven/man, man/earth, which have parallels with the creation, preservation, destruction of the Indian trimurti. So the 64 hexagrams reflect not only a three-dimensional spatial model but also a three-year temporal model reflecting changing relations between heaven, man and earth.

Giebels has shown how each of 8 basic hexagrams is linked with a symbolic representation: e.g. the Creative is a horse; the Receptive a cow; the Abysmal is a water creature; the Radiant a firebird (figure 1 c). In the tradition of the I Ching, the symbol for the abysmal is a seeming random splash of water, which becomes a symbol, a hexagram and part of cosmology. In the art work of Patricia Claro, ripples of water become Formas de Agua and ideograms.

In Russia, there has been study of runes and the I Ching. In the West, the geometry of the I Ching has inspired study: e.g. the Cullinane sequence, a 4 x 4 x 4 cube with the Karnaugh property, and Peirce-von Franz box notation. Already in the early 18th century the hexagrams of the I Ching fascinated Leibniz:

# Figure 1



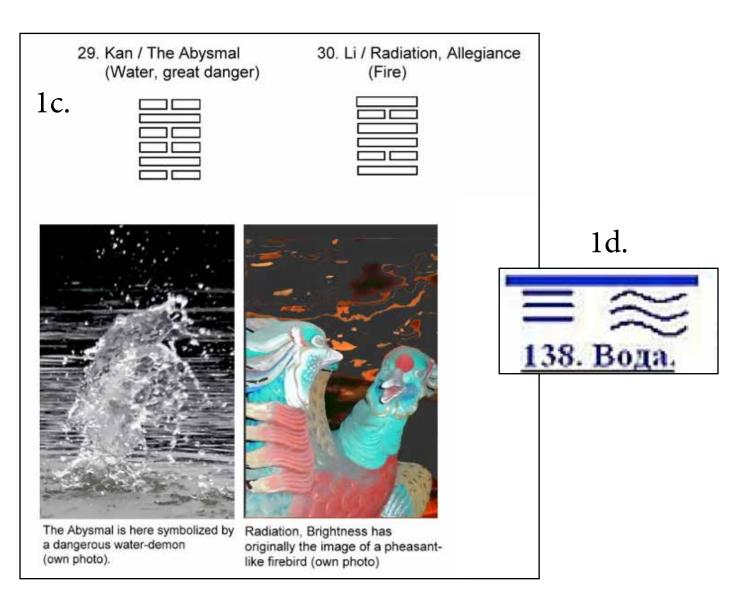
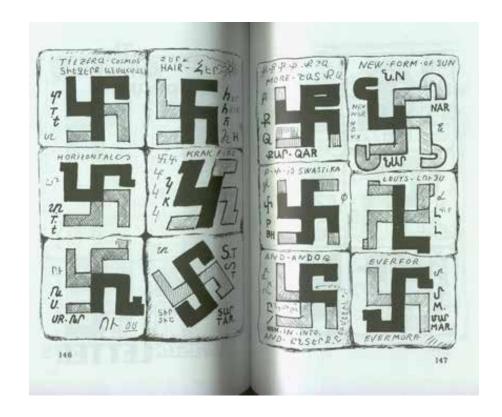


Figure 1a. I-Ching Sphere, 1b. Three year cycle of I-Ching, 1c. The Abysmal and Radiation as hexagrams and photos, 1d. Slavic Karuna 138: Water (вода).

2a.



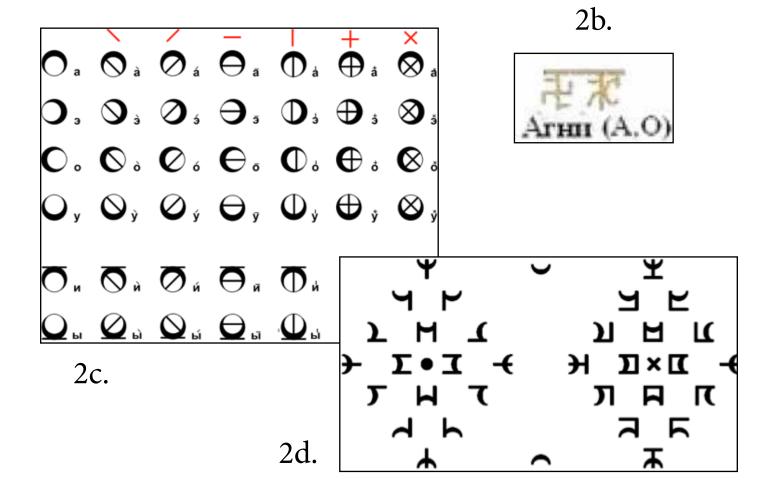


Figure 2a. Armenian alphabet with Swastika matrix, 2b. letter Agni in Karuna, 2c. Old Chechen Vowels, 2d. Old Chechen Consonants.

In 1707 he told Premare that, God willing, he would demonstrate that not only Chinese characters but all the major alphabets of the world stem from the hexagrams. He petitioned emperor K'ang Hsi with his ideas and forwarded a prospectus to the Jesuit General. His concepts expanded rather than grew; apocalyptic and messianic figures entered his writings.

It is true that the trigrams recur in unexpected places. For instance, the trigram for yang is found in Old Slavic karuna 138 as water (вода, figure 1d). But, in retrospect, seeing the hexagrams as the source of Chinese characters and all the alphabets of the world marked a wave of overenthusiasm not supported by the historical sources. There are, for instance, six types of Chinese characters (illustrating a shape, an affair, an idea, a sound, mutual comment and wrongly borrowing). All of these are subsumed in stage 3 of Diringer's classification.

Diringer, identifies four kinds of writing which serve to mark four stages of development: 1. embryo-writing; 2. picture writing; 3. ideographic writing and 4. phonetic writing. Stage one, embro-writing entails iconography, sympathetic magic, mnemonic devices, symbolic means of communication and occurs as animated objects, coloured pebbles, conventionalized figures, geometric marks, signs, symbols; numerical indications and especially as rock pictures (petroglyphs). This may include hundreds or even thousands of glyphs (marks, signs, symbols), but no clear system or numeration.

## Early Alphabets

Early alphabets were typically linked with cosmology. For instance, in the Old Armenian alphabet (6,500 B.C.), a swastika symbol related to the sun served as a matrix for creating letters (figure 2 a). Subsets of these matrices in four directions become letters along only one of the axes. In the Egyptian Book of Ra, the sun remains a starting point, but now the swastika matrix is replaced by an 8 square geometrical matrix for numbers and 16 square matrix for letters.

In India, the 16 vowels were linked with the 16 days of the moon and with the creation process. In Old Chechen (c.4,500 B.C.), phases of the (full) moon inspired symbols for the vowels (figure 2a), while variants of a crescent moon inspired the shapes of the consonants (figure 2c), slight variants of which produce familiar letters in Latin alphabets such as m, i, e, h, y. The early Georgian alphabet is also a moon alphabet. Arabic has sun and moon letters.

The early western alphabets shifted attention from sun and moon to the seven planets, frequently linked with 7 double letters (B G D K P R T). 12 simple letters were linked with the 12 zodiac signs and 3 mother letters (A M S), served as integrators, reflecting speech, writing and number respectively.

### Sources of Letters

There were a series of sources of early alphabet letters. These include astronomy, where stars and constellations defined the shapes of letters. Sound and words were one source:

not just sound in the air, but also the effects of sound on dust/sand particles or on water. Dance, human movements and hand gestures were another source. Geometry also played an important role, providing basic grids and matrices for the constriction of letters. Further, there was the role of the elements. In the Indian tradition, 24 basic elements (tattvas) were linked with 24 basic consonants as a starting point for creation. In Greece, these 24 elements became the 24 stoicheia of Euclid's geometry and Greek science. A more elaborate Indian version in the tantric school, entailed 36 elements  $(7 \times 5 + 1)$ including: 5 elements, 5 impressions, 5 instruments of action, 5 instruments of sensing, 5 aspects of empirical individual, 5 limitations of maya and 5 verities.

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Figure 3

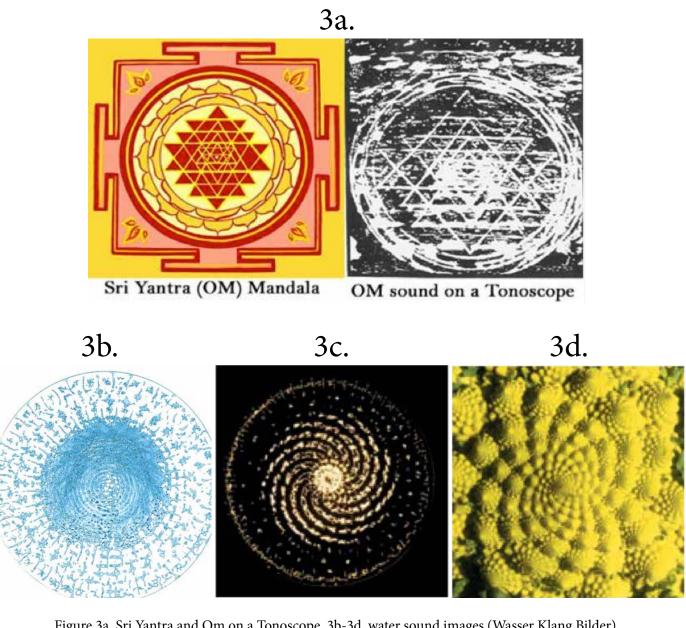


Figure 3a. Sri Yantra and Om on a Tonoscope, 3b-3d. water sound images (Wasser Klang Bilder).

#### Sound

In the Indian tradition, both the alphabet and creation itself are linked with sound. Cosmologically it is linked with the 4th of the higher heavens, Maharloka: "vibration, Aum, the universal creative force which obscures our realization of the ever uncreated." AUM or OM is much more than a simple sound. One of its visual expressions is the swastika, another is the Sri Yantra, which can be reproduced using a tonoscope (figure 3a). Indeed, the patterns produced by sound in both dust as Chladni figures and as water images (Wasser Klang Bilder), range from ideogram-like figures to elaborate geometrical shapes in nature (figure 3b-d). In Sanskrit, sabda rupa, is the energy of light and form. In Egypt, the god, Ptah, "created the universe by speaking words through his Tongue (linked to the god Thoth and the goddess Tefnut) and by thoughts coming from his Heart (linked to Horus the Elder)." The idea of speaking as a part of creation recurs in the Old Testament, among the Marcosians and in the Koran. Meanwhile, the idea of the world beginning from the word (vac), found in the Vedas, recurs in the opening of the Gospel of Saint John (figure 4).

# Figure 4

\*In the beginning was Brahman with whom was Vak, or the Word, and the Word is Brahman.

\*In the beginning was Prajapati, and with Him was the Word.

\*In the beginning was Vâk, and Vâk was with Yahva, and Vâk was Yahvî.

\*In the Beginning was the Logos, and the Logos was (one) with God, and the Logos was God.

\*In principio erat Verbum, et Verbum erat apud Deum, et Deus erat Verbum

\*In the beginning was the Word, and the word was with God.

Figure 4. Sentences concerning creation in India (Vedas) and Europe (New Testament).

#### Dance

It is also claimed that the letters of the Sanskrit alphabet were originally a series of dance postures. Siva, as the Lord of the Dance (Nataraja) performs the tandava, a dance in which the universe is created, maintained, and dissolved. So the 108 divisions of Sati's body, become the 108 letters of Sanskrit (54 x 2 letters), linked with 108 nadis (streams), 108 breaths, 108 pressure points, 108 kinetic poses (karanas, cf. adavus), 108 principal adavus, 108 dance positions, 108 modes of dancing, 108 poses of Shiva's dance, 108 movements of the creator God, Siva, whereby the world is brought into existence through a sacred dance connected with fire, Bharata Natyam (cf. Bharata, Mahabharata). Classical Indian dancing thus re-enacts the links between fire, sounds, alphabet, movements and cosmic creation:

Bharata Natyam is considered to be a 'fire dance' — the mystic manifestation of the metaphysical element of fire in the human body. It is one of the five major styles (one for each element) that includes Odissi (element of water), Mohiniattam (element of air), Kuchipudi (element of earth) and Kathakali (element of sky). The movements of an authentic Bharata Natyam dancer resemble the movements of a dancing flame. Contemporary Bharata Natyam is rarely practiced as Natya Yoga, a sacred meditational tradition, except by a few orthodox schools.

Hence there are 5 styles of dancing (Bharata Natyam, Odissi, Mohiniattam, Kuchipudi, Kathakali corresponding to the five elements (fire, water, air, earth, sky). Shiva has a special temple dedicated to each of these five elements. At Chindabaram, Siva's dance occurs on 5 steps linked with 5 vowels, in a room with 21,600 tiles corresponding to the breaths in a day.

More is involved than simple dance movements. The alphabet was seen in three stages: mudras (hand and body gestures), mantras (written and spoken signs) and yantras (written and spoken signs linked with deities), reflecting a process of deed, word and thought. Later in India and in Persia, this process was reversed as thought, word and deed (kaya, vac, citta) or will, knowledge, action. In Persia, and later in Arabic, each letter became linked with a yogic pose or body movement. This principle is said to have spread to China, where it inspired the basic postures and stances associated with Shaolin martial arts (tantui and tantuinine). A Nordic equivalent is the stay movements, a kind of runic yoga, connected with Slavic, Scandinavian and British runes.

In Japan, the tradition of sanmitsu retained the links between mudras - mantras - yantras; body - mind - spirit; sound - written Sanskrit - symbolic meaning. In other cultures, this threefold association gradually became split. In the West, the mudras became rhetorical signs or simply sign languages for hearing-challenged persons. Mantras became songs and chants in rituals. Yantras became associated with esoteric religions and magic.

# Figure 5

	Symbol	Sign	Ruling	Quality	Elements
5a.	Υ	ARIES	Head	Cardinal	Fire
	8	TAURUS	Throat	Fixed	Earth
	п	GEMINI	Chest	Mutable	Air
	69	CANCER	Stomach	Cardinal	Water
	N	LEO	Heart	Fixed	Fire
	ny	Virgo	Bowels	Mutable	Earth
	~	LIBRA	Loins	Cardinal	Air
	m	Scorpio	Secrets	Fixed	Water
	1	SAGITTARIUS	Thighs	Mutable	Fire
	B	CAPRICORN	Knees	Cardinal	Earth
	***	AQUARIUS	Ankles	Fixed	Air
	×	Pisces	Feet	Mutable	Water

5b. Air Fire Water Earth

Elements Saturn Jupiter Mars Sun Venus Mercury Moon Fire Ta 占 Sheen Alif 1 Ha b Fa La Meem ? Zal A 5c. Аіг Zaad Ва 😛 Ya & Noon 🔾 Wao 9 Saad U Water Kaf 🛂 Seen Qaf 遵 Za J Jeem 🌜 Earth Laam Dal 🗳 Ghain & Ain 8 Ha C Ra J Khay C (In Astrology the status of the Earth element is over the Water element. Whereas in ilm-ul-Jaffer it is the other wa around.)

Figure 5a. Elements and Zodiac, 5b. Hebrew Alphabet, 5c. Arabic alphabet.

#### Fire

Other systems emphasized individual elements. For instance, fire (agni), sometimes played an important role. Some versions of the Old Slavic Karuna began with the letter agni in the form of a left pointing swastika (figure 2b). Fire is not just an abstract concept. It is connected with the idea of 7 (living) flames in Jwalamukhi (Northern India) and Atashgah (Baku, Azerbaijan). In one version of the Hebrew alphabet, a Lah Swath, entailing a Cube-Octahedron, leads to a Shushon Flower (lily) of 6 + 1 flames, petals, which become a starting point for the 6 + 1 flames of the Menorah. Thus the 7 living flames become 7 candles, linked with 7 cups of letters, 7 planets and a whole cosmology. A Meru flame letter, projected in different ways, is said to generate the 22 or 27 letters of Hebrew. Fire, linked specifically with letter Shin.

#### Water

In India, the first five consonants are linked with the five elements, beginning with letter ka (क, earth) and kha (অ, water). In China, water is linked with the number 1, the trigram kan, Winter and the North. In the I Ching, Kan is hexagram 29. The Abysmal (water, great danger). In Giebel's imagery it is associated with a dangerous water dragon. In his chart it occurs in late spring.

In Buddhist cosmology, water is sometimes linked with the centre, Vairicona and the skandha of form. More typically, water is associated with the East, Akshobhya, the colour blue, and the vajra. In terms of mental symbolism, Akshobhya overcomes anger and hatred through mirror-like wisdom. In terms of physical symbol, he is associated with water, sound, blood flow and kidneys. In Tibetan Bon, water is linked with South, seed syllable Srum, accomplishment, blue, kidney, ears, birth from moisture, animals and mental formation. Hence, in both Buddhism and Bon, water is associated with one of the four cardinal points.

By contrast, in the Hebrew tradition, water becomes linked with one of the four worlds. In one version, water is linked with world 2, Briah, the Creative, the number 15, the letter He, cups and blue. In a variant, water is linked with world 2, the atmosphere, aquasphere, flow, staves, clubs, subtraction, perceptual, spirit, vision. In another version, water is linked with world 1, Atziluth, emanation, angel and king. In other versions, water is again associated with blue and the West. Elsewhere, water is associated with three zodiac signs Cancer, Scorpio, Pisces (figure 3a) and with the three letters: 7. Zayin 12. Lamed 18 Tzaddi (figure 3b). In Arabic, water is linked with letters jeem, za, kaf, seen, qaf, sa and za (figure 3 c). In Greece, water is linked with East and the icosahedron. In Christianity, water is again linked with one of the cardinal points, i.e. the West, love, maturity, cup, autumn.

Combined studies of water and sound have a history of nearly half a millennium. Leonardo da Vinci (1500-1515) was interested in waves caused by percussion. Sound and effects

on water were further studied by Galileo Galilei (1630), Robert Hooke (1680) and especially by Ernst Chladni (1756 -1827), the father of modern acoustics and Hans Jenny (1904-1972), the father of cymatics – a subset of modal vibrational phenomena. Patricia Claro's Formas de Agua combine a number of these traditional elements. She has both sound and sound effects in water. But whereas the earlier water sound images (Wasser Klang Bilder), were effectively still snapshots of effects of particular sounds, Claro presents a dynamic interplay of changing sounds and shapes. It is as if we could witness creation in the making.

#### Water and Creation

Whereas fire and sound play a central role in Indian and Eastern cosmology, water plays a corresponding role in Western cosmology. The creation tales of ancient Mesopotamia entail the encounter of fresh water and ocean water, personified as Apsu and Tiamat. In the ancient Nordic myths, the world begins with the encounter of two drops of dew. In the Old Testament, creation begins with the abyss. In some accounts, it is called the primeval abyss. In the Valentinian Ogdoad, one of the names of the Monad is Bythos (Depth or Profundity,  $B\nu\theta\dot{o}\varsigma$ ). Water is at the beginning of life and recurs with the flood in issuing in a new period of life.

## Conclusions

Standard histories of alphabets tend to identify ideograms (and hieroglyphs) as a particular stage in the evolution of writing methods. They are seen as quite distinct from the letters of alphabets. The origins of letters are diverse. They include cosmology (stars, constellations, sun, moon, planets), sound, dance, and elements, particularly fire and water.

Artists bring our attention to new associations or remind us of old and oft near- forgotten associations of culture. Patricia Claro's ideograms point to ancient sources of sign making and roots of how we communicate. Her images diverge from the strict evidence of historical documents. Their beauty, fascination, inspiration lies in reminding us that the history of media and communication is much more than mere signs, symbols, letters and words. It is profoundly linked with man's study of nature, efforts to make sense of origins, to explain the past and understand our ever evolving present.

Kim H. Veltman, VMMI, Maastricht ,1 July, 2016

#### **Notes**

a. I-Ching Sphere: http://trionfi.com/001/ichingsphere.jpg, cf. Yi-Globe: http://www.i-ching.hu/chp00/chp2/reconstruct.htm; b. 3 Year cycle of I-Ching: Wilhelm Josef Giebels, Structure of the I-Ching: http://i-ging-secrets.de.wilhelmjosefgiebels.info/author/admin/page/2/, c. the abysmal and radiation: ibid, cf. http://i-ging-secrets.de.wilhelmjosefgiebels.info/; d. Karuna: http://lektsii.net/5-19118.html .

Ban Shan, Machala Yan, Ma Jian: http://vl-club.com/31131-civilizacii-unasledovavshie-slavyanskiy-russkiy-svasticheskiy-alfavit.html

Banpo and Old Russian: http://vl-club.com/31131-civilizacii-unasledovavshie-slavyanskiy-russkiy-svasticheskiy-alfavit.html

Vinca Culture: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vin%C4%8Da\_culture

Navajo Culture: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Navajo; Vinca Scripts in the Mojave Area: https://s-media-cache-ak0.pinimg.com/736x/23/5b/66/235b66e718881d26f67fb85103b6f100.jpg

Chinese and Sumerian: http://www.bibliotecapleyades.net/sitchin/whentimebegan/whentimebegan13.htm: The writing was monosyllabic and the script was pictographic (from which the familiar Chinese characters evolved into a kind of "cuneiform" - Fig. 164) - both hallmarks of Sumerian writing. Nineteenth-century observations regarding the similarity between the Chinese and Sumerian scripts were the subject of a major study by C.J. Ball (Chinese and Sumerian, 1913) that was published under the auspices of Oxford University. It proved conclusively the similarity between the Sumerian pictographs (from which the cuneiform signs evolved) and the old forms (Ku Wen) of Chinese writing. Ball also tackled the issue of whether this was a similarity stemming only from the expectation that a man or a fish would be drawn pictorially in similar ways even by unrelated cultures.

Book of Ra: http://www.organizmica.org/archive/301/ra.shtml#1.10

In some versions there are 413 Syllables: http://www.zein.se/patrick/chinen8p.html. Other versions speak of 417 Transcendent syllables with 328 tonal syllables: http://www.pinyinology.com/combi/essay2.html

Giebels:: http://i-ging-secrets.de.wilhelmjosefgiebels.info/author/admin/page/2/2006. The properties of the properties

Runes and I Ching: http://runa-odin.narod.ru/kkp\_in.htm

Geometry and the I Ching: http://finitegeometry.org/sc/64/iching.html

Peirce von Franz box notation: http://finitegeometry.org/sc/64/iching\_files/HexagramTable01-mono.bmp Richard M. Swiderski, "Bouvet and Leibniz: A Scholarly Correspondence," Eighteenth Century Studies, Vol 14, No. 2 (Winter 1980-81), pp. 135-150.

Chinese Characters: http://www.chinaknowledge.de/Literature/Script/hanzi.html

xiangxing 象形 "illustrating a shape", pictographic

xiangshi 象事 "illustrating an affair",

xiangyi 象意 "illustrating an idea", ideographic xiangsheng 象聲 "illustrating a sound", phonetic

zhuanzhu 轉注 "mutual comment" and

jiajie 假借 "wrongly borrowing".

Diringer, 1948, pp. 21-37.

For an excellent introduction to this pre-history of writing see: Földes-Papp, Karoly: Vom Felsbild zum Alphabet Die Geschichte der Schrift von ihren frühesten Vorstufen bis zur modernen lateinischen Schreibschrift, Stuttgart: Belser Verlag, 1984. (ISBN: 3763016422 / 3-7630-1642-2).

Book of Ra: http://www.organizmica.org/archive/301/ra.shtml#1.10

AMS: http://hermetic.com/norton/images/QBL\_Figure\_12.gif

36 Tattvas: http://www.shivashakti.com/table2.gif

Sri Yantra and Om on a Tomoscope: http://www.mallstuffs.com/Blogs/BlogImages/2014/AUM--the-primordial-sound-that-creates-this-universe9.png

Wasser Klang Bilder: http://www.schwingung-und-gesundheit.de/media/images/P\_Wasser-Klang-Bild2.jpg Wasser Klang Bilde rand Nature: http://www.schwingung-und-gesundheit.de/media/images/P\_Wasser-Klang-Bild2.jpg

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AUM and Swastika: http://handlyres.ucoz.com/news/svastika\_krest\_matrica\_mirozdanija/2014-02-14-114 Om and tomograph: https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/20141125115141-46771699-power-science-of-mantras-divine-vibrations-of-the-universe-on-human-consciousness

Ptah: http://www.thekeep.org/~kunoichi/kunoichi/themestream/ptah.html#.V2pDxOQQYdU#ixzz4CID1i38Y In the Beginning was Brahman: http://www.spiritofmaat.com/archive/oct3/spadaro.htm

In the Beginning was Vak: formerly: http://sarabhanga.com/

5 Styles of dancing: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bharata Natyam

Sanctum: http://www.crystalinks.com/rosslynchapel.html

Hebrew Alphabet: formerly at: http://www.followme-series.org/images/templates/heb

Triplicities: http://www.ardue.org.uk/library/book26/p17tab.jpg

Arabic Alphabet: http://sule27.tripod.com/id4.html

Meru Flame Letter: http://www.meru.org/Press/Atlantisrising.html

Shin and Mother Letters: https://starmonkiesbigpicture.files.wordpress.com/2014/12/img\_0434-0.jpg

Giebels: http://i-ging-secrets.de.wilhelmjosefgiebels.info/

5 Buddha Families: http://audio.nashuameditator.org/Wisdom/QualitiesFiveFamilies.jpg

Akshobhya: https://www.flickr.com/photos/74526739@N06/6723831671

Buddhism: http://viewonbuddhism.org/5\_dhyani\_buddhas.html

Tibetan Bon: http://sherabchammaling.com/index.php/teachings.html

Hebrew 4 Worlds: https://jenwytch.files.wordpress.com/2015/03/jt-4-worlds.jpg

World 2: http://www.palmprints.com/guy/Images/TarotDiagrams/Elements\_Suits.gif

Atziluth: http://www.krishadar.com/Images/Numerologie/ArbreMondesKabbaleA.jpg

Water: http://goldenmean.info/ophanim/#tsot

Icosahedron: https://marymacgregorreid.files.wordpress.com/2015/12/platonic-solids-and-elements.png

Christianity: http://digilander.libero.it/TSCSS/IL%20CERCHIO.jpg

Ernst Chladni: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ernst\_Chladni

Hans Jenny: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hans\_Jenny\_(cymatics)

Monad: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Monad\_(Gnosticism)