

Cryptography

1,100 years ago, Abu Yusuf Al-Kindi a 9th century polymath from Baghdad laid the foundation of cryptography by noticing the variations in the frequency of letters from studying the Arabic text of the Quran closely.

The word 'cipher' in European languages comes from the Arabic word sifr, meaning Zero. The concept of zero lead to cipher, meaning concealment of clear messages or encryption.

Cryptography is a method or technique by which a message may be altered so that it becomes meaningless to anyone except the intended recipient. Al-Kindi's book 'A Manuscript on Deciphering Cryptographic Messages' is believed to be the earliest writing on frequency analysis and statistics. This text gave rise to the birth of both Statistics and Cryptanalysis.

Frequency analysis is now a basic tool for breaking classical ciphers or codes that use the basic, plain text alphabet. During World War II, problem solvers carried on the code-breaking tradition that was first devised and written by Al-Kindi.

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