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INSCRIPTIONS

The Newsletter of the Friends of the Egypt Centre, Swansea

Issue 40
September 2015

Special Language Edition

In this issue:

Next Friends' Lecture

Wednesday 16 September 2015

7.00 p.m.

Fulton House, Room 2

Presenting Ancient Egypt – the creation of the Secret Egypt exhibition

Chris Kirby

Director of Collections for Culture Coventry

This talk will look at the interpretative techniques that were used to create a highly successful exhibition on ancient Egypt that has been seen by over 120,000 people around the UK. We will see how through the interpreted use of primary source material, Secret Egypt has attempted to dispel well established misconceptions about ancient Egypt to convey a more accurate but still remarkable and vivid picture of this ancient civilisation.

Editor's note: Unlike previous years, this lecture will not be preceded by the Annual General Meeting. The AGM has been postponed until Wednesday 21st October (see page 6).

Wine Tasting at the Egypt Centre

Discover North Africa and the Middle East

Friday 25th September 2015, 6.30 pm — 8.30 pm

£18 per person or 2 tickets for £32

Explore a selection of wines from North Africa and the Middle East with wine and food specialist John Roberts.

Discover the history of wine in ancient Egypt and its neighbouring countries with a curator-led gallery tour.

Includes a food match selection with cheese, smoked salmon and dark chocolate.

Ages 18 and over only - Limited places available

Booking essential

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Two new Egyptology books

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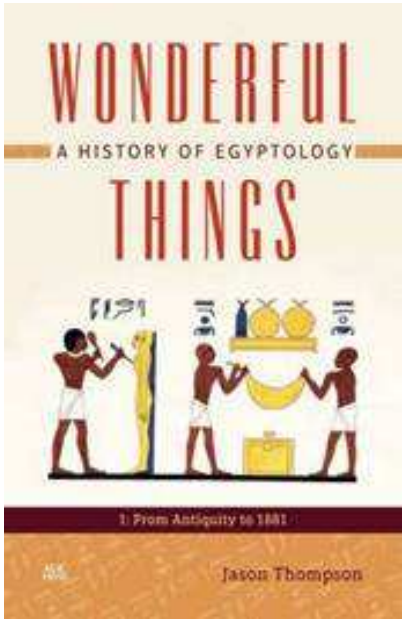
Wonderful Things: A History of Egyptology 1: From Antiquity to 1881

by Jason Thompson



Wonderful Things is the first part in a landmark series, the first ever comprehensive history of Egyptology, published by the American University of Cairo Press.

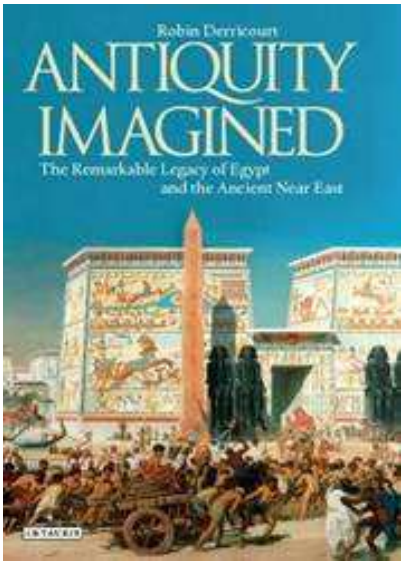
The discovery of ancient Egypt and the development of Egyptology are momentous events in intellectual and cultural history. The history of Egyptology is the story of the people, famous and obscure, who constructed the picture of ancient Egypt that we have today, recovered the Egyptian past while inventing it anew, and made a lost civilization comprehensible to generations of enchanted readers and viewers thousands of years later. The book traces the recovery of ancient Egypt and its impact on the human imagination in a saga filled with intriguing mysteries, great discoveries, and scholarly creativity. *Wonderful Things* affirms that the history of ancient Egypt has proved continually fascinating, but it also demonstrates that the history of Egyptology is no less so. Only by understanding how Egyptology has developed can we truly understand the Egyptian past.

‘A remarkable achievement’ JAROMIR MALEK

Jason Thompson recently gave the keynote address at the ASTENE conference. He is based in the US.

Antiquity Imagined: The Remarkable Legacy of Egypt and the Ancient Near East

by Robin Derricourt



Outsiders have long attributed to the Middle East, and especially to ancient Egypt, meanings that go way beyond the rational and observable. The region has been seen as the source of civilization, religion, the sciences and the arts; but also of mystical knowledge and outlandish theories, whether about the Lost City of Atlantis or visits by alien beings. In his exploration of how its past has been creatively interpreted by later ages, Robin Derricourt surveys the various claims that have been made for Egypt - particularly the idea that it harbours an esoteric wisdom vital to the world's survival. He looks at 'alternative' interpretations of the pyramids, from maps of space and time to landing markers for UFOs; at images of the Egyptian mummy and at the popular mythology of the 'pharaoh's curse'; and at imperialist ideas of racial superiority that credited Egypt with spreading innovations and inventions as far as the Americas, Australia and China. Including arcane ideas about the Lost Ten Tribes of biblical Israel, the author enlarges his focus to include the Levant. His book is the first to show in depth how ancient Egypt and the surrounding lands have so continuously and seductively tantalised the Western imagination.

‘Fascinating and Entertaining’ BARRY KEMP

by Rory Gormley

Ancient Egyptian Demons: An interactive workshop

Ancient Egyptian demons are conceptual imaginings of ancient minds, a projection and manifestation of fears of the unexplained. On 21 October, Zuzannah Bennett will deliver a short lecture discussing some of the problems encountered when modern scholars study these ancient visualisations and textual descriptions of demons. This will be followed by an interactive workshop that brings the Demon Creation Station (Ancient Egyptian Demonology Project: 2K) to you, so expect to get creative!

The workshop starts at 7 p.m. in Fulton House, Room 2, after the Friends’ AGM.

Editorial

Once again, welcome to our latest issue of Inscriptions. It's hard to believe that this is our 40th issue! We have again had difficulty in amassing enough contributions, so we are very grateful to Dr Dulcie Engel for providing so many excellent articles for this issue focussing on language.

As always I keep a close eye on the news for stories related to ancient Egypt. Reports are surfacing about the possibility of two hidden rooms in Tutankhamen's tomb. However, there is much unjustified media speculation about the actual presence of the rooms (they may never have been completed) and the possible occupant (if any) of one room. Much more work needs to be done. It is a case of "watch this space".

Don't forget to put these dates in your diary:

- First lecture of the new academic year, Wednesday 16th September
- Wine Tasting at the Egypt Centre, Friday 25th September
- Annual General Meeting of the Friends, followed by second lecture of the year, Wednesday 21 October

Sadly I will miss the first two due to holidays, but I look forward to seeing everyone again at the AGM.

Mike Mac Donagh

'Demon Things: Ancient Egyptian Manifestations of Liminal Entities' Conference

21-24 March, 2016

at Swansea University and the Egypt Centre

This international conference explores the range and variation of liminal entities the Ancient Egyptians believed capable of harm and help from the Predynastic through the Coptic periods. While previous demonological conferences focussed on issues related to definitions, we invite scholars to discuss the manifestations of demons through iconography, objects, or textual descriptions. Scholars are encouraged to present their findings in the hopes that the conference will provide a creative venue for spotting links and patterns. By converging different areas of research a fuller picture of these multi-faceted entities may emerge.

The conference is open to all. It will open on Monday 21st March with an evening launch of the Ancient Egyptian Demonology Project: 2K database, followed by an informal dinner. From 22nd to 24th March, a selection of conference papers will be presented, with confirmed speakers including Hans Fischer-Elfert, Panagiotis Kousoulis, Rita Lucarelli, Robert Ritner and Kasia Szpakowska. On the evening of the 22nd March, the Egypt Centre will host a magical 'Night at the Museum' with light refreshments. The Conference Feast will take place on the evening of 23rd March. The conference will be concluded in the afternoon of 24th March with a guided tour of the Gower Peninsula, with an optional thirst-quenching at the King Arthur Hotel.

Further information about the conference and the Demonology Project can be found at DemonThings.com. Keep an eye on our blog for the latest information, or you can follow us on Facebook and Twitter (@DemonThings). The registration form to attend the conference is available at DemonThings.com. The call for papers is open now until March 1, 2015. Please send abstracts of no more than 300 words, along with your name and institution, to demonthings@swansea.ac.uk.

WHT N VWLS?

Even in a writing system with both vowels and consonant symbols, such as the Latin alphabet as used to write English, it is quite easy for a native speaker to read a text with the vowels omitted:

WLCM T TH MSM

And it is more or less impossible to decipher the meaning of the same phrase with the consonants omitted:

EOE O E UEU

It is perhaps not surprising then that our alphabet evolved from a consonant-only alphabet, Phoenician (via Greek). The Phoenician alphabet is also the direct ancestor of two widely known consonantal alphabets, Arabic and Hebrew. These alphabets are sometimes called **abjads**, after the first four letters of various Semitic alphabets:

alif baa jim dal (Arabic)

alef bet gimel dalet (Hebrew)

In abjads, vowel sounds may be indicated by **diacritics**; marks such as points and dashes associated with a

letter. In Arabic and Hebrew, certain consonants evolved to represent vowel sounds. These are known as **matres lectionis** (mothers of reading) as they help readers differentiate words spelt with the same consonants.

In Hebrew, these matres lectionis are: *alef* (originally a glottal stop), *he, vav* and *yod.* Diacritics were introduced into Hebrew around the ninth century AD, to indicate vowel sounds even more precisely:

כֹּל בְּנֵי הָאָדָם נוֹלְדוּ בְּנֵי חוֹרִין וְשָׁוִים בְּעֶרְכָּם
וּבִזְכֻיּוֹתֵיהֶם. כֻּלָּם חוֹנְנוּ בַּתְּבוּנָה וּבְמַצְפּוּן, לְפִיכָךְ
חוֹבָה עֲלֵיהֶם לִנְהוֹג אִישׁ בְּרֵעֵהוּ בְּרוּחַ שֶׁל אַחֲוָה.

(http://www.omniglot.com/writing/hebrew.htm)

In Arabic, long vowels are written with matres lectionis, which are alif, waw and ya. Short vowels are indicated with diacritics:

يُولَدُ جَمِيعُ النَّاسِ أَحْرَاراً مُتَسَاوِينَ فِي الْكَرَامَةِ وَالحُقُوقِ. وَقَدْ وُهِبُوا
عَقْلاً وَ ضَمِيراً وَ عَلَيهِمْ أَنْ يُعَامِلَ بَعْضُهُمْ بَعْضاً بِرُوحِ اَلإِخَاء.

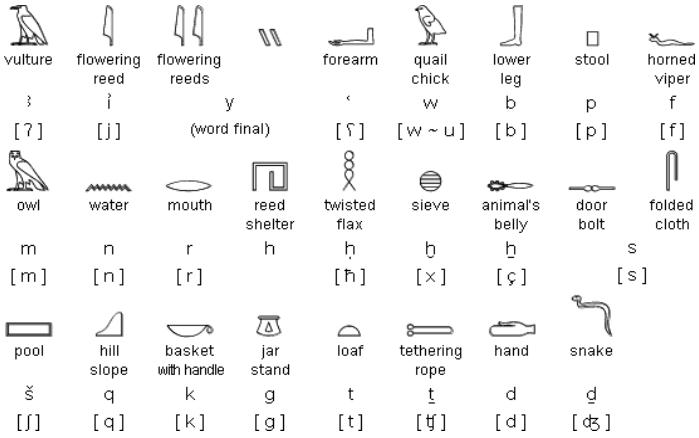
(http://www.omniglot.com/writing/arabic.htm)

In both languages however, diacritics are optional, and tend to be restricted to formal and religious texts, or texts for children and other learners.

Even in the Latin alphabet, various languages use diacritics, known as accents, to indicate the pronunciation of certain letters. In English, the diaeresis (¨) is used in names like Brontë, Zoë, to indicate that the final 'e' is pronounced, and not silent (as it would normally be in that position).

What about Egyptian hieroglyphs?

The Egyptian Alphabet



(http://www.omniglot.com/writing/egyptian.htm)

In the so-called Egyptian alphabet, or, more accurately, the list of uniliteral (one letter) symbols, there are some glyphs we equate to vowels. To keep things simple, I am using vowel letters (as on the posters in the House of Life), rather than symbols from the International Phonetic Alphabet or IPA (as shown in square brackets on the table above), which are more accurate representations of the actual sounds:

Vulture: a

Forearm: a

Flowering reed (single and double): i, e, ee, (and semi-vowel y)

Noose: o (a later symbol not on list above)

Quail chick: u (and semi-vowel w)

Egyptian hieroglyphs did not in fact mark vowels; the glyphs above became associated with vowel sounds, rather like the matres lectionis in Semitic languages. So the vulture is, like alef in Hebrew, a glottal stop consonant. The same consonant is present in some varieties of English, as in the Cockney pronunciation of the middle sound in 'bottle'. The other symbols are either later additions (to help with transliteration of Greek and Roman names and terms) or semi-vowels (also known as semi-consonants). These sounds are phonetically like a vowel, but consonant-like in their function (position in words and syllables). In English, the sounds represented by 'y' and 'w', 'r' and 'l' are semi-vowels (see Crystal 1987: 152-3).

Apart from the uniliteral symbols, there are many phonograms (sound signs) made up of two (biliteral) or three (triliteral) glyphs. These signs are sometimes accompanied by an extra (unilateral or biliteral) glyph which is not pronounced, but which reminds the reader of the sounds to be read. This extra glyph is known as a phonetic complement. Sometimes they resolve ambiguity; at other times they repeat the phonetic values of the original sign. They are optional, and with monumental hieroglyphs, aesthetic reasons may be a factor in their usage (space, layout, etc):

'the triliteral  can be combined with the uniliterals f and r resulting in  , or even with n, f and r, resulting in the group  , both combinations having exactly the same reading as the triliteral sign without any additional phonograms, nfr'

(http://www.ancient-egypt.org/_v3d/index.html)

Hieroglyphs use a combination of phonograms (as above) and ideograms (symbols which represent an object or a concept). The same glyph can be an ideogram and a phonogram. In the example above, the elongated oval represents the sound 'r', but a vertical stroke placed below indicates its use as the ideogram for 'mouth'.

In order to differentiate between words which are spelt the same, and may therefore sound the same (especially as vowels are not marked), an ideogram is added. This is called a determinative, and hints at the general sense of the word. There are over 100 generic determinatives, and they serve only as visual clues; they are not pronounced.

The same phonograms combined with different ideograms can also represent different meanings.

 nfr.t, for instance, means "the beautiful one".

With  as determinative the "one" is specified as being a woman, resulting in the meaning "the beautiful

woman". With  as determinative the "one" is specified as being the White Crown of Upper Egypt, resulting in the meaning "the beautiful crown". And with  , it is a cow that is said to be beautiful, giving the meaning "the beautiful cow"' (http://www.ancientegypt.org/_v3d/index.html)

Other common determinatives are two legs walking, which indicates motion, and a rolled-up papyrus, which indicates an abstract concept. In addition, as determinatives can only occur at the end of a word, they are useful indicators of word boundaries (there is no word spacing in hieroglyphic writing).

In conclusion…

We have seen that consonants are clearer indications of meaning than vowels. Also, in writing systems without vowels, various techniques can be used to indicate vowel sounds and avoid ambiguity. We have examples of Hebrew and Arabic writing in the House of Life, in addition to the many examples and explanations of hieroglyphs in both galleries.

HP Y NJYD THS RTCL!

by Dulcie Engel

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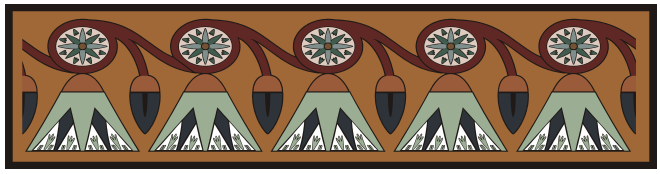

Even a scrap of cloth has a story

The Egypt Centre holds 188 items listed as textiles, of which 125 are designated as Coptic. These include many medallions or fragments with embroidered or woven motifs. A selection is on display in the Textiles case and drawers in the House of Life.

Many early textiles were found in Egypt as they were relatively well preserved: 'Knowledge about textiles from the early days of Islam comes mainly from Egypt, where fragile materials, including linen, cotton, wool and silk have been preserved in the dry soil as burial shrouds' (http://www.hali.com/news/cairo-wraps-early-islamic-textiles-toronto/). Furthermore, 'the fragments that have survived are…often dyed vivid colors. They demonstrate a well-developed textile technology notable for its use of complicated and richly colored designs' (http://www.lacma.org/islamic_art/eia.htm).

Unfortunately, most museums only hold fragmentary pieces: 'As in many museums today, the British Museum's Egyptian textiles collection is mostly composed of fragmentary pieces, acquired through excavation and purchase in the late 19th and early 20th century. At that time, decorative elements considered as spectacular or aesthetically pleasing were often cut out from large pieces when discovered, as only the most vibrant and colourful pieces were wanted by European collectors. However, this meant that they were also cut off from their archaeological contexts' (http://blog.britishmuseum.org/2014/06/02/a-new-look-at-ancient-egyptian-textiles/)

Variously shaped patches were used to decorate plain linen or wool tunics in the Coptic and the early Islamic Period, usually consisting of tapestry-woven symmetrical patterns or depictions of natural objects such as flowers and animals.

However, one small piece in our collection is a little different, and came to my attention during my research on writing and scripts in the Egypt Centre. EC1257 (see below) is a textile piece from the early Islamic Period. It consists of a decorative strip of purple and brown wool on undyed linen. At this period, indigotin (woad: the blue dye plant Isatis Tinctoria) and madder (the red dye plant Rubia Tinctorum) were mixed to create 'a cheap but effective purple dye' (Hall 1986: 11). Furthermore, EC1257 is patterned with two identical lines of Arabic script:

EC1257

Pritchard (2004: 37, 144) notes examples of a tunic, scarves and hats in the Whitworth Art Gallery (Manchester) collection, which are decorated with Greek or Coptic lettering. She (2004:92) also notes that the Victoria & Albert Museum (London) hold a red tunic (Egypt, 670-870 AD, cat. no. 291 1891):

'In the tapestry of the shoulder-bands is the name of God, *Allah*, in Arabic script. However, one letter is missing (the first freestanding one) and it is also woven mirror image. This could be due to faulty original design or the weaver might not to have been familiar with the word. Incorporating the word *Allah* was common at this time, both for reasons of faith and for purely decorative purposes. At this point, tapestry-woven decoration was bought separately from shops, so anyone of any faith could buy whatever took his or her fancy'. (http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O119593/tunic-unknown/)

In Newberry's collection of more than one thousand Islamic textile fragments from graves and rubbish mounds in Egypt, donated to the Ashmolean in the 1940s, 'many of the embroideries are worked in geometric patterns but there are also examples of scrolling and arabesque designs, figurative motifs and calligraphy. Beautiful writing is considered a major art form in Islamic culture[1]...the forms derived from letters on some pre-Mamluk fragments…have become illegible repeating patterns contained within compartments; this ordered arrangement of two patterns alternating along a band continued in use throughout the medieval period. Sometimes calligraphy was set against an intricate background of decorated scrolls and interlaced knots...Examples from the Mamluk period have words repeated as patterns like "glory" on a roundel…and the phrase "glory and eternity" on a long strip of linen...A motif which occurs with slight variations on no less than nine of the embroideries is derived from Arabic letters…the frequency with which it appears suggests it was a 'good luck' symbol' (http://jameelcentre.ashmolean.org/collection/7/1252).

Until recently, we had no translation for EC1257, but Syd got in touch with his Egyptologist friend in Egypt, Ahmed Khalifa, who suggested translations along the lines of 'We have (of) favour/blessings'. However the text is incomplete.

This could be a good luck symbol as above, or possibly an example of 'tiraz': 'In the Abbasid period (AD750-1258) fabrics, called tiraz, were made in present day Iraq and Egypt. Text from the Koran was embroidered across the fabric with a line of geometric shapes above that were probably for decoration. The word came to mean honorific robes with woven or embroidered inscriptions. Text might also include information such as the name of the reigning caliph, place of production and date' (Victoria and Albert museum. http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O77072/textile-fragment/). The V & A database lists 37 examples of 'tiraz' from Egypt in their collection.

The use of Arabic calligraphy is an important decorative and communicative form in a religion which forbids the depiction of human figures: 'while earlier civilizations used human figures to convey religious and political messages, Islam used Arabic script as a means of communication and as a primary symbol of the new religious faith' (http://www.hali.com/news/cairo-wraps-early-islamic-textiles-toronto/).

It was used to decorate a whole range of materials: 'Extending from manuscripts, calligraphy was soon used on a wide range of artefacts including metalwork, ceramics, testes *[sic]*, glasswork and glazed tiles' (http://islamic-arts.org/2012/the-farjam-collection-of-islamic-art/).

Furthermore, inscribed textiles 'record valuable information concerning broad historical trends. They document increasing government control over the textile industry, names of officials and rulers associated with these prestige items, the spread of Arabic language, the phenomenal popularity of the written word, as well as the special economic force of gift giving' (http://www.belovedlinens.net/fabrics/islamicT.html).

'Initially common in tomb covers, woven or embroidered inscriptions became increasingly complex during the 5th and 6th century AH and played (an) important role in decorating the textiles produced in Fatimid Egypt and Mesopotamia. Highly stylised calligraphic designs complimented the animal and bind patterns drawn from earlier Sasanid textile medallions' (http://islamic-arts.org/2012/the-farjam-collection-of-islamic-art/).

It is amazing how a little research into a small artefact from a museum can lead to a greater insight into the technology, art, religion and politics of a place and era.

by Dulcie Engel

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http://jameelcentre.ashmolean.org/collection/7/1252

http://www.lacma.org/i

[1] Writing as an art form is of course well known in Ancient Egypt, as many carved and painted hieroglyphs were arranged with aesthetic considerations in mind.

Annual General Meeting

Of the Friends of the Egypt Centre

Wednesday 21 October 2015

6.30 p.m. Fulton House, Room 2

Followed by the second lecture of the Academic Year

Ancient Egyptian Demons: an interactive Workshop

Zuzanna Bennett
PhD candidate in Egyptology

Part of the Ancient Egyptian Demonology Project: Second Millennium BCE

For more details see Page 2.

Hieroglyphs, Emoticons and Emoji: do they really have the same function?

Hieroglyphs and emoji have been in the news recently; in particular a claim by linguist Vyvyan Evans in May 2015 that emoji have eclipsed hieroglyphics as a visual language; and indeed he sees emoji as modern-day hieroglyphics (see Evans 2015b, Jones 2015). As Margaret (2015) points out, it is clear that Evans knows little about hieroglyphs or the Ancient Egyptian language. He is not however the first 'expert' on language to make such comparisons.

Sutherland (quoted in Press Association 2015) has compared emoticons with a 'caveman form of communication', and has described texting as a 'dialect' with 'a few hieroglyphs (codes comprehensible only to initiates) and a range of face symbols' (Sutherland 2002). Other experts disagree: 'the symbols found in texting are not like the writing system of Ancient Egypt. Egyptian hieroglyphs were complex entities, combinations of symbols representing both concepts and sounds' (Crystal 2008: 39).

So what do they really share and how do they differ? Let's start with some definitions:

Hieroglyphs (from the Greek *hieros*, sacred, and *gluptein*, to carve in stone) developed from pictograms into ideograms (stylised pictograms with a conventional meaning), and phonograms (symbols representing sounds). The system developed around 3100 to 3000 BC. The number of individual symbols range from 700 in Middle Egyptian to 5000 in the Graeco-Roman period. Most words are made up of groups of signs representing one, two or three consonants, known as uni-, bi- or tri-literal signs. There are 24 uniliteral signs. Direction of writing is variable, and text is written in columns or horizontal lines. It is usually read from right to left horizontally, and always from top to bottom vertically. Aesthetic consideration is important in the arrangement of symbols, to avoid gaps in monumental inscriptions. It is a writing system for a specific language: Ancient Egyptian. Between c. 535AD and 1822, no one was able to decipher hieroglyphs. Once deciphered, not only inscriptions, but works of literature were discovered and translated. And it was not the only writing system for this language: hieroglyphs existed alongside hieratic, and later, demotic script (see Engel 2015).

Emoticons (a blend of the words *emotion* and *icon*) are symbols used in texting and instant messaging; although their origins can be dated back to the 19th century, when combinations of punctuation marks were used for humorous effect to denote emotions. Digital forms for use on the internet can be traced back to the USA and Japan in the 1980s (see Wikipedia). The most used is the smiley face :), and variations of it, which can be linked to the yellow smiley symbol which was popularised in the 1960s (see Wikipedia). They can be used in messages of any language. Emoticons are a type of pictogram 'where the meaning is entirely a function of the shape of the symbols (when read sideways, with the head to the left…or straight ahead, as in Japanese and other East Asian systems)' (Crystal 2008: 38). With the increase in emoji keyboards on smartphones and tablets, the use of emoticons has declined.

Emoji (a blend of two Japanese words: *e-*, picture, and *moji*, character) are ideograms which originated in Japan in 1998/1999. Some are very specific to Japanese culture (see Wikipedia). By 2010, a set of internationally standardised emoji were approved by Unicode, and now there are over 800 symbols (see Clark 2014). Like emoticons, they can be used in messages of any language, or indeed instead of written words. In contrast to emoticons, they usually consist of coloured pictures of items (including the yellow smiley face and its variations). In late 2012, emojis were integrated into smartphones and tablets as standard, which has certainly contributed to their rise in popularity (Evans 2015b). A survey by Evans and TalkTalk Mobile found that 80% of Britons are regularly using emojis to communicate, with the smiley face the most popular at 62%. Emojis have a wider range of representation compared to emoticons: they are a 'visual representation of an idea, entity, feeling, status or event' (Evans 2015b).

Visual communication or language?

Hieroglyphs are a writing system for a language which was spoken in Ancient Egypt. Ancient Egyptian has a sound system, a grammar and a vocabulary, all of which are represented in the writing system. Symbols or combinations of symbols can represent sounds, and words. They can indicate grammatical functions (such as plurals, verb forms, gender, agreement), and are placed in a particular order which we call a sentence. If we learn the rules of pronunciation and grammar plus some of the vocabulary of a language, we can speak, understand, read and write phrases and sentences in that language.

In Ancient Egypt, only scribes could read and write (about 1 to 5% of the population in Pharaonic times)[*], and the main use of hieroglyphs was for the writing of sacred texts on papyri, stelae, tomb paintings and temple walls. More mundane texts were written on papyri or ostraca in hieratic (a cursive version of hieroglyphs), and later, demotic script.

Emoticons are a restricted form of pictogram primarily used to convey emotions in a short written form such as texting. When we speak, we use tone of voice, facial expression, gesture, body language, etc. to convey our emotions. This is how we distinguish between a happy or sad utterance which may consist of the same words: 'I've just retired' (hurrah, I can do what I want now, go on that round the world trip)/(I'm going to miss work so much, I don't know what I'll do with myself). In writing, punctuation has always had the function of conveying these emotions: exclamation marks for surprise, interrogation marks for questioning or concern, capital letters for shouting or emphasis, ellipsis (…) for building up tension, etc. Emoticons seem like a natural development of this tendency.

Although it has been shown that 'textspeak' can be used for longer messages, and indeed poems (see Crystal 2008 a,b), emoticons alone cannot, i.e. they cannot be used to form full sentences.

Emoji icons have more potential as there are more of them, and they cover a wider range of themes. In 2013, Hermann Melville's *Moby Dick* was translated into emoji (Popovich 2013). But as has been pointed out: 'I don't understand why the book's famous opening sentence, "Call me Ishmael", becomes, to my eyes at least, "telephone/man-with-moustache/

yacht/whale/OK-sign"' (Clark 2015). Indeed a sequence of emojis is not a sentence: there is no grammar, and understanding cannot be fully clear.

In January 2015, an American teenager (coincidentally named Osiris!) was arrested for making a terrorist threat on Facebook, using emojis of a police officer and a revolver (Evans 2015a). Evans argues that emojis share some attributes common to language: conveying ideas and influencing others. From this point of view it could be argued that they could indeed be interpreted as a terrorist threat. Also in 2015, the Australian foreign affairs minister gave a political interview to Buzzfeed, entirely in emoji (Evans 2015b). However, their most frequent use is similar to that of emoticons (which they seem to be replacing), as emotional emphasis in a text.

Conclusion

Crystal (2008a) reminds us of the long history of language scares: 'Ever since the arrival of printing–thought to be the invention of the devil because it would put false opinions into people's minds–people have been arguing that new technology would have disastrous consequences for languages'.

We have nothing to fear for our language because people communicate more via electronic devices, using textspeak and instant messaging: 'emojis are being used to enhance, rather than replace words in our digital communications' (Evans 2015b).

And while it is perfectly fine to agree that pictographic communication (especially emoji) is increasing, and may indeed replace more and more textspeak (Sutherland quoted in Press Association 2015), that does not mean it can be described as Britain's (or any other country's) 'fastest growing *language*' (Evans quoted in Jones 2015; my italics). Furthermore, although: 'There are harsh limits on what you can say with pictures' (Jones 2015), it is not acceptable to say that hieroglyphs were merely pictures and that they enabled the Ancient Egyptians 'to write spells but not to develop a more flexible, questioning literary culture: they left that to the Greeks" (Jones 2015). The study of the Ancient Egyptian language and its hieroglyphic writing system requires much time and effort, and is rewarded by the gaining of access to a rich culture and literature (see Margaret 2015). The same cannot be said of emoji.

by Dulcie Engel

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Dylan Thomas and Ancient Egypt

Dylan Thomas and Ancient Egypt

Dylan Thomas was born in Swansea in 1914. He grew up in a period of intense interest in Egyptology following Howard Carter's discovery of the tomb of Tutankhamun in 1922. Between 1930 and 1939, he returned again and again to the imagery of Ancient Egypt in his poems and short stories.

Dylan Thomas a'r Aifft Hynafol

Ganwyd Dylan Thomas yn Abertawe yn 1914. Magwyd mewn cyfnod o ddiddordeb dwys mewn Eifftoleg yn dilyn darganfyddiad Howard Carter o fedd Tutankhamun yn 1922. Rhwng 1930 a 1939, dychwelodd tro ar ol tro at ddelweddaeth yr Aifft Hynafol yn ei farddoniaeth a'i straeon byrion.

Osiris, come to Isis (1930)

Osiris was the son of Seb and Nut
A glacial god, a strongly muscled boy...
Osiris, Osiris, father of Horus....
Opening his eye and dreaming of Isis

My world is pyramid (1934)

My world is pyramid. The padded mummer
Weeps on the desert ochre and the salt
Incising summer.

Should lanterns shine (1936)

...from her lips the faded pigments fall,
The mummy cloths expose an ancient breast...
The Sphinx

I, in my intricate image (1936)

Man was the scales, the death birds on enamel,
Tail, Nile, and snout, a saddler of the rushes

O make me a mask (1939)

O make me a mask and a wall to shut from your spies
Of the sharp, enamelled eyes and the spectacled claws...

Make this in a warring absence (1939)

Weighed in rock shroud is my proud pyramid
Where, wound in emerald linen and sharp wind,
The hero's hand lies scraped of every legend

Altarwise by moonlight (1936)

Death from a bandage, rants the mask of scholars
Gold on such features, and the linen spirit
Weds my long gentleman to dusts and furies;
With priest and pharaoh bed my gentle wound,
World in the sand, on the triangle landscape

Photograph courtesy of Nora Summers & Dylan's Bookstore

the EGYPT centre y ganolfan EIFFTAIDD

Compiled by Dr Dulcie Engel

by Dulcie Engel

Nine ways of writing seven languages

as evidenced in the collection of the Egypt Centre, Swansea

Nine scripts: Cuneiform, Hieroglyphic, Hieratic, Demotic, Hebrew, Greek, Coptic, Roman, Arabic;

Seven languages: Sumerian, Akkadian, Egyptian , Hebrew, Greek, Latin, Arabic. I will also refer to the Aramaic script and language used in Egypt, but we have no examples in the Egypt Centre. See note 3 below. And I will refer to the Meroïtic language and scripts used in Nubia.

A key resource on all these scripts and languages which I have used throughout is www.omniglot.com , which has full details and many links for each language. I have chosen to write the names of all scripts with a capital letter, although practice varies among writers. I do not however use a capital for individual symbol names, such as hieroglyphs.

In 1994, Kate Bosse-Griffiths published a booklet entitled Five Ways of Writing between 2000 BC and AD 200,[2] featuring Cuneiform, Hieroglyphic, Hebrew, Greek and Roman writing on eight objects in the Wellcome Museum (now the Egypt Centre, Swansea University). The objects were photographed by Roger P. Davies, and are made of brick, marble, sandstone, wood, papyrus and parchment. Bosse-Griffiths provides a brief description, translation, commentary and references for each object, and some additional illustrations.[3]

The aim of this article is slightly different. I am approaching the subject from the point of view of a linguist, and I will be looking at the scripts and languages concerned from a comparative point of view, while giving brief details of illustrative objects in the collection.[4]

Table A below[5] sketches out the development of writing systems in the Near East. Table B below indicates the relevant branches of the two language families which concern us here[6].

Pictures > Pictograms > Proto-writing > Full writing	SYLLABIC
> Cuneiform (Sumerian, Akkadian)	LOGO-SYLLABIC
> Hieroglyphs > Hieratic >Demotic (all Egyptian)	LOGO-CONSONANTAL
> Phoenician> Aramaic, Hebrew, Arabic	CONSONANTAL ALPHABETIC
> Greek, Coptic (Egyptian), Roman (Latin)	PHONEMIC ALPHABETIC

Table A Development of Writing Systems in the Near East

Afro-Asiatic	> Semitic > Akkadian, Phoenician, Hebrew, Aramaic, Arabic
	> Egyptian > Coptic
Indo-European	> Greek
	>Italic (Latin)

Table B Branches of language families

[2] Still available to buy at the Egypt Centre gift shop.

3 The Ashmolean Museum in Oxford has a large collection of papyri and ostraca: 'They provide examples of all the scripts and languages that have been used in Egypt (Egyptian, Greek, Coptic, Aramaic, and Arabic), and documents which range from school texts to private letters'
(http://www.ashmus.ox.ac.uk/departments/antiquities/about/AEgypt/

[4] My thanks to the curator, Carolyn Graves-Brown, for her help with my queries about the catalogue and certain objects in the collection. Thanks also to Wendy Goodridge, Sam Wale, Tim Jones, Syd Howells and Bev Rogers. This paper forms the basis for the two Egypt Centre Writing Trail booklets (2015) and a master class with the same title presented to volunteers on 03/02/15 and to the public on 03/03/15.

[5] Adapted from Robinson (1995: 44). See also Watterson (1981:25-34).

[6] See Crystal (1987: 296-301, 316)

1. Cuneiform[7]

Writing probably developed from pictures, such as those found painted on the walls of caves, or carved onto rocks (petroglyphs). Non-phonological systems such as pictograms tend to be more common in early forms of writing. Pictograms are pictures which stand for a particular object or concept. They tend to be ambiguous, and evolve into ideograms, which have an abstract or conventional meaning and a more stylised form.

Cuneiform (wedge-shaped) writing dates from the fourth millennium BC and developed from a pictographic system to one that marked words, syllables and phonetic elements with stylised symbols consisting of straight strokes, often in a wedge shape. These were pressed into soft clay with a stylus, although later the writing was inscribed on harder surfaces such as stone. It is classified as a logo[8]-syllabic writing system, and was used to write various languages in the Near East, the first being Sumerian, a language isolate[9] spoken in southern Mesopotamia from the fourth millennium BC to around 2000 BC, when it was replaced by Akkadian, although the written form continued to be used, and the Sumerian language strongly influenced Akkadian. The script is a semanto-phonetic system (phonograms, logograms and determinatives[10]). Writing direction is variable, and there were about 1000 symbols in the early period, later reduced to around 400. Akkadian, a Northeast Semitic language, was spoken in Mesopotamia from around 2800 BC to 500AD, and adapted the Sumerian script around 2350 BC. It later divided into two main dialects: Assyrian and Babylonian. Akkadian was the lingua franca of the Near East, until it became marginalised by Aramaic[11] in the eighth century BC. The last known text dates from the first century AD. Like Sumerian, it is a semanto-phonetic writing system, and writing direction is variable. It consists of 200 to 400 symbols.

Bosse-Griffiths (1994: 5-9) describes two artefacts in the Egypt Centre which exemplify Cuneiform writing:

W 950 (given as W250 by Bosse-Griffiths) is a brick from Ur with a dedicatory inscription, referring to King Ur-Nammu (2112-2095 BC), and dates from around 2100 BC.[12] As Ur was a Sumerian city state, we can assume this is Sumerian Cuneiform.[13] There are four vertical lines of writing, to be read from right to left. Burnt bricks such as this one are linked with the ziggurat of the moon god built by Ur-Nammu at Ur, which is itself linked to the Biblical Tower of Babel.

W 952 is a marble slab dating from around 600 BC, set in plaster in modern times (1885), and bearing an inscription of Nebuchadrezzar, King of Babylon. He is better known to us as Nebuchadnezzar II (reigned 605-562 BC), an important figure in Jewish history, responsible for the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem. The slab contains six vertical lines of writing to be read from right to left, and proclaims the king as a provider of temples and son of Nebopolassar.

As already mentioned, Akkadian was the diplomatic language of the Near East in this period, and was the language of Babylon, so we can assume that we have here an example of Akkadian Cuneiform.[14] Perhaps the most famous examples in an Egyptian context are the Amarna Tablets or Letters, addressed to various pharaohs of the New Kingdom. They consist of: '382 cuneiform documents discovered in 1887 in Egypt, at the site of Tell el-Amarna. They are mainly letters spanning a fifteen- to thirty-year period. The first dates to around year 30 of the reign of Amenhotep III (1390-1352 BC), and the last to no later than the first year of the reign of Tutankhamun (1336-1327 BC). The majority date to the reign of Amenhotep IV (Akhenaten) (1352-1336 BC), the heretic pharaoh who founded a new capital at Tell el-Amarna.' [15]

2. Hieroglyphs[16]

Egyptian hieroglyphs also developed from pictograms, and this script uses a mixture of symbol types: ideograms and phonograms. Ideograms can function as determinatives, used to clarify ambiguities when words are spelt in the same way. These occur more frequently in consonantal writing systems such as hieroglyphs. The system developed around 3100 to

[7] See the chapter on Cuneiform by C.B.F. Walker in Various authors (1990: 15-73), also Robinson (1995: 70-91), Watterson (1981: 30-34).

[8] logo = word

[9] A language isolate designates a language not related to any other (such as Basque, an ancient language still spoken in north-west Spain and south-west France).

[10] A logogram is a symbol that represents a word; a phonogram represents a sound (in these languages, a syllable as they are logo-syllabic languages), and a determinative differentiates meaning or indicates word category.

[11] Aramaic is a North West Semitic language which replaced Akkadian as the lingua franca of the Near East until the seventh century AD, when it was replaced by Arabic. We will discuss it in more detail in section 5 (Hebrew).

[12] There are 71 bricks bearing Cuneiform dedicatory inscriptions to Ur-Nammu in the British Museum.
(http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/search.aspx?searchText=brick+ur-nammu)

[13] 'The earliest ancient inscriptions to be recorded by foreign travellers to the Middle East were fired clay bricks with a cuneiform inscription impressed or stamped on one edge or surface. The earliest such bricks come from southern Iraq, date to about 2500 BC and were inscribed in the Sumerian language. These were replaced after 2000 BC by Babylonian dialect of the Akkadian language, whereas those made in the cities of Assyria, in northern Iraq, were in Assyrian dialect, and equivalent bricks made in Iran were inscribed in Elamite. Bricks with cuneiform inscriptions were collected by most foreign travellers to these regions, although most were fragmentary as complete bricks were systematically re-used by local builders'
(http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/collection_object_details.aspx?objectId=674208&partId=1).
Thanks to Carolyn Graves-Brown of the Egypt Centre for alerting me to this reference.

[14] See footnote 14: the brick in the British museum has an almost identical inscription, and is described as being written in Babylonian (i.e. a dialect of Akkadian).

[15] See:
http://www.britishmuseum.org/explore/highlights/highlight_objects/me/l/clay_tablet_letter,_egypt_2.aspx

[16] See the chapter on hieroglyphs by W.V. Davies in Various authors (1990: 75-135); also Robinson (1995: 93-107), Egypt Centre (2010,2011).

3000 BC. The number of individual symbols range from 700 in Middle Egyptian to 5000 in the Graeco-Roman period. Most words are made up of groups of signs representing one, two or three consonants, known as uni-, bi- or tri-literal signs.[17] There are 24 uniliteral signs. Direction of writing is variable, and text is written in columns or horizontal lines. It is usually read from right to left horizontally, and always from top to bottom vertically. Normally animal or human hieroglyphs indicate the direction of reading (the way they are facing). Aesthetic consideration is important in the arrangement of symbols to avoid gaps.

Hieroglyphs were considered as divine writing, and some symbols were worn as amulets. Both the goddess Isis and the god Thoth were associated with wisdom, and credited with the creation of Hieroglyphic writing. Indeed, Thoth was the god of writing, and patron of scribes. He was said to have created himself through the power of language. He maintained the library of the gods, along with his wife Seshat, the goddess of writing.

The names of kings[18] were written inside a protective oval representing a knotted rope, which we know as a cartouche (French for gun cartridge, named by Napoleon's soldiers for the resemblance in shape). Hieroglyphic writing was always a priestly form, and never used for administrative purposes (*see* Hieratic). Hieroglyphs are found on religious papyri, temple stelae, tomb and temple wall paintings and statues, amulets, sarcophagi and coffins, mummy bandages, ostraca …

The term 'hieroglyph' comes from the Greek *hieros* (sacred) and *gluptein* (to carve in stone), reflecting both the religious and monumental use of this script. The Egyptian term was *mdju netjer* (words of the gods).

One of the earliest examples of hieroglyphic writing is found on the Narmer Palette excavated at Hierakonpolis, and dating to c. 3000 BC. The original is in the Egyptian Museum in Cairo, but the Egypt Centre has a copy of one side, where Narmer, wearing the crown of Upper Egypt, is depicted as smiting a foreigner. Various symbols on this may be interpreted as early hieroglyphic characters, including Narmer's name in the rebus symbols *n'r* (catfish) and *mr* (chisel). Many scholars consider this palette an accurate depiction of actual events, that is, one of the earliest historical documents.[19] And of course, without writing, there is no history.

Not surprisingly, given the plethora of materials and religious contexts for hieroglyphs, the number of items in the Egypt Centre bearing these symbols cannot easily be quantified. Bosse-Griffiths (1994: 10-15) chooses two examples.

W867 is an illustrated Papyrus of Hapi-Ankh, with a hymn to the rising sun from the Book of the Dead, chapter 15. There are 44 vertical columns of hieroglyphs written in black and red ink, beneath a picture of a funeral ceremony. Such texts were placed inside the coffin, or inside Sokar-Isis figures. This piece is Late Dynastic or Ptolemaic, and was acquired by Wellcome in 1932.

W946 bis (given as W945 by Bosse-Griffiths) is a sandstone stela in memory of the mother of a sacred Buchis bull, from the Baqaria cow cemetery at Armant. She died in 190 AD, during the reign of the Roman Emperor Commodus. It is the only known inscribed memorial stone for a sacred cow. There are five horizontal lines of inscription, reading from right to left, and it is one of the latest inscriptions of hieroglyphs.[20] Greek and Latin words have been rendered into hieroglyphs (*autokrator, Commodus).*

Ancient Egyptian writing was also the source of the Meroïtic alphabet[21]. A hieroglyphic version developed around 315 BC with 23 characters based on Egyptian hieroglyphs, but with different sound values. A cursive script based on Demotic developed around 185 BC. The alphabet was used in Nubia until about 440AD, and it was deciphered by Frances Llewellyn Griffith in 1909.

The Egypt Centre has an artefact which may be in Meroïtic script. EC 470 is part of an inscribed stone relief from Meroë in Nubia (now Sudan).

3. Hieratic

Hieratic is a simplified form of hieroglyphic script in which the symbols are no longer recognisable as pictograms. The direction of writing is right to left in horizontal lines, and it is almost exclusively written in ink on papyrus. It developed around the same time as hieroglyphs, but was used for administrative and everyday purposes such as keeping records and accounts and writing letters. We must remember that the degree of literacy was always very low in Ancient Egypt, from 1% in Pharaonic times to 10% in the Graeco-Roman period.[22] Hieratic was used until the 26th Dynasty, though by that time it was only used for religious texts, while Demotic was used for everyday purposes. The word 'hieratic' comes from the Greek *hieratika* (priestly writing), which reflects its purpose at the time the Greeks came to Egypt.

In the Egypt Centre, there are 21 examples of Hieratic writing listed in the catalogue, most of which are on linen fragments, but there is also a neck of a pottery jar, and a mummy label.[23] One of the most extensive pieces of writing is on W868, a linen fragment from the Graeco-Roman period containing the text of chapters 148 and 149 of the Book of the Dead.

W960 is the pottery neck of a wine jar, found in Amarna and dating from c. 1350 BC (18th Dynasty). The inscription

[17] Watterson (1981: 38).

[18] The kings actually had five names; just two were in cartouches: the prenomen or throne name, and the nomen or birth name.

[19] See http://en wikipedia.org/wiki/Narmer_Palette

[20] According to Tyldesley (in Champollion 2009: 15): 'When in 535 AD the Byzantine Emperor Justinian forbade the cult of Isis and closed its temple on the island of Philae, there was no longer anyone capable of reading the long pharaonic litanies that covered the Egyptian temples'.

[21] Meroïtic was spoken in Nubia until the 4th century AD, when it was replaced by Nubian. Its relationship to other languages is unclear, and the meaning of inscriptions remains unknown.

[22] See Egypt Centre (2011). Only boys were trained as scribes.

[23] W552, described as a wooden grain tablet, is currently listed in the catalogue as an example of Hieratic writing, but is in fact Demotic. It is discussed in the following section.

states that the wine came from a vineyard in the western Delta and was bottled in the 12th year of the reign of the king. This is a good example of an everyday use of Hieratic, before it was restricted to a purely religious function.

4. Demotic

Demotic was a cursive script which developed from the colloquial Egyptian spoken in the Delta region at the end of the seventh century BC. It took over the functions of Hieratic, and was used for legal, administrative, scientific, literary and religious documents,[24] the latest example dating from 452 AD. The direction of writing is right to left in horizontal lines and it is mainly found written in ink on papyrus. There are approximately 40 symbols for single consonants. The word 'demotic' comes from the Greek *demotikos* (popular).

From the Ptolemaic Period, we find examples of the script carved in stone, the most famous being the Rosetta Stone,[25] 'an irregularly shaped slab of dark stone, 112.3 cm tall, 75.7 wide, 28.4 thick, and weighing 762 kg' (Parkinson 2005: 7). It is a fragment of a stela showing a copy of the Memphis Decree issued in 196 BC recording the granting of a royal cult to Ptolemy V by the priests of Memphis. The fragment records the text of the decree in 14 lines of hieroglyphs, 32 lines of Demotic, and 54 lines of Greek. The stela was discovered by French soldiers in 1799, during Napoleon's Egyptian campaign (1798-1801).[26] It was embedded in a wall in the village of Rashid, also known as Rosetta. It was moved to Alexandria in 1801, and on the surrender of the French to the British troops that year, all the antiquities found by the French and still in Alexandria were surrendered to the British army. The stone was officially donated to the British Museum by George III in 1802.

The linguistic importance of the stela lies in the three scripts which led to the deciphering of hieroglyphs. The Napoleonic campaign included scholars and scientists, so the potential of the Rosetta stone was recognised almost immediately. Copies (prints and casts) were made and sent to European scholars by both the French, and later the British Museum staff.

The real key to the puzzle was the Demotic section, which was more complete than the Hieroglyphic section. It was noted early on that there were similarities between Demotic and Coptic, with breakthroughs made by Baron Silvestre de Sacy (1758-1838) and J. H. Åkerblad (1763-1819). However, the two key figures were Thomas Young (1773-1829) and Jean-François Champollion (1790-1832).[27] Young did some important initial work on deciphering the stone. For example, he deciphered the name Ptolemy inside a cartouche, but he maintained that hieroglyphs were symbolic, and that phonetic symbols were rare. Champollion was an expert on Coptic, and was able to find many parallels between the Demotic section and Coptic. He also concluded in 1821 that Hieratic was a simplification of Hieroglyphic, and compared all three Egyptian scripts. With the hieroglyphs, he realised that there were both sound and picture signs, and this was the key breakthrough. He published his report in 1822. The first translation of the Rosetta Stone texts was published in 1858. Champollion travelled to Egypt in 1828-1829, and was able to decipher and record many monumental inscriptions, vindicating his interpretation of hieroglyphs.[28]

As Adkins & Adkins (2000: 297) point out:

'It is the sheer volume and diversity of information about ancient Egypt in the hieroglyphic and hieratic texts that has made their decipherment so important. The survival of huge numbers of documents, including thousands upon thousands of papyri and ostraca, is due to the combination of a favourable climate and the attitudes of the ancient Egyptians themselves. They regarded their scribes as the most important people (the pharaoh was a scribe), who were writing not just for their contemporaries but for the generations that came after'.

In the Egypt Centre, there are two examples of Demotic listed in the catalogue.[29]

W552 is a small piece of wood, which has recently been studied by Martina Minas-Nerpel of the Department of Classics and History at Swansea University. This is what she has to say:

'This label was once probably attached to another object, perhaps a sack of grain, since the twelve lines of Demotic on the recto and one line of Demotic on the verso detail the seed-grain that has been distributed to the arable land in a specific month …We do not know where it comes from, and it is difficult to establish a date for the grain account on the basis of the palaeography, though a late Ptolemaic or Roman date seems more likely. Due to the relatively even thickness of the strokes we can assume that a calamus or reed pen instead of a traditional rush seems to have been used, a criterion which also points to the late Ptolemaic and Roman period.'[30]

EC 155 is a pottery ostracon with a list of commodities. The first line reads 'the priests'; line 2 is unclear, but may read 'two measures of wine'; line 3 appears to end in the word 'fat'; line 5 reads 'sesame'. It dates from the Roman period and was found in Kom Ombo.

5. Hebrew[31]

The earliest alphabetic system is North Semitic, dating from 1700 BC. The Phoenician alphabet evolved from this,[32] which in turn spawned the Hebrew, Aramaic and Arabic

[24] See Watterson (1991: x-xi).

[25] On the Rosetta Stone, see Parkinson (2005), Robinson (1995: 20-35).

[26] On the Egyptian campaign and the decipherment of the Rosetta Stone, see Watterson (1981: 9-24).

[27] On Champollion's life and achievements, see Adkins & Adkins (2000), Champollion (2009), Watterson (1981, 19-24).

[28] See his letters and diaries from this expedition (Champollion 2009).

[29] However, there is a question mark over the script of EC123, consisting of 2 fragments of linen bandage (could be hieratic or demotic); and W552 should be catalogued as demotic (not hieratic).

[30] I am grateful to Martina Minas-Nerpel for sharing this information with me, which will be published in 2014-15.

[31] See the chapter on early alphabets by J.F. Healey in Various authors (1990: 197-257), and Sáenz-Badillos (1993) on the history of Hebrew.

[32] The oldest Phoenician inscriptions date from around 1100 BC

consonantal alphabets,[33] as well as being adapted by the Greeks.

Hebrew developed in the north-western part of the Near East during the latter half of the second millennium BC, the area known as Canaan. Both Hebrew and Phoenician belong to the Canaanite branch, as opposed to the Aramaic or Arabic branches of Semitic. The earliest inscriptions in Hebrew date from the tenth century BC. The Hebrew language is very closely associated with Jewish religion, being the language of the Torah (Old Testament).

Aramaic gradually replaced Hebrew as the vernacular of the Jewish people in the Near East, and Hebrew became restricted to liturgical purposes. Indeed Watterson (1991: xi-xii) notes that when Herodotus visited Egypt around 450 BC, he was 'totally unaware' that Aramaic was the administrative language of the country. When Aramaic was displaced by Arabic (from the seventh century AD), it too became a second religious language for Jews. The Aramaic alphabet did not survive: Aramaic is either written in the Hebrew script (biblical and religious Aramaic such as the Talmud, and Jewish Neo-Aramaic dialects), or the Syriac alphabet (Syriac and Christian Neo-Aramaic dialects).[34]

The Hebrew alphabet consists of 22 consonantal symbols, and is read from right to left. Points may be used to indicate vowel sounds where the context is unclear. As well as being used to write Hebrew and Aramaic, it is also used for Judeo-Arabic, Ladino and Yiddish.[35]

There was a Jewish presence in Egypt from about 650 BC, when Jewish soldiers helped Psammeticus I in the Nubian campaign. In 597 BC, Jews took refuge in Egypt after the destruction of Judah. Most significant however, was the large Jewish immigration to Alexandria during the Ptolemaic period, from 332 BC. The Jews were virtually wiped out by Emperor Trajan in the Jewish Revolt (115-117 AD).[36] However, many hellenised Jews in Alexandria converted to Christianity in the first century AD (see section 7).

Not surprisingly, both Hebrew and Aramaic texts have been found in Egypt (see note 3). For example, the Brooklyn Museum holds an Aramaic property transfer document, entitled 'Ananiah Gives Yehoishema Another Part of the House', dated November 25 or 26, 404 BC.[37]

As for Hebrew, a cache of religious documents was found in 1896 in a hiding place (Hebrew *genizah*) in the Ezra synagogue in Fostat (Old Cairo), built in 882 AD, and these are known as the Cairo Genizah.[38] These documents are an indication that Jews were in Egypt, and indeed in Cairo, long after the Jewish Revolt, and indeed have been there in diminishing numbers up to modern times.

The Egypt Centre holds one relatively late Hebrew document: W 967 is a parchment scroll, about two metres in length, comprising the Book of Esther from the Old Testament. The scroll is affixed to a wooden roll decorated with a triple crown of ivory, and dates from about 1600 AD. There are 28 columns of writing, most containing 18 vertical lines of script. The story of Esther[39] is read out in synagogues at the festival of Purim. The scroll was acquired by Wellcome, but we do not know its provenance (Bosse-Griffiths 1994: 16-17).

6. Greek[40]

Alexander the Great defeated the Persian occupiers of Egypt and conquered the country in 332 BC; he founded the city of Alexandria, and after his death in 323 BC, his immediate heirs were in power for a short period. One of Alexander's generals, Ptolemy, became pharaoh in 305 BC, the start of a dynasty. The Ptolemaic Period lasted from 332 to 32 BC.

The Greek pharaohs had much respect for Egyptian culture and religion, acknowledging gods and building temples to them, although Alexandria was very much a separate, Hellenistic centre. Greek was the language of empire, but important documents and decrees were often written in Egyptian scripts as well as Greek (such as the Rosetta Stone, as already discussed). However, none of the Ptolemies actually spoke Egyptian until Cleopatra VII, the last pharaoh (Ellis 1992: 11-12).

Greek is an Indo-European language. Its alphabet developed around 1000 BC, and was in constant use from around 750 BC.[41] It is an adaptation of the Phoenician alphabet. There are 24 letters in all. The major difference from its predecessors in the Near East is that it is the first phonemic alphabet with symbols for vowel sounds as well as consonants. Some of the Semitic consonant symbols were made to represent vowels (for example, *alef* > *alpha*). New letters were added, and others modified.[42] Another significant difference is that by the time Greek came to Egypt, it was written from left to right (from around 500 BC), although in early Greek the direction of writing was variable, and some texts were written in *boustrophedon* (literally, as the ox turns: first in one

[33] Consonantal alphabets are also known as abjads (word based on first 4 letters of Semitic alphabets). Vowel sounds can be indicated by the addition of diacritics, small symbols such as dots, associated with the letters.

[34] http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/1707-aramaic-language-among-the-jews

[35] These being languages of the Jewish diaspora, based respectively on medieval Arabic, Spanish and German, with Hebrew borrowings.

[36] http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/1171-alexandria-egypt-ancient

[37] http://www.brooklynmuseum.org/opencollection/objects/60731/Property_Transfer_Document%3A_Ananiah_Gives_Yehoishema_Another_Part_of_the_House. This is one of the Elephantine papyri, a collection of ancient Jewish manuscripts, many of which are in the Brooklyn Museum.

[38] http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/History/Genizah.html

[39] Sáenz-Badillos (1993: 115) notes that the Book of Esther is one of the Biblical sections in which Aramaic influence is very clear.

[40] See the chapter on Greek inscriptions by B. F. Cook in Various authors (1990: 259-319); on the history, see Ellis (1992), Mysliwiec (2000: 178-184).

[41] Greek was first written around 1500 BC in Linear B script, and in Crete in the Cypriot syllabary from around 1200-300 BC. The Greek alphabet is also the basis for the Cyrillic alphabet, which developed in the late 9th century, and is used to write Russian and various other Slavic languages (see omniglot.com on all these scripts).

[42] see www.britannica.com, omniglot.com.

direction, then the other). We can see this as a transitional stage between writing right to left and left to right (Crystal 1987: 185).

Bosse-Griffiths (1994: 18-21) chooses two examples of Greek writing associated with death.

W540 is a wooden mummy label dating to c. 200AD, on which are written seven lines in ink. The Greeks adapted Egyptian mummification processes, and when people died away from home, labels were attached to the mummies for the journey back to their home town. The label ensured correct identification of the body. In this case, it is Heriysis, son of Kollouthos. The Egypt Centre has three mummy labels (the other two are W549 and W550).

GR 90 (now I .Gibbs 4) is a funerary stela of sandstone from the Ptolemaic period, engraved with seven lines of Greek script, in memory of Arisa, daughter of Aristomenes. It is of interest because the numbers are written with letters, so, for example, 'N' represents 50.

7. Coptic[43]

Coptic is a development of the ancient Egyptian language, and there is a clear line of continuity between Hieratic, Demotic and Coptic. The Coptic script adopted the Greek alphabet for practical reasons, with the addition of six or seven Demotic characters to indicate sounds not present in Greek. The word 'Coptic' is *gubti* in Arabic, from the Greek *Aigyptioi*, 'the Hellenized form of the ancient Egyptian name of the chief temple of Memphis, *Hut-ka-Ptah, "ka*-house (=temple) of Ptah"' (Mysliwiec 2000: 190). There were two main dialects of Coptic: Sahidic in the south, and Bohairic in the north. Most Coptic literature was written in Sahidic, but in the Middle Ages, it was supplanted as the liturgical language by Bohairic (Cannuyer 2001: 123-124).

There are two ways in which Greek came to be adapted to write the Egyptian language. Firstly, the impetus came from the priests of the Egyptian religion. Following the establishment of the Greek language in Egypt, the population who could afford to buy amulets could not read aloud the spells on them: 'To avert such economic and religious massacre, they [*the priests*] reverted to a transliteration system of these amulets' (www.coptic.org/language).

The second, and most important, reason is the introduction of Christianity to Egypt. St Mark is said to have preached in Alexandria between 43 and 48 AD, and the first Egyptian Christians were Hellenised Jews in that city (see section 5). The spread of Christianity among the wider population dates from the end of the third century AD.[44] Missionaries needed to preach using the same texts, so they translated them into Egyptian, but wrote them using the Greek alphabet with additional Demotic characters.[45]

The last original Coptic text is a poem dating from around 1300 AD, but the language has survived to this day as the liturgical language of the Coptic Church in Egypt. We have already seen how important Champollion's knowledge of Coptic was for the translation of the Rosetta Stone.[46]

In the Egypt Centre, there are a few stelae among the 119 Coptic items (mainly textiles and jewellery), and two have writing on them.

I. Gibbs 1 is a fragment of a stone stela from Edfu, carved with four rows of Coptic writing. The text is cut through on the left, but it is possible to make out some of it. On line 2 the Greek letter abbreviations XC (Christ) and IC (Jesus) appear, and on line 4 there is the beginning of the word 'amen'. We have no date for this object, but it is clearly a religious piece.

I. Gibbs 2 is a stone stela with nine rows of Coptic writing. We currently have no location, date or translation for this object.

8. Roman (Latin)[47]

Egypt became part of the Roman Empire following the death of Cleopatra VII in 30 BC. Following the assassination of Julius Caesar, Mark Antony had been ruling over the eastern Roman Empire, and Octavian over the western half. Antony began to collaborate closely with Cleopatra, and in 31 BC, with the support of the Italian communities, Octavian defeated Antony and Cleopatra at the naval battle of Actium. He conquered Egypt in 30 BC, and Antony and Cleopatra committed suicide.[48]

Cleopatra's heir Caesarion (her son by Julius Caesar) only outlived his mother by a few months. He was declared pharaoh by his supporters but was soon killed on Octavian's orders. Octavian became Emperor Augustus in 27 BC.

The Two Lands of Upper and Lower Egypt with their long dynastic history became the Roman province of Aegyptus. However, it did have special status as the Emperor's private domain, and the Romans retained the bureaucratic system set up by the Ptolemies.[49]

Hence, in contrast to other parts of the empire, the language of the ruling class continued to be Greek rather than Latin. Ellis sees a trilingual situation, with each language having its own defined area of usage: 'In Roman times, as a broad generalisation, we can say that Latin was the language of official decrees, Greek was the intellectual language and Egyptian was the everyday language of the street' (1992: 9).

Despite the continuing dominance of Greek as the lingua franca of the Classical Near East, there is plenty of archaeological evidence for the use of Latin in Egypt during this period. The British Museum catalogue shows 109 results for 'Latin inscriptions in Egypt'. Among the many coins and amphora fragments, there is a gold ring and a military diploma. One of the most interesting items is a grey sandstone block with a Latin verse recording the visit of the governor

[43] See Cannuyer (2001); www.coptic.org/language; Watterson (1881: 47-49).

[44] Cannuyer(2001: 16-21)

[45] Cannuyer (2001: 122-124); www.coptic.org/language

[46] This knowledge owes much to Athanasius Kircher, a Jesuit professor of mathematics in Rome who compiled the first Coptic grammar and then attempted to decipher hieroglyphs (1652-1654). He was the first to recognise that Coptic was a direct descendant of Pharaonic Egyptian (Watterson 1981: 17-18).

[47] On the history of Roman Egypt, see Ellis (1992).

[48] See de Blois & van der Spek (1997/2008: 204-212).

[49] See de Blois & van der Spek (1997/2008: 208-211).

Mamertinus to the singing statue of Memnon[50] at Thebes. The verse praises the piety of the age of Hadrian,[51] which apparently caused the statue to sing. The inscription dates from 134 AD and was found at Kalabsha.[52]

Latin, like Greek, is an Indo-European language. The Greek alphabet was adapted into Etruscan (c. 800 BC), from which the Latin alphabet evolved, the basis for all western alphabets. The Classical Latin alphabet has 23 letters representing consonant and vowel sounds. It is written from left to right, and has been adapted by many languages with the addition, reduction or modification of letters.

Bosse-Griffiths (1994: 22-23) describes GR31, a memorial plaque of white marble, engraved with four lines of Latin. It was acquired in Italy in the nineteenth century by Glynn Vivian, and apparently has no clear links to Egypt. It is in memory of Atilia Romana, wife of Rustius Potitus.[53]

The Egypt Centre holds a fair number of Roman coins (around 80). These include EC 1508, a copper alloy coin of Faustina Augusta (130-176 BC), wife of Marcus Aurelius and mother of Commodus (he of the stela to the mother of the Buchis bull, W946bis: see section 2). Coins were a fairly late introduction into Egyptian society, first circulating around 500 BC.[54]

9. Arabic

In the fourth and fifth centuries AD, the western (Latin speaking) and eastern (Greek speaking) halves of the Roman Empire became more and more separate. The eastern empire was ruled from Constantinople, and was more successful economically than the western empire, which fell into decline. Rome was sacked by the Visigoths in 410 AD. The eastern, or Byzantine empire lasted throughout the Middle Ages, until the Turks captured Constantinople in 1453.[55] But Egypt had already been lost to Arab conquests from 639-642 AD. And so Arabic came to be the dominant language of Egypt, and Islam the dominant religion.

Arabic is a Semitic language which dates from the fourth century AD. The earliest document is an inscription in Arabic, Syriac and Greek from 512 AD. The alphabet evolved from Nabatean Aramaic script. There are 28 letters in this consonantal alphabet, which is written from right to left. Classical Arabic is the language of the Koran and works of classical literature. Egyptian Arabic shows influence from Coptic, which survived in parts of Egypt until the seventeenth century, and from Turkish (Egypt became part of the Ottoman Empire in 1517). There are currently about 50 million Egyptian Arabic speakers in Egypt.

In the Egypt Centre, we have two examples of religious Arabic writing from Armant. AR 50/3539 is a set of Koranic texts used as a charm, and AR50/3540 is a metal-bound miniature book containing sections of the Koran.

There are also 11 glass weights from Armant with Arabic inscriptions dating from the early Islamic Period (641-1510 AD).[56] These were used to measure metals, usually coins. Some may have also been used as coinage.

EC1257 is a textile piece from the early Islamic Period. It consists of a decorative strip of purple and brown wool on undyed linen. Variously shaped patches were used to decorate tunics in the Coptic and the early Islamic Period, usually consisting of symmetrical patterns or depictions of natural objects such as flowers and animals. However, EC1257 is patterned with two identical lines of Arabic script.[57] It is

50 The Colossi of Memnon: two giant statues of Amenhotep III dating from 1350 BC:
'When the northern statue started emitting sounds after an earthquake in 27 BC, the Greeks thought Memnon was moaning a salutation to his mother, the goddess Aurora. In reality, the earthquake damaged the statue so that changes in humidity and temperature at dawn caused an internal vibration, which then produced the strange singing sound. The voice disappeared when Emperor Septimius Severus repaired the damage in AD 199, but not before the phenomenon attracted a large number of tourists. The Greek geographer Strabo first wrote about the "singing statue" in Geographica, which was written after his expedition to Egypt that began in 25 BC. In AD 130, Emperor Hadrian and his wife spent several days by the statues, and according to the poetess Balbilla's inscription on the leg of one of the colossi, the northern statue sang for the emperor three times as a symbol of the Gods' respect (David, 80).'
(http://www.victorianweb.org/authors/carlyle/signs/memnon.html)

51 Roman Emperor from 117-138 AD.

52 Catalogue number1973,0107.1
http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/collection_object_details.aspx?objectId=465521&partId=1&searchText=kalabsha&page=1

53 This catalogue number now refers to another artefact, and there seems to be no trace of this plaque in the Egypt Centre catalogue. The current curator believes it may now be in Swansea Museum, as Bosse-Griffiths also catalogued objects for them which were temporarily housed in the Wellcome Museum. According to Hollie Gaze (Collections assistant, Swansea Museum), the "original accession register... does refer to a tombstone with a Latin inscription 'Atilia'. It was part of a gift of five tombstones that were given to the museum by Richard Glynn Vivian in 1904. Unfortunately, it is missing from our database while its companions are listed. This indicates that either it simply has not been documented yet or it is no longer in our possession' (31.7.2015)

54 However, coinage was not regularly used until the time of Alexander the Great. There was a mint at Memphis, and later at Alexandria (Egypt Centre (n.d.))

55 See de Blois & van der Spek (1997/2008: 290-292).

56 With catalogue numbers between AR 50/3493 and AR 50/3538.

57 Pritchard (2004: 37,144)) notes examples of a tunic, scarves and hats in the Whitworth Art Gallery collection decorated with Greek or Coptic lettering. She (2004:92) also notes that the V & A hold a red tunic (Egypt, 670-870 AD, cat. no. 291 1891): 'In the tapestry of the shoulder-bands is the name of God, *Allah*, in Arabic script. However, one letter is missing (the first freestanding one) and it is also woven mirror image. This could be due to faulty original design or the weaver might not to have been familiar with the word. Incorporating the word *Allah* was common at this time, both for reasons of faith and for purely decorative purposes. At this point, tapestry-woven decoration was bought separately from shops, so

incomplete, but appears to say 'We have (of) favour/blessings'.[58]

This could be an example of 'tiraz': 'In the Abbasid period (AD750-1258) fabrics, called tiraz, were made in present day Iraq and Egypt. Text from the Koran was embroidered across the fabric with a line of geometric shapes above that were probably for decoration. The word came to mean honorific robes with woven or embroidered inscriptions. Text might also include information such as the name of the reigning caliph, place of production and date' (Victoria and Albert museum. http://collections.vam .ac.uk/item/O77072/textile-fragment/).[59]

Conclusion

This paper has highlighted the central importance of Egypt and the Near East as a crucible for the development of writing systems. It has also illustrated the different and changing functions of both languages and scripts, from diplomatic (Akkadian, Aramaic, Arabic) to administrative (Hieratic, Aramaic, Greek), to sacred/liturgical (Hieroglyphic, Coptic, Hebrew, Aramaic, Arabic) to tools of empire-building (Akkadian, Greek, Latin). We have seen the influence of non-related languages/ scripts on others (Sumerian on Akkadian, Phoenician on Greek, Greek on Coptic). Also, we have noted the use of one writing system for more than one language (Cuneiform, Hebrew, Greek); and the use of more than one writing system for one language (Egyptian, Aramaic). We have noted the importance of language families as aids to translation, most spectacularly in the deciphering of hieroglyphs via the Rosetta Stone (Demotic and Coptic). The deciphering of ancient scripts allows us access to the ancient world, as writing records history:

"Without words, without writing and without books there would be no history, there could be no concept of humanity" (Hermann Hesse 1877-1962)

Furthermore, original examples of nine of these scripts and seven of these languages are in the Egypt Centre collection, a wonderful resource for further study.

by Dulcie Engel

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anyone of any faith could buy whatever took his or her fancy' (http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O119593/tunic-unknown/)

[58] Translation suggested by Egyptologist Ahmed Khalifa.

[59] The V & A database lists 37 examples of 'tiraz' from Egypt in their collection.

[*] ***Editor's note:*** *The scribal profession encompassed a whole range of competencies and hierarchies and was the entrée to senior offices in the administration. It seems that all of the upper levels of administration including royalty were literate. The figure of 1 to 5% for literacy levels is a guesstimate. My personal view is that literacy was more widespread than we think.*