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Ancient Egypt Hieroglyphs – Contemporary Reading for Fresh Ideas in Art

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The aim of this article is to rationalise emotional, intellectual and aesthetic impact of Egyptian hieroglyphs through their examination with the research tools of the aesthetics as an academic discipline and its related sciences. Their evocative power made them possess the property of life, resulting in attributing the ancient Egyptian writing with the power of storing a universal sagacity. The latter is suggested as both a rationale and an outcome of every creative process to which the art of hieroglyphs seems to invite. *Results.* Nevertheless, through taking a down-to-earth stand for a methodological choice we aim to be reconnected with techniques of making a single hieroglyph and getting insight into conceptual principles of tying them in rows of a text that generate intentional ancient meaning to be decoded and delighted through present day lens. *Scientific novelty.* The study tries to establish a new both bond and relationship between the signifier and the signified to allow contemporary reading of the ancient signs that could bridge modern man with their Ancient Egypt ancestors. Following Ferdinand de Saussure's exposition of the semiotic nature of the symbolisation process it opens an investigation into ways the modern mind can bear new meaning that will substitute the extinct signified in relation to the compelling ancient signifier a single hieroglyph is. *Conclusions.* Adhering to a formal scrutiny of the outer form of an ideogram in the first place, we intend to both challenge and inform contemporary art with strongly symbolic nature of ancient Egypt thought and spirituality that yielded those polysemous signs created with extremely sublime logic of artistic wisdom and craft. A nonrandom and revealing interchange between logics and aesthetics suggests the given art form can bring to light some strict and invariant rational laws that constituted it.

Keywords: hieroglyphs; artistic properties; aesthetic experience; living cultural heritage; correspondence of arts

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Introduction

motto:

I have seen Horus as helmsman, with Thoth and Maat beside him, I have taken hold of the bow-warp of the Night-bark and the stern-warp of the Day-bark. May he grant that

I see the sun-disk and behold the moon unceasingly every day, may my soul go forth to travel every place which it desires; may my name be called out, may it be found at the board of offerings.¹

The Ancient Egypt hieroglyphs, belonging to the Hamitic-Semitic or Afro-Asiatic family of languages, depict unnumbered phenomena of life and picturise a rich cultural content of the magnificent civilisation that yielded it. Ancient Egyptian writing system is based on pictures drawn from objects of everyday life or personal imagination which accompanied by abstract phonetic characters. The civilisation of Ancient Egypt, aptly called the cradle of the Western World, and its scripture emerged between Eastern Africa and the Middle East thriving then across millennia. This complex and compelling graphic code manifests man's close relationship with Nature. Drawing inspiration from them might revitalise contemporary consciousness as to the man's belonging to Universe in the epoch of the global environmental disaster. This factor regards graphic content of the signs. They were used to spell out words but could as well represent the actual object itself. For example, let us examine one of the most common *ankh* sign, of phonetic value 'n-h, which is a trilateral sign representing a sequence of three consonants represented in the Figure 1.

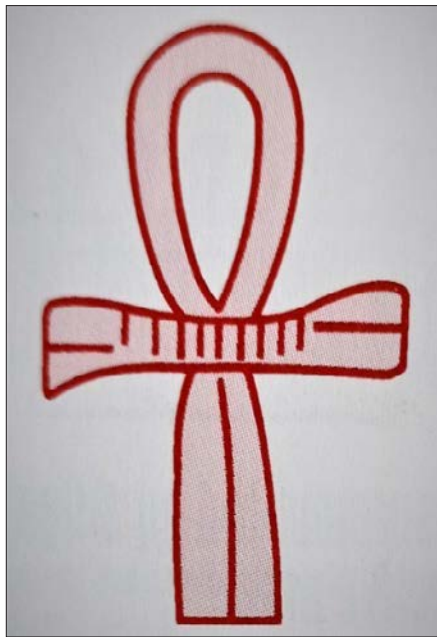


Figure 1. The *ankh* sign (Betrò,1996, p. 213)

Taken as a verb means “to live” while as a noun is “life”, denoting too “a mirror” and “a floral bouquet”. It is an ideogram of a cross shape but with a teardrop-shaped

¹ From Introductory Hymn to the Sun — God Re, in *The Egyptian Book of the Dead*, plate 1 (Dassow, 1998).

loop in place of a vertical upper bar. In the religious images it is an equivalent of “breath of life” that the god transmits to the king, and the king in turn to subjects, as seen in Figure 2. The *ankh* sign was identified with the air by which men live. In the *Book of the Dead* holding the ankh sign up to the deceased nose, a “seat of life” itself, magically guaranteed their eternal life. There are a few theories as to the real object the hieroglyph represents. It could be a sandal strip, next a sort of belt called “knot of Isis”, yet another knot associated with the magic ring of twisted cord that surrounded the name (Betrò, 1996). My interpretation opts for anthropomorphic rendering of the idea of life that is epitomised in the image of the human body, here highly abstracted and stylised. What is more, the author of this particular hieroglyph’s structural concept was able to convey through it a plethora of insightful remarks regarding the essence of human being. The most striking feature is a tear-drop loop over horizontal arms which evokes a shape of the human head and suggests its both primary significance in the overall structure and a possible entrance, of threshold kind, into supramundane realm. The horizontal line in the composition calls forth a sense of balance and symmetry, so to speak, an intrinsic characteristic of man’s bodily framework harmoniously united with the activity of the mind/head. Incidentally, the first vignette of the Ani Papyrus in *The Book of the Dead*, see below Figure 3, which accompanies hymns to the rising sun, corroborates such a reading. Here we find a personified sign for life whose two arms are lifting the large red disk of the sun into the sky above, conveying evidently some theological concepts concerning the rising sun. The ankh stands upon a *djed*-pillar or pilaster². This intricate motif, obtained by ingenious combination of the disk, ankh and the *djed*-pillar is associated with the syncretised deity of the Osiris-Re and it merges in this imaginative form the chthonian and celestial aspects of the afterlife (Dassow, 1998).

A striking example of the hieroglyphic character of the Egyptian art that points to the subtle interaction between text and image, evoking parenthetically a similar semantic/aesthetic interrelatedness found in the Mediaeval manuscripts recording a plain chant. Here we see a decoration of the Hymn to Ra. Plate 1 of *The Book of the Dead*. It is a vignette with the image made of the three elements: hieroglyph *ankh*, *djed*-pillar and the sun-disk makes up a word meaning “endurance”. Allegorically it might be a pictorial expression of the praying person, united in the sacred act of devotion with their object of their veneration. Ogelet finds, that this tripartite image was extensively used on amulets (Dassow, 1998, p. 154).

The ankh sign possesses a double meaning referring both to life on earth and eternal life. As physical life is tantamount to sun and water, every so often the rays of the sun disk terminate in *ankh*-signs, like in the relief of the royal family, Figure 4, Akhenaten and Nefertiti, of 18th Dynasty, c.1345 BC. Elsewhen, in the scenes of sacrificial libation and purification, gods pour a rain of *ankh*-signs over the king’s head. The import of this particular hieroglyph’s shows Egyptian artists’ ability of inventing poly semantic symbols and images inspired by the shape of the human body. In terms of art making, it indicates an infallible device for meaning conveyance that prescind or abstracts from material objects to find an immersive form that lies at the heart of the human essence.

² A *djed*-pillar or pilaster, a hieroglyph denoting the idea of longevity and stability, found in the realm of symbolism and associated with the god Osiris. Its phonetic value is *ḏd*, from the verb *ḏdi*, “to be stable, last” (Dassow, 1998, p. 209).



Figure 2. Scene on the door-jamb showing an *ankh* sign held to the nose of King Psammetichus III, on the left, by the god Amen-Re, on the right, with a two-plumed crown.

Sandstone. From the temple of Osiris at Karnak; 26th Dynasty, 526-525 BC.
British Museum 1519 (Katan & Mintz, 1985)

Another source of the guiding light in our pursuit concerns hieroglyphic writing as art. Here we need to study interdependence between a hieroglyph as such and its value as an image in order to try to grasp the deep nature of its knot with art, both in terms of figurative representation of Nature, obviously in its alternate modes as *natura naturata* or *natura naturans*. Whence one distinguishes different artistic languages being applied in the relative articulation of one of these conceptual principles regarding rendition of Nature and its workings. As we can notice, a single hieroglyph and hieroglyphic writing too are subjects to the same rules of figurative representation.

Further, while embracing papyri we encounter the subtle interactions between text and image pointing to the Ancient Egyptians' unity of their written words and their world, Goelet, Jr, a renowned researcher into *The Book of the Dead* notices that cognitive fact

virtually commands us to take account of the profound significance of images in the Egyptians' perception of reality and the forces that controlled their universe. It is not surprising

that the Egyptians should have invented the illustrated book... (...) ... in which scenes and captions were intimately interwoven. (Dassow, 1998, p. 149)

to produce, let us add, an intricate, intermodal and overarching meaning through aesthetic and semantic interplay of its constituents. This in turn opens onto a field of research for contemporary aesthetics which investigates multimodal art, both as an aesthetic structure of a given work and its relative aesthetic experience being wherewith triggered. In consequence, the latter stimulates further research into an ontic nature of correspondence of arts what implies subsequent study on occurrences of aesthetic affinities, technical similarities and modi operandi of interrelated arts (Forceville, 2008).



Figure 3. First vignette of the Ani Papyrus in *The Book of the Dead* (Dassow, 1998)

Maria Caramela Betrò (1996) noticed that the Egyptian writing has all the characteristics of the mature hieroglyphic system, and “already recapitulates a nearly complete panoply of alphabetic and multiconsonantal signs as well as other categories of graphemes, ideograms, and determinatives (classifying signs which have no phonetic value)” being the two confluent aspects, graphic and phonetic, of a phonogram... (...)

“Egyptian hieroglyphic writing seems to break into history as a divine gift, ready for use.” Indeed, the myth has it that the multiform ibisheaded god of science and writing, magic arts and lunar phases, Thoth, was credited with endowment the Egyptians with their hieroglyphic writing. Yet historically, hieroglyphic writing appears in Egypt around 3150 BC, the late fourth millennium BC. Annette Imhausen in her study on ancient Egyptian mathematics champions widely accepted view that it was a product of evolution. According to her the origins of numeracy and literacy resulted from the needs of accounting and she examines pictorial signs and combinations of abstract signs as representations of numbers (Imhausen 2016, p. 40). It is commonly agreed that written languages came into being as a necessity for people’s living and labour cooperation. Notwithstanding the unfathomed character of the hieroglyphic writing’s origins, it has unceasingly been delivering its ancient message. Although nowadays detached from their original cultural context and predominantly spotted in the funerary context of the evidence, they nevertheless keep offering ever fresh cognitive and aesthetic stimuli for consecutive generations of artists, including contemporary art.



Figure 4. Relief of Akhenaton’s Royal Family. Limestone. Height 32,5cm, provenance unknown, Staatliche Museum, Berlin. Photo. PSAT

Recent research and publications analysis. The living legacy of the Giants of Egyptology, the Founding Fathers of modern times scholarship into hieroglyphic writing, who began the scientific decipherment of hieroglyphs, to mention only Thomas Young, 1773–1829, and Jean-François Champillion, 1790–1832, Alan Henderson Gardiner, 1879–1966, Adolf Erman, 1854–1937, had resulted in fact from the antecedent, centuries-old quest and research efforts made by consecutive heirs of the tradition that date back as early as to 5th century with Alexandrian Egyptian priest Horapollo in the first place, who has been credited with a treatise *Hieroglyphica*. We need as well to bear in mind the Coptic monks, generally acclaimed as keepers of ancient wisdom, then Arabic scholars like Ibn Wahshiyah, d.930 AD who studied Egyptians inscriptions and manuscripts. The latter proposed that some Egyptian hieroglyphs could be read phonetically, rather than only logographi-

cally³, namely in a written form exclusively. It had been their steadfast endeavour and bold guesswork that backed Renaissance pursuit of Leon Battista Alberti followed in turn by the 17th century contribution into hieroglyph decoding by Athanasius Kircher, 1602–1680. The series of insights, guessworks, every so often misled, but nevertheless thought provoking, prepared Champillion’s decipherment backed by Young’s findings. The contemporary hieroglyph study is marked notably by Italian scholar Maria Carmela Betrò and American Egyptologist Ogden Goelet Jr of Columbia University. Quite recently Ilona Reguluski has come with many sided standpoint to try to unlock seemingly still unapprehended weight of Ancient Egypt civilisation. She suggests that hieroglyphs store in themselves the hidden knowledge that came down to us as a kind of cognitive challenge that is worth facing and might be intellectually rewarding (Reguluski, 2022). Ogden Goelet Jr, a remarkable scholar on *The Book of the Dead’s* reading made significant and encouraging remarks on writing and painting interplay in Egyptian papyri or tomb’s decorations that generates an overarching meaning. Yet there has not been so far any exclusively aesthetic approach to hieroglyphs, embedded in phenomenological epoché that would invite their universal reading through comparative studies, neuroaesthetics, and Jung’s collective unconsciousness criteria. Together with analytical tools of the depth psychology. This study is both inviting and addressing an innovative approach to Egyptian signs with the research premise that they are a living vehicle of the universal meaning that could extend our understanding of the nature of mankind.

Aim of the article

When we come to embrace works of the ancient art it is semiosis that appears to guarantee the most neutral and safe way of the approach called a sign process. Yet to decode and infer the meaning of a sign from more than remote times one needs to assume a circumspective preliminary phenomenological stand called epoché (ἐποχή, “cessation” in Greek), which is a suspension of judgement or withholding of assent. Husserl’s notion of “bracketing” or phenomenological reduction suggests consecutive steps of unconditioned seeing to allow a free flow of phantasiai (φαντασίαι) in the form of pieces of information received from sense experience. In the Hellenistic philosophy⁴ the term referred to information received through senses and arising in thoughts. Only then, it seems, a beholder can confront the pure meaning of the form, responding to it with his/her perception, viz. all psychological states and activities such as mental assent, cognition, impulse and knowledge.

³ A logogram is a written character that represents an entire word, phrase or morpheme. The use of logograms in writing is called logography, and a writing system that is based on logograms is called logography or logographic system. The examples of logograms are Chinese *hanzi*, Chinese characters, Japanese *kanji*, hieroglyphic and cuneiform characters. Each graph or character corresponds to one meaningful unit of the language, not directly to a unit of thought. Logogram is a word-forming element meaning speech, word, reason from Greek *logos*, while gram means “that which is written or marked”, from Greek *gramma*, that which is drawn, a picture, a drawing, that which is written, a letter, a character.

⁴ For further study on the subject consult a skeptical philosophy of Pyrronists (1st century BCE) and Stoicism (the early 3rd century BCE).

Hieroglyphs were already in times of their production multi semantic, polyvalent and denoting many distant things whereby suggesting underlying ontic connections between things being evoked through man's power to associate. Let us take the example of hieroglyph for "gold" in order to analyse its form, principles of composition and its final artistic properties. We are proceeding now to the sheer making up a single hieroglyph itself. Assuming from the outset that at the very heart of this process lies man's innate need to represent, record and imitate a perceived world in order to gentle and understand it. This particular sign has been chosen purposefully as an instance of semantic richness it might yield and its ability to metamorphose as in the relief from sarcophagus of queen Hatshepsut, found in Thebes, the Valley of Kings, nowadays in the Cairo Egyptian Museum, where it turned into a stool for the goddess Isis, see Figure 5.

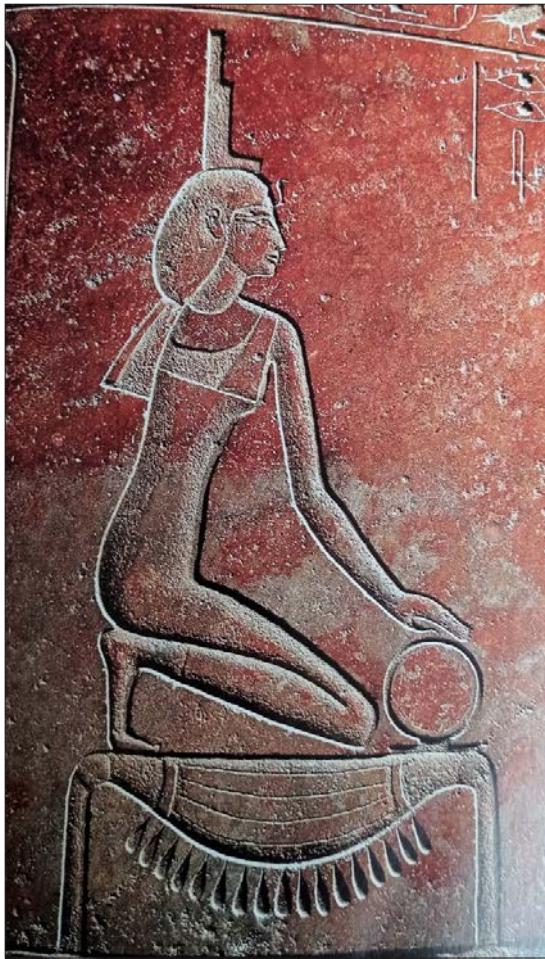


Figure 5. Relief from the sarcophagus of queen Hatshepsut, fragment, 18th dynasty, 1479–1458 BCE, quartzite, Cairo, Egyptian Museum. Photo. PSAT

Hieroglyph for gold in its graphic form reminds a stool, Figure 6. The phonetic value of this ideogram in ancient Egyptian language is nbw, and it stands for gold, as well it is a determinative in names of precious metal.

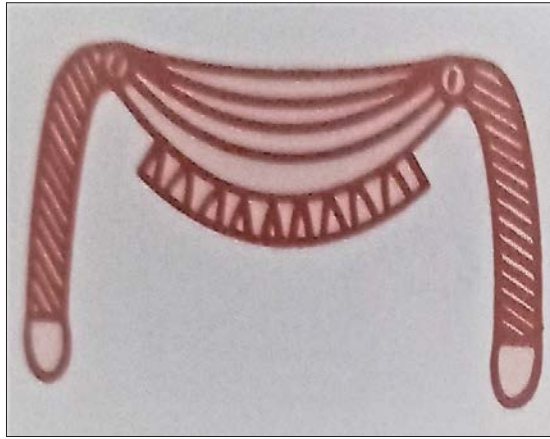


Figure 6. The ideogram of phonetic value nbw. “gold”, and a determinative in names of precious metals

Betrò gives at least two interpretations of this character. According to the general agreement “...it portrays a type of archaic necklace composed of threads of assorted grains in the shape of droplets in the lower part with two long side elements that were tied behind the head” (Betrò, 1996, p. 213). However Ipollito Rosellini, who was the Pisan Egyptologist co-leading with Champollion the Franco-Tuscan expedition into Egypt, gives a quite different reading of the image: According to him, the sign was a long or an intricately folded sheet, with the extremities hanging, used for washing gold: the droplets shown in the lower part would have been the filtered water. The anonymous artist carver of the relief with a power of his or her imagination transformed it into a stool for the kneeling goddess Isis, creating an impressive multi evocative object which can be perceived as an intermodal art, where visual experience overlaps with acoustic whereby providing a plethora of conceptual associations.

Relation of writing and art

Alan Gardiner claims that hieroglyphs are an offshoot of the pictorial art. However, the aesthetic and conceptual tie is so strong that art historians agree on the hieroglyphic character of the Egyptian art. In a need of overcoming all the expressive limits of the pictorial art sometime before the end of Pre-dynastic period the Egyptians discovered the principle of rebus and charade⁵.

⁵ **Rebus** is a puzzle in which words are represented by combinations of pictures and individual letters, for instance, *apex* might be represented by a picture of an *ape* followed by a letter *x*. Historically, it is an ornamental device associated with a person to whose name it punningly alludes. While **charade** is an absurd pretence intended to create a pleasant or respectable appearance, or a game in which players guess a word or phrase from a written or acted clue given for each syllable and for the whole item. Source: Oxford Languages, languages, oup.com.

The new departure consisted in using the pictures of things, not to denote those things themselves or any cognate notions, but to indicate certain other, entirely different, things not easily susceptible of pictorial representation, the names of which chanced to have similar sound. (Gardiner, 1957)

Betrò (1996) claims that

the immediate expressivity of the hieroglyphic message, unlike the discrete neutrality of an abstract alphabetic code, frequently superimposed itself on the hieroglyph's own significance. Sometimes the image interacted with the meaning, sometimes obscuring it or providing a departure point for elaborate philosophical speculation,

briefly, stimulating continual exploration of expressive and cognitive value of writing whereby informing philosophical-religious thought in Ancient Egypt. Here as example of the evocative overlapping of writing and culture, or nature and culture.

It is commonly agreed that hieroglyphs corresponded to their present-day art. Ogden Goelet Jr points to the constant interlocking of Egyptian art and language: "Indeed, one of the most striking characteristics of Egyptian culture is that it made no distinction between art and language.

Although the Egyptian script was not picture writing in the true sense of the phrase, Egyptian was written pictorially" (Dassow, 1998, p. 154). The Egyptian style although a subject of inevitable change and evolution across ages, mirroring aesthetic taste of the sequential dynasties conveyed nevertheless "a precise message to the beholder, and — most important of all — through the disciplined, rational orderliness of the design... (...) ...a strong sense of order, the inner logic of the style" (Janson, 1979).

Such are key formal qualities, viz. the style, that can be defined as

the distinctive way a thing is done in any field of human endeavour... (...) ... In the visual art, style means the particular way in which the forms that make up any given work of art are chosen and fitted together... (...) ...within these broad period styles of particular phases, such as the Old Kingdom; or wherever it seems appropriate, we differentiate national or local styles within a period, until we arrive at the personal styles of individual artist. Even these may be needed to be subdivided further into the various phases of an artist's development. The extent to which we are able to do all this depends on how much internal coherence, how much of a sense of continuity, there is in the material we are dealing with. We find that the art of historic civilisations has a much more controlled, tightly knit kind of style than does a prehistoric art. (Janson, 1979, pp. 53–55)

Equally valid is a statement that precondition of every writing system is a need of basic codification or normalisation, which as such obviously is not tantamount to a canon — a general law, rule, principle or criterion — in the degree of stylistic conformity that it requires. As a matter of fact, a recognised aesthetic formula of Egyptian hieroglyphic writing emerged in the 3rd dynasty and was preserved until the end of the use of this script.

The principles of writing an ancient Egypt ideogram⁶

An ideogram is a sense and sound sign, if both properties co-occur then it is a pictophonetic one. To be precise, it is a kind of character that symbolises the idea of a thing sometimes without indicating the sequence of sounds in its name⁷. The latter can stand for a numeral or a letter. Betrò observes that

A single hieroglyph may function as an ideogram (many scholars prefer to call them “logograms” but I use the more common traditional term), as a phonogram (with no apparent relation to the image evoked by the drawing), and as a determinative. (Betrò, 1996)

The examples of hieroglyphs investigated in this paper allow to draw conclusions as for the general principles of their production. They are a type of image – based representative symbols that depict external form of material object, rendered highly abstracted though. As purely pictographic and unsurprisingly similar to the Chinese ideograms, “...were created on the basis of the human body, in vicinity and the appliances and architecture in the distance, or through looking skyward to observe the heaven, looking downward to observe earth, birds and beasts and plants” (Xiran et al., 2010, p. 8).

Needless to say, the creators of the Egyptian hieratic writing were dissimilar in personality and mindset from the Chinese one. We can easily observe the balanced composition of the pictorial components of a single Egyptian hieroglyph, its internal coherence and a strong sense of order, what echoes the features of then Egyptian art. Both recapitulated the Egyptian experience of life and were expression of the same order carried over into mental and social organisation through the cognitive need to classify reality.

Hieroglyphic writing is subject to the same rules as figurative representation in ancient Egypt. The little figures of men, animals, and objects that comprise the texts are represented as collection of parts seen from different points of view, alternately full-face, in profile, or in three-quarters profile... (...) ancient scribes could vary the size, spatial arrangement, or orientation of the signs to satisfy aesthetic concerns. (Betrò, 1996, p. 16)

The method of writing a word or a text

There are over seven hundred of these signs. All of them are consonants as the Egyptians did not write vowels. Although the canonical direction in which Egyptian papyri were written was from right to left, against the direction in which the signs face, hieroglyphics could be written either from left to right, or right to left, and vertically as well as horizontally. Hieroglyphs are always read from top to bottom but sometimes you should start on the left side, and sometimes on the right. The animals, birds or

⁶ It might be helpful for further discernment to make a distinction between an **ideogram** which can be both a sound and sense-sign and depicting exactly what it means, from a **hieroglyph** itself which is a mere sign or a letter, next, a **phonogram**, a sound-sign, and a **determinative**. The latter is a hieroglyph that is placed at the end of the alphabetic hieroglyphs to indicate the general sense preceding it. In other words, it is a sense sign with the exception that it cannot be pronounced because it has no sound.

⁷ In the semiotic classification by Joseph I. M. Bocheński, a logician, an ideographic writing where an ideogram is a signifier or an object that signifies – is a direct sign of the person’s thought. While European phonetic languages are direct signs of speech and indirect ones of thought (Bocheński, 2016, p. 23).

people used in hieroglyphs always face the beginning of the sentence so that tells you where to start. A single word is made of hieroglyphs, a phonogram and a determinative, as showed in Figure 7:

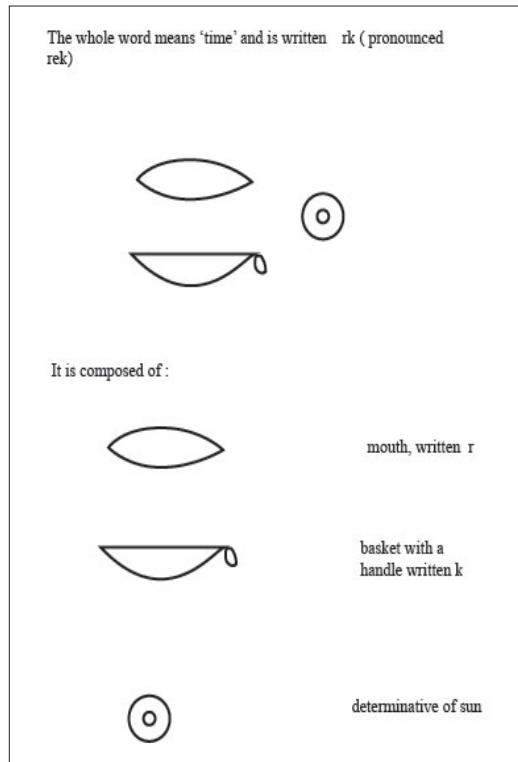


Figure 7. The whole word composed *seriatim* of a hieroglyph for a mouth, next a hieroglyph for basket with a handle and the third one for the sun is written rk (pronounced "rek") and means "time". After (Katan & Mintz, 1987, p. 42).

Main research material

We still have a great deal to learn about the origins and significance of the Ancient Egypt hieratic writing for the contemporary mean, specifically of those belonging to the Western civilisation. However, owing to compelling impact of a single ideogram or hieroglyph, to call only up an ankh sign, we may enjoy their cognitive purport and aesthetic beauty without any new present or future findings of Egyptology. A sheer aesthetic experience of a hieroglyph taken as a work of art has nothing to do with the process of denotation that is referential (Goodman, 1976, pp. 3–5). With scarce or none knowledge at all about the Egyptian civilisation the beholder's response to the hieratic sign implies non-referential semiotic act and allows free associations through their creative imagination, engaging one's individual memory, and their unique content of

relative subconsciousness and unconsciousness. A hieroglyph treated as a pure *quali-signum*, defined by Charles Sander Peirce as sign's inherent aesthetic properties operate at various stages in the process of semiosis and it induces emotional, energetic and logic response on the part of the perceiver. It communicates a pure meaning, albeit accumulated and generated through strings of numberless individual experiences of the world. Approached from this semiotic stand it can always challenge our imagination and invite further exploration, as being substantialised and inviting by a stylised hieroglyph of a snake/cobra on the headgear of a royal head from a sphinx statue, Figure 8.

The cobra is associated with the sun god, the kingdom of Lower Egypt, the kings and their families, and several deities. It is a symbol of protection and guards the gates of the underworld, wards off the enemies of the royals and guides the deceased pharaohs on their journey through the underworld (*Royal Symbols*, n.d.).



Figure 8. An example of a stylised hieroglyph of a snake/cobra on the headgear of a royal head from a sphinx statue. Granite, height 16.5cm, provenance unknown, circa 1460 B.C., Staatliche Museum, Berlin. Photo. PSAT.

Conclusions

The Egyptians hieroglyphs, ceremonial ones carved or incised into stone, carved into the white limestone cladding as incuse relief, other painted on the walls of tombs, temples and pyramids, on statutes, obelisks, on everyday things, personal possessions and written with a reed on papyri build up some invaluable legacy of the past civilisations, seemingly still locked with no full access for the contemporaries. They present

specific ways of conveying and transmitting the universal substance of the human experience the whole mankind has had a share in it. They unceasingly pose a challenge for the aesthetics asking for new ways of perceiving and cognising them in the aesthetic response to their formal beauty and hidden sense.

Scientific novelty. The study tries to establish a new both bond and relationship between the signifier and the signified to allow contemporary reading of the ancient signs that could bridge modern man with their Ancient Egypt ancestors. Following Ferdinand de Saussure's exposition of the semiotic nature of the symbolisation process it opens an investigation into ways the modern mind can bear new meaning that will substitute the extinct signified in relation to the compelling ancient signifier a single hieroglyph is. To put it differently, with the help of logical thinking one simply needs to build up a new ontic fundament of the semantic relation between *le signifié* and *le signifiant*⁸.

The further research to be undertaken in the new effort of decoding their meaning invites methods of the neuroaesthetics that deals with neural consequences of contemplating a creative work of art. It seems that our collected memories as stored in prefrontal cortex and limbic systems might reconnect us with the true meaning of the Ancient Egypt hieratic graphic code. As mentioned above, the broken bond and relationship, rudimental and essential of its own, between the signifier and the signified (Beziau, 2017) in the case of most of Egyptian hieroglyphs, due to extinct civilisation that bore them, is an irrevocable existential fact. Nevertheless, the existing semiotic state of the hieroglyphs can open new research horizons for semioticians and provide challenging inspiration for artists alike. The former, overcoming dilemma of arbitrary nature of signs and their double symbolism, be it ideal or pictorial, can investigate implicit connections, ontologically codependent, between aesthetics and logics. Embracing a sign as it is, on its own, detached from its historic and cultural contexts, one is invited to infer its pure unconditioned meaning armed with tools of logics which traces ideal concatenation between things, here formal elements that build up a sign, a hieroglyph. Further it is welcome to define intrinsic characteristics and relations within the given form. Thus, we might bridge aesthetic with logics, then consistently, senses with the reason, to try to balance two different, yet complementing research methodologies. As for the artists, they would have twofold task: first cognise, then respond accordingly with their individual imagination and technical capacities, if they happen to be under the spell of the sacred signs of the Ancient Egypt wisdom and love.

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⁸ In linguistics, *le signifié* and *le signifiant*, are the two complementary faces of the concept of linguistic sign developed by Ferdinand de Saussure (de Saussure, 1972, p. 97).

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Стародавні єгипетські ієрогліфи — сучасне прочитання для свіжих ідей у мистецтві

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Метою статті є раціоналізація емоційного, інтелектуального та естетичного впливу єгипетських ієрогліфів через їх вивчення за допомогою дослідницьких інструментів естетики як академічної дисципліни та суміжних наук. Розуміння ієрогліфів як символів спокою та вічності призвело до приписування давньоєгипетському письму здатності зберігати універсальну мудрість. Останнє пропонується і як обґрунтування, і як результат кожного творчого процесу, до якого ніби запрошує мистецтво ієрогліфів. *Результати дослідження*. Практична позиція щодо методологічного вибору дала змогу відновити зв'язок із техніками створення окремого ієрогліфа та отримати уявлення про концептуальні принципи зв'язування їх в ряди тексту, які генерують стародавнє значення, що мають бути розшифровані й сприйняті через призму сучасності. *Наукова новизна* дослідження полягає в спробі встановити новий зв'язок і стосунки між означником й означуваним, щоб забезпечити можливість прочитання стародавніх знаків, які могли б пов'язати сучасну людину з її давньоєгипетськими предками. Пояснення Фердинанда

де Соссюра семіотичної природи процесу символізації відкриває дослідження способів, згідно з якими сучасний розум може нести нове значення, яке замінить зникаюче означуване стосовно переконливого стародавнього означника, яким є окремий ієрогліф. *Висновки.* Дотримуючись передусім формального вивчення зовнішньої форми ідеограми, ми маємо намір одночасно кинути виклик сучасному мистецтву та поінформувати його про символічну природу мислення та духовності Стародавнього Єгипту, що породила ці полісемантичні знаки, створені з надзвичайно піднесеною логікою художньої мудрості та майстерності. Невипадковий і ревелюційний взаємообмін логіки й естетики свідчить про те, що ця форма мистецтва може виявити деякі суворі й інваріантні раціональні закони, які її сформували.

Ключові слова: ієрогліфи; художні властивості; естетичний досвід; жива культурна спадщина; відповідність мистецтв

