

# Writing Systems at Risk

By 2100, over half of the world's 7,000 languages will probably be extinct. The **writing systems** in which many languages are written are disappearing, too. (1) \_\_\_\_\_ so today there are only about 140 different **scripts**. Sadly, one third of these is in danger of becoming extinct.

There are a few possible reasons for this: maybe no one teaches the written form of the language in schools anymore, or only a few older people in the community speak the language. (2) \_\_\_\_\_ Some scripts use pictures instead of letters, like the Dongba script used by the Naxi people in China. These scripts can't easily be used on computers, but this doesn't mean that they have any less cultural value than other scripts.

(3) \_\_\_\_\_ say Martin Raymond and Lorna Evans of ScriptSource, a reference for the world's writing systems. When a culture loses its writing system, it also loses everything it believed to be important enough to communicate in writing, such as poems, stories, legal documents, and personal

letters. Writing is so important that many people feel a strong connection to their written language even if they can't read it. For example, in the city of Tahlequah, Oklahoma, which is often called the capital of the Cherokee Nation, many of the street signs are written in both English and the Cherokee language. Not many people can read the Cherokee language, but it is a way of remembering the city's Native American history.

There are different ways of saving endangered alphabets. (4) \_\_\_\_\_ For example, Tim Brookes decided to **carve** some of the less common scripts from Bangladesh, like Marma and Chakma, to make artwork. Brookes has shown his work in schools, libraries, and universities across the United States and Europe. He hopes to increase people's interest in saving the world's uncommon scripts.

**writing systems** the different ways languages are written  
**scripts** ways languages are written down, in letters, symbols, or pictures  
**carve** to write in wood or stone

▼ Dongba script used by the Naxi people of China

