

HIEROGLYPHS

An Introductory Course to Hieroglyphics

COMPILED BY THE MIDPACIFIC SOCIETY OF LETTERS

Desk C/04

SYMBOLIC INFRASTRUCTURE SERIES

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Colophon

Hieroglyphs: An Introductory Course to Hieroglyphics was compiled and prepared for distribution by the MidPacific Soviet of Letters. It is part of the Symbolic Infrastructure Series and constitutes an approved object for introductory study in ancient writing systems, symbolic literacy, and archival interpretation.

This manual is intended for readers with no prior familiarity with Egyptian hieroglyphs. It does not attempt comprehensive grammatical instruction. Its purpose is narrower: to acquaint the reader with the structure, logic, and material context of one of humanity's longest-lived writing systems.

All efforts have been made to preserve historical accuracy, instructional clarity, and compatibility with contemporary Egyptological scholarship. Supplemental notes, annotations, translations, and educational adaptations are encouraged. Modification for local instructional use is permitted under condition of care.

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Insignia: Crossed sledgehammer and fountain pen, contained within a laurel wreath.

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Pacific Archives Division

Memorandum

MidPacific Soviet of Letters

Budget Committee

Subject: Egypt

The Committee has reviewed the proposal.

The Egyptians appear to have completed most of the required recordkeeping in advance.

Pending authorization, funds are reserved.

Congratulations.

Budget Committee

MPSoL

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I. A Village of Tomb Builders

Part 1: Deir el-Medina

Before proceeding to the signs, the reader is directed to Deir el-Medina.

The settlement occupied a narrow strip of ground on the west bank of the Nile opposite ancient Thebes. For several centuries it housed the craftsmen responsible for the construction and decoration of the royal tombs.

The village contained houses, workshops, storehouses, and administrative offices. Paths connected the settlement to the necropolis and to the cultivated land beyond. Water, food, tools, and materials moved along these routes. Records moved with them.

The population included stonemasons, draftsmen, painters, plasterers, scribes, laborers, officials, spouses, children, and elders. Some worked in the tombs. Some maintained the settlement. Some kept accounts. Some prepared supplies. The activities differed. The records accumulated in the same place.

Letters were exchanged. Deliveries were recorded. Attendance was tracked. Inventories were maintained. Wages were issued. Complaints were filed. Poems were written.

Many of these records survived. The village is known in unusual detail.

Rooms can be measured. Occupations can be identified. Family relationships can often be reconstructed. Individual voices occasionally emerge from the record and then return to it.

The workers of Deir el-Medina are introduced first. Their hands prepared the walls. Their records preserved the village.

Part 2: The Workers

The royal tombs were the product of many trades.

Stone was quarried and transported. Passages were surveyed. Walls were prepared. Figures were drafted. Pigments were mixed. Texts were copied. The finished work appears unified. The work itself was distributed among many hands.

Deir el-Medina housed those hands.

The settlement included stonemasons, plasterers, painters, draftsmen, scribes, laborers, foremen, and officials. Some occupations left visible marks upon the tombs. Others left marks in ledgers and inventories. Both forms of work were required.

A wall inscription provides a useful example. The surface was prepared by one worker. The figures were laid out by another. The text was drafted by a scribe. Pigments were applied by painters. The finished wall presents a single composition. The record preserves a larger number of participants.

Work proceeded according to schedule. Attendance was recorded. Supplies were issued. Tools were maintained. Deliveries were expected.

The records occasionally note delays, disputes, illnesses, shortages, and absences. Such entries occupy little space. They bring the village into focus.

A worker fails to appear. Additional grain is requested. A shipment arrives late. A complaint is filed. The work continues.

Names survive. Occupations survive. Family relationships survive. In some cases, handwriting survives.

Part 3: The Written Village

The records of Deir el-Medina include administrative documents, inventories, receipts, work reports, correspondence, and poetry.

Administrative records establish dates, occupations, property, and obligation. Personal writing preserves different information. Affection appears there. Longing appears there. Memory appears there. The record broadens.

The poems are often direct. A garden is described. A pool is described. A face is described. A meeting is anticipated. An absence is noted. The scale remains human.

Many centuries separate the modern reader from the author. The distance is occasionally reduced by a single line. A complaint remains recognizable. A compliment remains recognizable. Anticipation remains recognizable.

The village contributes records of work. It also contributes records of attention. The same settlement that supplied craftsmen to the royal tombs supplied readers, writers, spouses, friends, and admirers.

The inscriptions encountered later in the manual were produced by people accustomed to using writing for more than one purpose. Accounts were kept. Names were preserved. Instructions were transmitted. Poems were written. The record contains all four.

Part 4: Why We Begin Here

The preceding sections have been concerned with a village. A settlement has been described. Occupations have been identified. Records have been introduced. Little attention has yet been given to hieroglyphs.

This arrangement is intentional.

Writing is frequently encountered in its completed form. The reader enters a museum, a temple, or a tomb and finds a finished surface. Signs appear already arranged. The work of construction has been completed. The system appears all at once.

A village provides a slower introduction.

The reader has already encountered households, workshops, inventories, deliveries, attendance records, correspondence, and poetry. These activities do not require explanation. Their modern equivalents remain familiar. The names differ. The functions remain recognizable.

A shipment arrives. A worker falls ill. A letter is written. An account is kept. A wall is prepared. The activities precede the writing that records them.

For this reason the manual begins with the settlement rather than the sign.

The signs belong to a larger world. They refer to occupations, buildings, tools, obligations, institutions, landscapes, and relationships. The writing system did not create these things. The writing system provided a means of recording them.

A sign for a house presumes the existence of houses. A sign for a road presumes roads. A sign for a scribe presumes scribes.

The objects arrive first. The signs arrive later. The order is retained here.

II. The Household

Part 1: The House Sign

Among the most common signs in the Egyptian writing system is the sign transliterated as pr.

The sign represents a house. Its form resembles a simple ground plan viewed from above. An enclosure is indicated. An opening is provided. The design is economical.

The sign appears in titles, institutional names, property records, inventories, and formal designations. Familiarity with the sign is useful from the beginning.

The Egyptian house served several functions at once. Food was stored there. Property was managed there. Children were raised there. Accounts were kept there. Religious observances occurred there. Instruction occurred there. The boundaries of the household and the boundaries of daily life often overlapped.

When modern readers encounter the word house, a building is usually understood. Egyptian usage extends further. A house could refer to a residence, a household, an estate, an institution, or an administrative body. Context determines the scale.

Part 2: The Great House

The expression Per-Aa is commonly translated as Great House. The phrase is familiar to many readers through its later form: Pharaoh.

The earlier usage referred to the institution. Records indicate that the phrase was applied to the royal establishment before it was regularly applied to those associated with it. The development was gradual.

Large institutions often acquire identities independent of their occupants. The institution persists. Its personnel change. The records continue.

The Egyptian state generated a substantial quantity of records. Land was surveyed. Taxes were assessed. Labor was organized. Storehouses were maintained. Correspondence was transmitted.

These activities required offices, archives, officials, and procedures. The Great House occupied a central position within this arrangement.

The term may refer to a location. It may refer to an administration. It may refer to the royal establishment as a whole. The scale varies according to context.

A household becomes an estate. An estate becomes an institution. An institution acquires responsibilities extending across a kingdom. The language follows the growth of the structure.

A workshop may include several workers. A temple may include several households. An estate may include fields, storehouses, personnel, and records. The name remains singular. The activity extends beyond the walls.

Part 3: Household as a Unit of Reality

The household occupied a central position within Egyptian society.

Many activities now distributed among separate institutions were conducted within the household. Food was stored there. Property was managed there. Children were raised there. Instruction occurred there. Religious observances occurred there. Craft activity frequently occurred there as well.

A household might include family members, dependents, servants, laborers, and apprentices. Property could be held

through the household. Obligations could be assigned through the household. Occupations were often learned there.

The household therefore appears in several forms of documentation. Tax assessments refer to households. Property transfers refer to households. Inheritance records refer to households. Administrative records refer to households.

A household required resources. Food entered. Materials entered. Tools entered. Records entered. People entered and departed according to circumstance.

Several generations might occupy the same structure or remain associated with the same property. Names reappear in the record. Occupations reappear in the record. Relationships reappear in the record.

Workers belonged to households. Scribes belonged to households. Officials belonged to households. The administrative record frequently identifies individuals through these relationships.

Part 4: Continuity

The Egyptian record extends across many centuries. Structures remained recognizable throughout that period.

Households persisted. Occupations persisted. Administrative offices persisted. Methods of recordkeeping persisted. The individuals associated with these structures changed continuously.

The household provides a useful example. Property might pass from one generation to the next. Occupations might pass from one generation to the next. Names occasionally reappear across several generations of the same family.

The record preserves these transitions unevenly but in substantial numbers. A son enters an occupation previously held by a parent.

Property changes ownership. An inheritance is recorded. A household continues.

The same pattern appears beyond the household. A workshop continues. A temple continues. An administrative office continues. Records created by one generation are consulted by another.

A record extends the useful life of information. An inventory remains available after its compiler has departed. A boundary description remains available after a surveyor has departed. A name remains available after its owner has departed.

Part 5: Property, Inheritance, and Obligation

The Egyptian record contains frequent references to property. Land appears in the record. Buildings appear in the record. Tools appear in the record. Livestock appears in the record.

Property must be identified, managed, transferred, and protected. The household occupied an important position within this process.

Property was held by individuals. Property was also associated with households, estates, temples, and institutions. The arrangement depended upon circumstance. The records preserve examples of each.

Inheritance appears regularly in the documentary record. Property changed hands. Responsibilities changed hands. Occupations occasionally changed hands. The transfer required recognition. Writing provided one means of establishing that recognition.

A boundary required description. Property required identification. An obligation required acknowledgement. The record supported these activities.

The same principle extends beyond material possessions. Knowledge may be transmitted. An occupation may be transmitted. A workshop may continue through successive generations. The transfer is not always formal. The continuity remains visible.

Obligation appears alongside property. Taxes were assessed. Labor was assigned. Supplies were distributed. Responsibilities accompanied participation in larger administrative systems.

III. The Things They Carried

Part 1: Tools

The workers of Deir el-Medina carried tools.

Construction required tools. Measurement required tools. Writing required tools. The activities described in earlier sections depended upon them.

Examples survive. Chisels survive. Mallets survive. Adzes survive. Measuring rods survive. Plumb lines survive. Palettes survive.

The forms vary according to purpose. A measuring rod performs a different task than a chisel. A palette performs a different task than a plumb line. The distinction is practical.

Tools are designed to accomplish specific work. The shape of a tool reflects that work. A measuring rod reflects measurement. A chisel reflects stone. A palette reflects writing.

Experience accumulates in the object. The user receives the tool in finished form. The adjustments, experiments, and corrections that produced the design have already occurred.

A workshop contains knowledge. Some of that knowledge resides in the workers. Some resides in the tools.

For this reason, tools appear frequently in both archaeological and visual records. Occupations become visible through the objects associated with them.

Part 2: The Scribe's Palette

Among the objects associated with ancient Egypt, the scribe's palette appears with unusual frequency.

The object was practical. Reeds, pigments, and writing materials could be carried together and kept available for use.

Administrative work depended upon such equipment. Inventories, correspondence, reports, measurements, and accounts required tools suitable for recording information.

Examples survive. Palettes appear in excavations. Palettes appear in tomb decoration. Palettes appear in association with scribes.

The object accompanies the occupation.

A stonemason may be identified through tools associated with stonework. A surveyor may be identified through instruments associated with measurement. Occupations frequently become visible through the objects required for their practice.

The palette occupies this position within Egyptian writing. The object supported routine work.

Deliveries were recorded. Inventories were maintained. Boundaries were described. Correspondence was transmitted. Instructions were copied.

Administrative systems produce records. Records require personnel capable of creating and maintaining them. The palette accompanied this activity.

Writing entered practical situations. A shipment arrived. A count was recorded. A worker was absent. A letter was delivered. A decision was preserved.

Many tools disappear into the work they support. The palette belongs to this category.

Part 3: Staffs and Rods

Staffs and rods appear frequently in Egyptian representations.

The forms vary according to purpose. Some were used for walking. Some were used for measurement. Some appear in association with authority, office, or responsibility. The distinction is usually apparent from context.

The practical uses are sufficient for the present section.

Construction requires measurement. Agriculture requires measurement. Property requires measurement. Administration requires measurement.

Fields possess boundaries. Buildings possess dimensions. Storehouses possess capacities. Records describing these things depend upon methods capable of producing consistent results.

Simple tools often satisfy the requirement. A rod establishes length. A plumb line establishes vertical alignment. A cord establishes distance between points. The principles are uncomplicated. Their application permits larger activities to proceed.

The surveyor occupies a useful position in this regard. Construction follows measurement. Property records follow measurement. Tax assessments frequently follow measurement. The activity appears before the record. The record preserves the result.

Many Egyptian representations include staffs carried by officials, overseers, and other figures associated with administration. The object may serve practical purposes. It may also indicate a position within a larger structure.

A rod measures. A staff supports movement.

Part 4: Containers

The Egyptian record contains a large number of containers.

Jars, baskets, sacks, chests, boxes, and storage vessels appear in excavations, illustrations, inventories, and administrative records. The forms vary according to purpose. The function remains recognizable.

Materials require storage. Materials require transport. The same object often supports both activities.

Grain provides a useful example. Harvested grain must be gathered, transported, stored, measured, distributed, and consumed. Each stage requires containers.

The principle extends beyond food. Pigments require containers. Tools require containers. Documents require containers. Personal possessions require containers. A settlement accumulates objects. Containers assist in their organization.

The relationship appears frequently in administrative records. Inventories describe quantities. Deliveries describe movement. Storehouse records describe accumulation.

The container often remains in the background while the contents receive attention. Records are usually concerned with what is being stored rather than the vessel performing the storage. The vessel remains necessary.

A household stores supplies. A workshop stores materials. A temple stores offerings. An administration stores records. The objects differ. The requirement remains familiar.

Part 5: When Objects Become Signs

The objects discussed in this section possess practical functions. A palette supports writing. A rod supports measurement. A container supports storage and transport.

The object exists whether or not it is represented.

Many Egyptian signs derive from recognizable objects. The relationship is often visible. A house resembles a house. A hand resembles a hand. Water resembles water.

The student has already encountered the house sign. The sign refers to something already familiar. The object was established before the sign was introduced.

The same pattern appears throughout the writing system. Objects enter daily life before they enter writing. The writing system records a world that already exists.

Familiarity with ordinary objects assists the study of hieroglyphs. A student encountering an unfamiliar sign may discover that the object represented is already known.

Not every sign retains an obvious relationship to its original form. Time introduces variation. Convention introduces variation. The record preserves examples of both.

The object and the sign are related. They are not identical. A drawing of a house may represent a house. It may also participate in a word. The same sign may perform different functions in different contexts.

The Egyptian writing system emerged from a world of objects, occupations, buildings, landscapes, and activities. The signs preserve traces of that origin.

IV. Records

Part 1: Why Keep Records?

Records preserve information.

A boundary may be known to several individuals. A record permits consultation after those individuals have departed.

A delivery may be observed once. A record permits review at a later date.

A count may be performed in the morning. A record permits the count to remain available in the evening.

Property requires description. Inventories require maintenance. Agreements require recognition. Obligations require acknowledgment. The activities differ. The underlying problem remains similar. Information must remain available.

The Egyptian record preserves numerous examples. Deliveries were recorded. Inventories were maintained. Property was described. Names were preserved. Instructions were transmitted.

The surviving documents vary considerably in scale. Some concern a single transaction. Others concern institutions, estates, or administrative systems extending across many years.

A record permits reference. A decision may be reviewed. A boundary may be consulted. A quantity may be verified. The information becomes available beyond the moment of observation.

Records also accumulate. A single record preserves a single event. Many records preserve a process. A collection of inventories reveals a system of storage. A collection of letters reveals a network of relationships. A collection of administrative documents reveals an institution.

The records introduced in this section were created to solve immediate problems. Their survival permits later generations to observe the solutions.

Part 2: Lists

Many records take the form of lists.

The format is economical. Information may be arranged, reviewed, expanded, corrected, and compared with relative ease. The advantages become apparent wherever large quantities of material require organization.

The Egyptian record contains numerous examples. Inventories were maintained. Personnel were listed. Deliveries were recorded. Offerings were enumerated. Property was described.

A list imposes order. Objects occupying different locations may be gathered within a single document. Activities occurring at different times may be presented together. Quantities become easier to compare. Omissions become easier to identify.

A storehouse requires inventories. A work crew requires personnel records. A temple requires records of offerings and supplies. Administrative activity produces lists naturally.

A workshop may maintain an inventory of tools. A household may maintain a list of expenses. An archive may maintain a catalog of documents. The scale changes. The underlying method remains stable.

Lists also reveal patterns. A single entry records an item. Many entries describe a system. A list of deliveries reveals movement. A list of names reveals organization. A list of supplies reveals priorities.

Part 3: Accounts

Lists record what exists. Accounts record what happened.

An inventory may describe the contents of a storehouse. An account may describe the movement of materials into or out of that storehouse. One record establishes a condition. The other records a change.

The Egyptian record contains many examples. Deliveries were recorded. Supplies were issued. Labor was assigned. Taxes were assessed. Materials were distributed.

An account connects actions to records. A quantity is observed. A quantity is recorded. The record becomes available for later consultation.

The process assists verification. A delivery may be confirmed. A shortage may be identified. A previous decision may be reviewed.

The same principles appear at many scales. A household may account for stored grain. A workshop may account for tools and materials. An estate may account for agricultural production. An administration may account for taxation, labor, and distribution.

Accounts also preserve sequence. An inventory describes what is present. An account often describes what occurred first, what occurred next, and what occurred afterward.

Part 4: Letters

Some records are addressed to specific individuals.

The Egyptian record contains numerous examples of correspondence. Messages were exchanged between family members, officials, workers, and institutions. The subjects vary. The form remains recognizable.

A letter permits communication across distance. The distance may be physical. The distance may be administrative. The requirement remains similar. Information must travel from one location to another.

Instructions may be transmitted. Questions may be asked. Requests may be made. Reports may be delivered. The practical uses are extensive.

The village of Deir el-Medina provides useful examples. Correspondence appears alongside inventories, accounts, attendance records, and other documents associated with daily life.

An inventory describes materials. An account describes activity. A letter introduces intention. The writer possesses a purpose. The purpose enters the document.

Letters often preserve details absent from other forms of recordkeeping. Personal concerns appear. Administrative concerns appear. Explanations appear. Requests appear.

Many letters concern practical matters. Materials are requested. Instructions are clarified. Deliveries are acknowledged. The record remains connected to ordinary activity.

Part 5: Archives

An individual record may solve an immediate problem. A collection of records may remain useful for much longer.

The Egyptian record survives in fragments. The surviving material nevertheless demonstrates the value of preservation. Inventories, accounts, correspondence, property records, administrative documents, and inscriptions remain available long after the activities that produced them have concluded.

The archive extends the useful life of information. A previous decision may be consulted. A boundary may be reviewed. A property claim may be examined. An account may be verified.

The immediate purpose of a document often concludes shortly after its creation. Preservation creates additional uses.

A household may preserve records. A workshop may preserve records. A temple may preserve records. An administration may preserve records. The methods vary according to circumstance.

The Egyptian record demonstrates both success and failure. Many records disappeared. Some survived. Modern knowledge of ancient Egypt depends heavily upon the surviving portion.

The surviving material is uneven. Certain periods are represented more fully than others. Certain activities appear frequently. Others appear rarely. The archive reflects the conditions of its preservation as much as the conditions of its creation.

The student encounters Egypt through surviving records. The original creators encountered only the records available to them at the time. The difference is substantial.

Archives preserve information. They shape understanding.

V. Signs

Part 1: Pictures

Many Egyptian signs resemble recognizable objects.

A house may resemble a house. A hand may resemble a hand.

Water may resemble water.

Birds, tools, plants, containers, and parts of the human body appear throughout the writing system. The relationship between object and sign is often visible.

A sign may resemble an object while serving a different purpose within the writing system. Context determines the reading.

Observation provides a useful beginning. Identify the object. Observe the sign.

Part 2: Sounds

The signs of Egyptian writing do not function solely as pictures.

Many signs also represent sounds.

A picture of a bird may participate in the writing of a word. The object represented by the sign and the sound represented by the sign are not always identical.

A written symbol may represent a sound rather than an object. Egyptian writing employs both approaches.

The signs remain visible. The writing system extends beyond illustration.

Words may be written through combinations of sound values. The signs contributing those sounds are selected according to convention and usage.

The student is not required to memorize extensive sound values at this stage. Recognition of the principle is sufficient.

Part 3: Words

Some signs represent words directly.

A sign depicting the sun may represent the sun. A sign depicting water may represent water. The relationship between object and word remains visible.

Other words require combinations of signs. Sound values, convention, and context contribute to the reading.

A single function should not be assumed for every sign.

A sign may represent an object. A sign may contribute a sound. A sign may participate in the writing of a complete word.

The writing system employs these methods together.

Part 4: Determinatives

Not every sign in Egyptian writing contributes a sound.

Some signs perform a different function. Modern scholars refer to these signs as determinatives. The term is useful and will be retained throughout this manual.

A determinative assists classification.

The sign is typically placed near the end of a word. It helps identify the category to which the word belongs. The sign may indicate a person, a place, an occupation, an action, an animal, or another recognizable class of things.

The determinative is usually not pronounced. Its contribution is visual rather than phonetic.

Words possessing similar sounds may be distinguished from one another. Categories become easier to identify. Meaning becomes easier to establish.

A word concerning a person may conclude with a sign associated with persons. A word concerning a settlement may conclude with

a sign associated with settlements. A word concerning movement may conclude with a sign associated with movement.

The practice reflects a broader tendency already encountered in earlier sections of this manual. Households were classified. Property was classified. Records were classified. Archives were classified. The writing system participates in the same habit of organization.

Determinatives perform practical work. The sign assists the reader. The category becomes visible.

Part 5: Reading a Sign

The student has now encountered several functions performed by Egyptian signs.

A sign may resemble an object. A sign may contribute a sound. A sign may represent a word. A sign may serve as a determinative.

These functions operate together. The reading of a sign therefore depends upon context.

An unfamiliar sign should first be observed. Its form should be noted. Its position should be noted. Its relationship to neighboring signs should be noted.

The writing system provides information through arrangement as well as through individual signs.

A sign rarely appears alone. The surrounding signs contribute meaning. The surrounding signs contribute sound. The surrounding signs contribute classification.

Egyptian writing is best approached as a system rather than a collection of isolated symbols.

It is rarely useful to ask what a sign means in isolation. The more useful question concerns function: what role does the sign perform here?

The answer may vary according to context. The same sign may participate differently in different texts.

VI. Reading a Wall

Part 1: Direction

Egyptian writing possesses direction.

The determination of direction should occur before reading begins.

Many signs face a particular way. Birds provide useful examples. Human figures provide useful examples. Animals provide useful examples.

The figures generally face the beginning of the line. The reader proceeds toward them.

A line of signs facing left is typically read from left to right. A line of signs facing right is typically read from right to left.

Vertical arrangements follow similar principles.

Sound values and translation come later. Direction is established first. The remainder of the process follows.

The arrangement serves practical purposes. A reader must know where to begin. A reader must know where to continue. The writing system provides this information visually.

Egyptian inscriptions often possess considerable visual balance. Signs are arranged to occupy available space effectively. Direction remains present despite these adjustments.

Part 2: Arrangement

Egyptian signs are arranged deliberately.

The arrangement serves both practical and visual purposes. Signs occupy space. Words occupy space. The available surface influences the placement of both.

For this reason, signs are often grouped rather than written in long uninterrupted sequences. The arrangement assists readability. It also contributes to visual balance.

A sign may be enlarged. A sign may be reduced. Several signs may occupy the space of a single larger sign. The adjustments affect appearance more than meaning.

Groups of signs are best treated as units. A group may contain several sounds. A group may contain a word. A group may contain a combination of signs performing different functions.

The visual arrangement assists organization. A paragraph is easier to read than an uninterrupted wall of text. A page benefits from margins. The Egyptian system addresses similar concerns through different methods.

Beginning students occasionally assume that signs should be read according to physical size. Position and function remain more important than scale.

Observation resolves most difficulties. The arrangement deserves attention before interpretation begins.

Part 3: Names

Names appear frequently in Egyptian writing.

People possess names. Households possess names. Places possess names. Institutions possess names. The writing system records all of them.

Royal names are often enclosed within cartouches. The cartouche is readily recognizable. Its form assists identification even when the surrounding signs remain unfamiliar.

Recognition often precedes reading.

Many inscriptions become less intimidating once names are identified. The reader acquires points of reference.

A familiar name assists orientation within a text. The same principle applies to maps, records, and correspondence. Names provide anchors.

The Egyptian record preserves large numbers of names. Officials appear. Workers appear. Scribes appear. Rulers appear. Many remain known because their names entered the record.

The preservation of names represents one of the recurring functions of writing encountered throughout this manual.

Part 4: First Reading

A short inscription may now be examined. Recognition is sufficient.

Several elements introduced in previous sections should already be familiar. Direction should be established first. Individual signs should be identified second. Functions should be considered third.

A reader does not begin with conclusions. A reader begins with observation.

For the present exercise, consider the expression Per-Aa: Great House.

The phrase has already appeared in earlier sections of this manual. The signs may be approached in stages.

First, identify the house sign. The sign has been encountered previously. Recognition should require little effort.

Second, identify the remaining signs. Observation remains sufficient.

Third, consider the function of the expression. The phrase refers to an institution. The expression later became associated with those occupying that institution. The development was gradual.

A second example may be considered: a personal name enclosed within a cartouche. The student should first identify the cartouche. The signs contained within it may remain unfamiliar. The function is nevertheless apparent. A name is being preserved.

Part 5: Working Method

The preceding sections introduced signs, records, direction, arrangement, and names.

Sufficient material has now been introduced to approach unfamiliar inscriptions.

First, establish direction. Determine where the text begins. Determine where the text continues. The remaining observations depend upon this step.

Second, identify familiar forms. The student should not attempt immediate translation. Recognition provides a more reliable point of departure. A house sign may be recognized. A cartouche may be recognized. A determinative may be recognized.

Third, identify functions. Determine whether a sign operates as picture, sound, word, or determinative. The distinction frequently resolves uncertainty.

Fourth, observe relationships. Signs rarely appear alone. Meaning emerges through arrangement and context. The surrounding signs contribute information. The larger structure contributes information.

Fifth, record observations. A partial reading remains valuable. An uncertain reading remains valuable. Additional information may become available later. The record should reflect the current state of understanding.

Observation precedes interpretation. Interpretation precedes conclusion. The sequence should not be reversed.

VII. Field Reference

Part 1: Twenty Signs Worth Knowing

The following reference list is intentionally short.

Twenty signs are sufficient for first recognition. Additional signs may be added after the student has acquired direction, arrangement, and function.

House. Water. Road. Hand. Mouth. Eye. Man. Woman. Child.
King. Scribe. Sun. Field. Bird. Reed. Owl. Basket. Jar. Staff.
Name.

The signs are best learned first as objects. Sound values may be added later.

Part 2: Common Determinatives

Determinatives assist classification.

Begin with a small number of common categories: person, woman, child, deity, place, settlement, movement, animal, plant, action, abstract quality, and occupation.

The present manual supplies categories before forms.



























A determinative is often silent. Its silence should not be mistaken for absence of function. It assists the reader by narrowing the field of meaning.

When a word is difficult, the determinative may provide the first reliable clue.

Part 3: Additional References

Readers requiring expanded sign lists, administrative samples, and practice inscriptions should consult companion references maintained by the Pacific Archives Division.

Suggested references: SI-01-HRG-R (Field Reference), SI-01-HRG-A (Administrative Text Samples), SI-01-HRG-P (Practice Inscriptions).

<p style="text-align: center;">TWENTY HIEROGLYPHS WORTH CARRYING FORWARD</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Field Reference</i></p>							
	No.	Sign	Gardiner Code	Transliteration	Meaning / Value	Category	Notes
<p>HOUSEHOLD & PLACE</p> 	1		G17	<i>pr</i>	house, estate, dwelling	household	Appears in many place and institution names.
	2		G5	<i>niwt</i>	town, city	household / place	Used in names of cities and settlements.
	3		G46	<i>²a</i>	great, large	concept	Common adjective in titles and names.
<p>PEOPLE</p> 	4		A1	<i>²nh</i>	life (as word); man (as determinative)	people / determinative	Used as determinative for male persons.
	5		D36	<i>irt</i>	woman	people	Also used as determinative.
	6		D37	<i>t</i>	female (determinative)	determinative	Follows words referring to women.
<p>NATURE</p> 	7		N35	<i>n</i>	water	nature	Very common phonetic sign.
	8		R11	<i>r²</i>	sun, day, Ra	nature / deity	Used in many divine and solar names.
	9		D10	<i>pt</i>	sky	nature	Often used in place names and titles.
	10		M4	<i>i</i>	reeds	nature	Common phonetic sign.
<p>ANIMALS</p> 	11		G21	<i>m</i>	owl	animal / phonetic	One of the most frequent signs.
	12		G43	<i>w</i>	quail chick	animal / phonetic	Common sound sign.
	13		F30	<i>f</i>	viper	animal / phonetic	Often used in royal names.
	14		G9	<i>w</i>	bird (determinative)	determinative	Follows words relating to birds.
<p>ADMINISTRATION & RECORDS</p> 	15		N18	<i>sš</i>	scribe, writing	administration	Important in titles of scribes.
	16		D28	<i>²bd</i>	papyrus, document	administration	Refers to writing material or document.
	17		S34	<i>hpr</i>	seal	administration	Used in official contexts.
	18		D58	<i>m²</i>	to go, movement	action / concept	Indicates movement or action.
<p>DAILY LIFE</p> 	19		D46	<i>d</i>	hand	daily life	Common object and phonetic sign.
	20		X1	<i>t</i>	bread	daily life	Basic food; appears in offering lists.

Notes: 1) Direction in texts is determined by the way figures face. 2) Determinatives do not indicate sound; they indicate category.

Gardiner Codes from: Gardiner, A. H. Egyptian Grammar, 3rd ed., Oxford, 1957.

Afterword

The present manual arrived at Desk C/04 through ordinary channels.

The original proposal was submitted by C/14 during the second quarter review cycle. The proposal noted the absence of a concise introductory guide to Egyptian hieroglyphs within the educational holdings of the MidPacific Soviet of Letters. Existing materials were judged either excessively specialized or insufficiently practical for introductory use.

The proposal was accepted for preliminary review.

A provisional structure was subsequently prepared by CSAIT/18 (Compiler Sub-Assistant in Training). The structure consisted of six sections and an appendix. Several useful observations were included. Several additional observations were not. Such conditions are normal.

The proposal was returned for revision.

The revised structure demonstrated improvement.

An additional allotment of green tea was authorized.

Further revisions followed.

Research materials were assembled from archaeological reports, reference grammars, educational texts, excavation records, and prior compilations. The resulting material exceeded the requirements of an introductory manual by a considerable margin. Most of it remains in storage.

The final structure emerged gradually.

The village was retained.

The household was retained.

The records section was expanded.

Several proposed digressions concerning dynastic chronology, comparative religion, esoteric interpretation, and speculative architecture were removed without ceremony.

The remaining material proved sufficient.

The purpose of the manual is introductory. The reader is not expected to complete this volume as an Egyptologist. The reader is expected to complete this volume with fewer mysteries than were present at the beginning. That standard was judged attainable.

The compiler wishes to acknowledge the contribution of CSAIT/18, whose early drafts displayed enthusiasm in quantities exceeding precision, and precision in quantities exceeding experience.

The compiler also notes that the workers of Deir el-Medina, whose records supplied much of the material contained herein, completed their duties several thousand years before the preparation of this volume. Their participation in the project was therefore indirect, though substantial.

C/04

Symbolic Infrastructure Harmonics Division,
Historical and Archaeological Compilations,
MidPacific Soviet of Letters