

Hieroglyphs: Studies in Ancient Hieroglyphic Writing

Introduction

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Dedicated to J.-Fr. Champollion,
the founder of hieroglyphic studies

With this first issue we are very pleased to introduce *Hieroglyphs*, an internationally peer-reviewed e-journal that aims to promote the academic study of hieroglyphs from both an Egyptological and a comparative perspective.

As we celebrate the 200-year anniversary of Champollion's decipherment of Egyptian hieroglyphs, studies of hieroglyphs continue to appear in scattered publications. This dispersion is paradoxical, given the centrality of hieroglyphic writing to both the high culture of ancient Egyptian and Egyptology. It is also highly unfortunate in view of the diverse research currently taking place in relation to many different aspects of hieroglyphic writing. *Hieroglyphs* aims to address these shortfalls by providing a dedicated home for studies of hieroglyphs in all their semiotic, linguistic, aesthetic, cultural, and material dimensions. In doing so, it will help intensify discussion, emphasize the manifold nature of the study of hieroglyphs, and establish this study as a field of its own.

Hieroglyphic scripts reflect a major cultural investment on the part of the societies that developed and used them. They served for thousands of years as an advanced experimental laboratory

for the relations between the spoken and written words and images. Hieroglyphic writing systems embrace a variety of different scripts, including Mesoamerican scripts and Anatolian hieroglyphs. These scripts span time and space, and we intend *Hieroglyphs* to function as a forum for the study of Egyptian hieroglyphs alongside these and other similar scripts. We are further interested in the iconic aspects of Cuneiform and Chinese writing in their earlier stages. We hope that the interdisciplinary analysis of these different forms of writing will highlight the relevance of pictorial scripts to such disciplines as anthropology, cognitive linguistics, neuroscience, and communication studies.

Hieroglyphs invites academic studies on the following, non-exclusive list of subjects in Egyptology and other hieroglyphic or related traditions:

- the linguistic and semiotic dimensions of hieroglyphic writing systems
- the categorization and representation of knowledge in hieroglyphic repertoires
- individual signs and repertoires of signs, including their forms, visual and cultural referents, and “biographies” (their diachronic development)
- the relation of hieroglyphic systems to iconography and visual/aesthetic culture, including extended practices of hieroglyphic writing such as enigmatic writing, visual poetry, etc.
- the graphic ideologies behind hieroglyphic writing, including issues of ontology; the power of hieroglyphs; hieroglyphs in society; hieroglyphs and authority; hieroglyphs and materiality
- the reception of hieroglyphs, both ancient (including pseudo-hieroglyphs) and modern; history of research
- the relation of Egyptian hieroglyphs to other varieties of Egyptian writing (hieratic, demotic), including influences and hybrid registers.

In addition to traditional articles, *Hieroglyphs* invites the submission of “essays and notes.” We intend these essays and notes as an alternative mode of academic conversation and dissemination: an experimental way of presenting ideas in the making and/or in formats that differ from those of the traditional academic article. For instance, an author might make use of the format to experiment with an idea and submit it for discussion before elaborating on it further.

Hieroglyphs will be an entirely digital venue. This will allow us to publish images and other visual content without any restriction on their number or the use of color. It will allow for the detailed presentation of original hieroglyphic inscriptions that are not reducible to fonts; inscribed artifacts and monuments; computerized color visualizations of networks of signs, etc.

The digital format and a fast-tracked editorial process will also permit the rapid publication of articles (within three months of the date of initial submission for articles that do not require major changes). Articles and essays will be published individually as soon as they are ready and collected in an annual e-volume. In the spirit of broad dissemination, *Hieroglyphs* is fully Open Access.

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The editors (July 23, 2023)

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