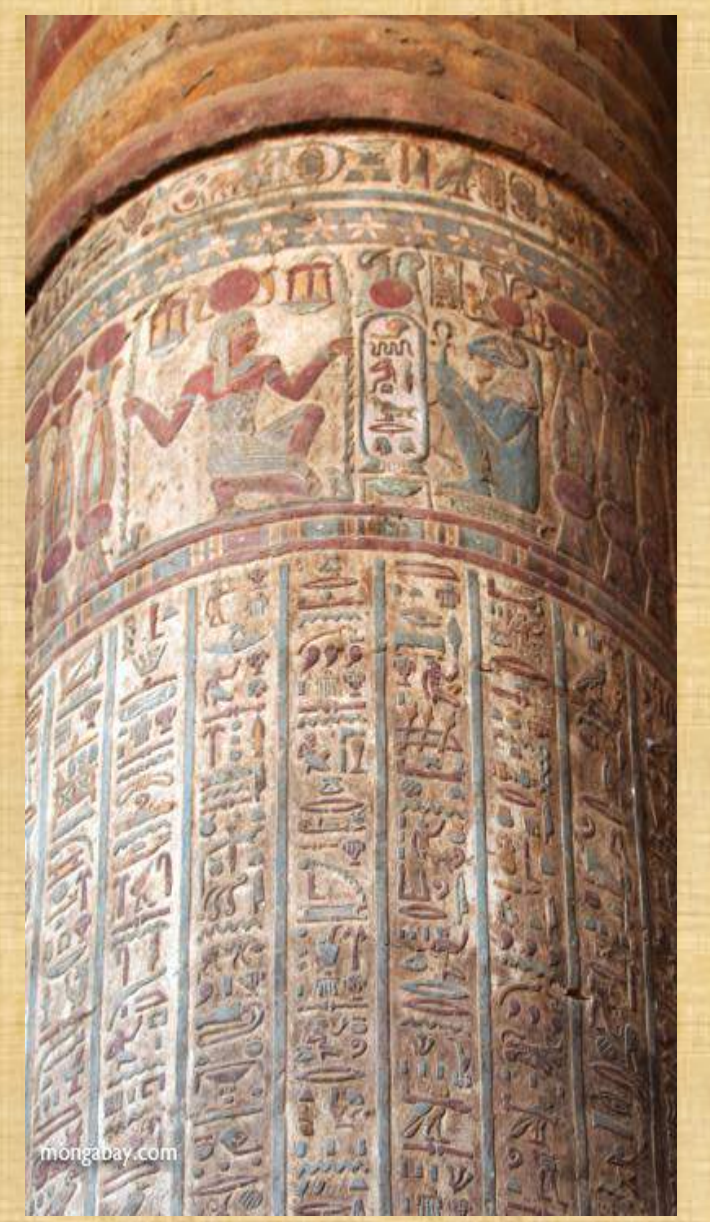
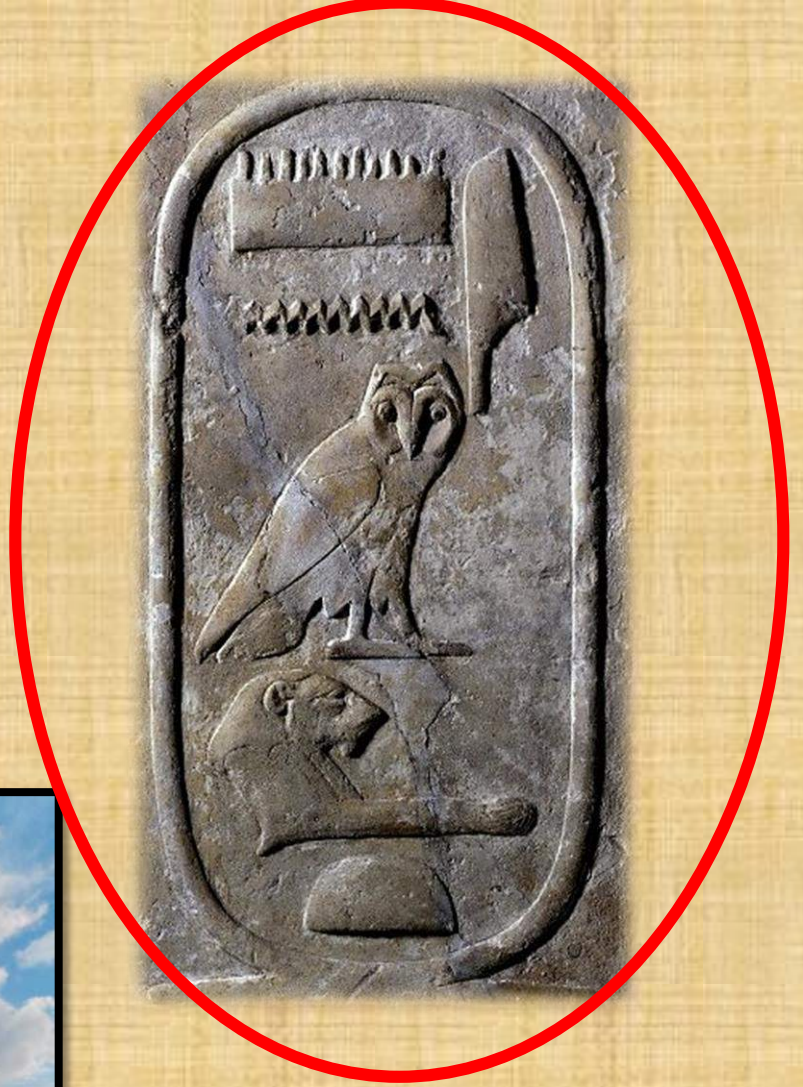
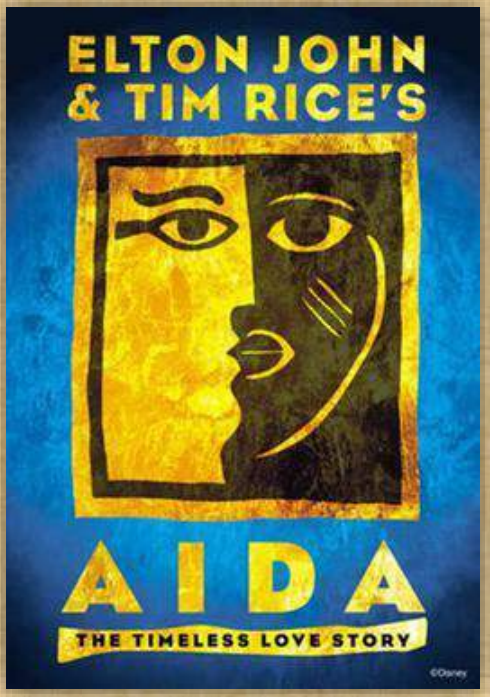


Egyptian Hieroglyphics

Ruth Kramer

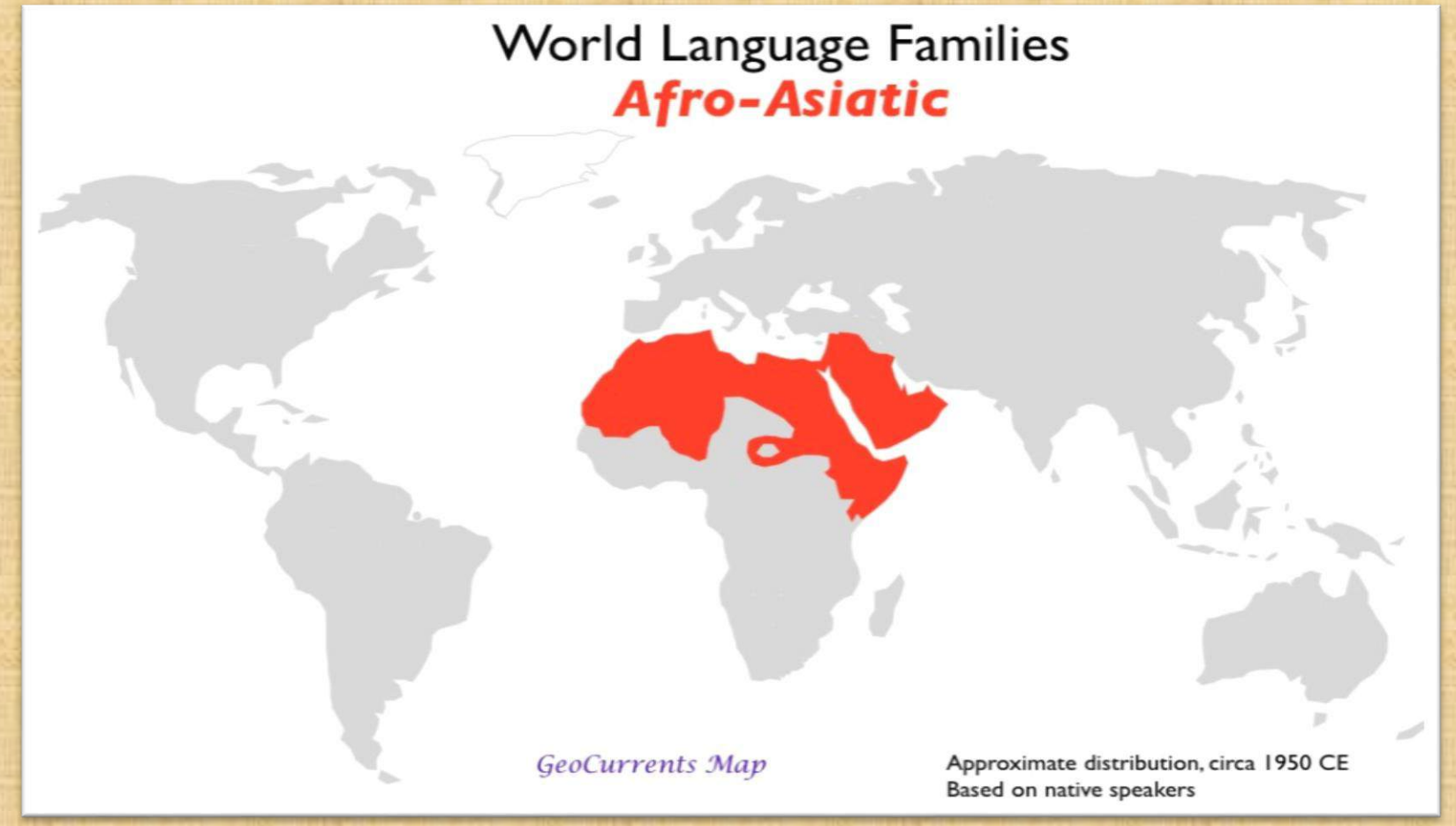
Georgetown University



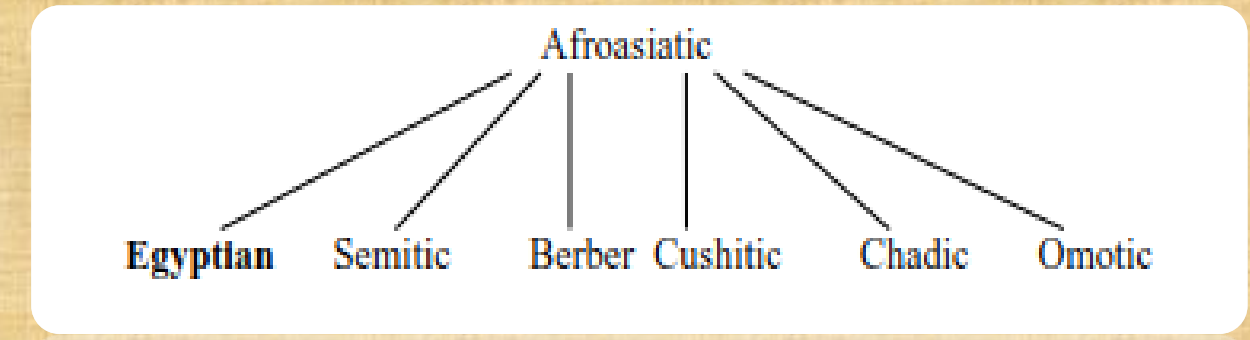

ELTON JOHN
& TIM RICE'S
AIDA
THE TIMELESS LOVE STORY

BLU-RAY + DIGITAL HD
THE MUMMY
ULTIMATE COLLECTION
THE MUMMY • THE MUMMY RETURNS
THE MUMMY: TOMB OF THE DRAGON EMPEROR • THE SCORPION KING

Egyptian hieroglyphics were used to write the indigenous language of Egypt = Egyptian.



Egyptian: attested in writing from 3000 BCE to 1300 CE



<u>Stage 1 (of 5): Old Egyptian</u> (~3000-2000 BCE)

- Spoken during the Old Kingdom and the First Intermediate Period
- Main texts: Pyramid Texts, tomb autobiographies
- Writing system: hieroglyphics

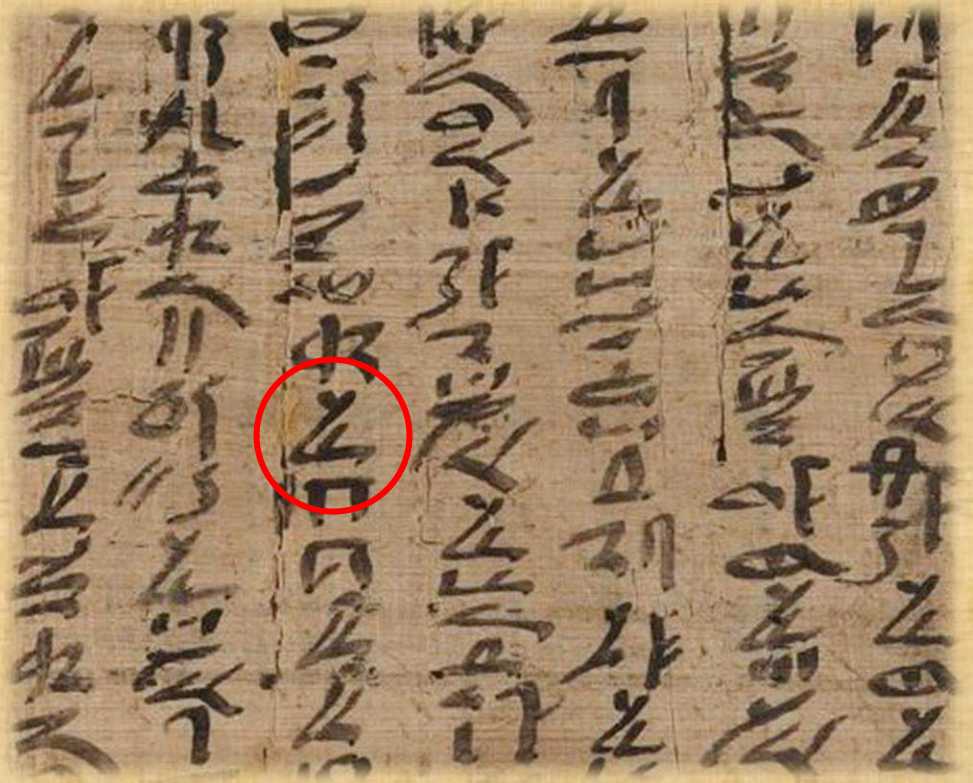
Cylinder seal of Peribsen

"Aida" is (most likely) set during the Old Kingdom!

<u>Stage 2 (of 5): Middle Egyptian</u> (~2000-1300 BCE)

- Spoken from the Middle Kingdom to the beginning of the New Kingdom
- Golden age of Egyptian written culture (religious texts, literature, letters, etc.)
- Two writing systems:

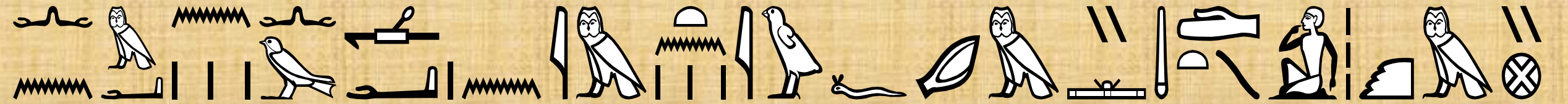
Glyphs



Hieratic

<u>Stage 3 (of 5): Late Egyptian</u> (1300-700 BCE)

- Spoken from the New Kingdom through the 3rd Intermediate Period
- Main texts: narratives, love poetry, written administrative records, etc.
- Writing system: hieroglyphics and hieratic

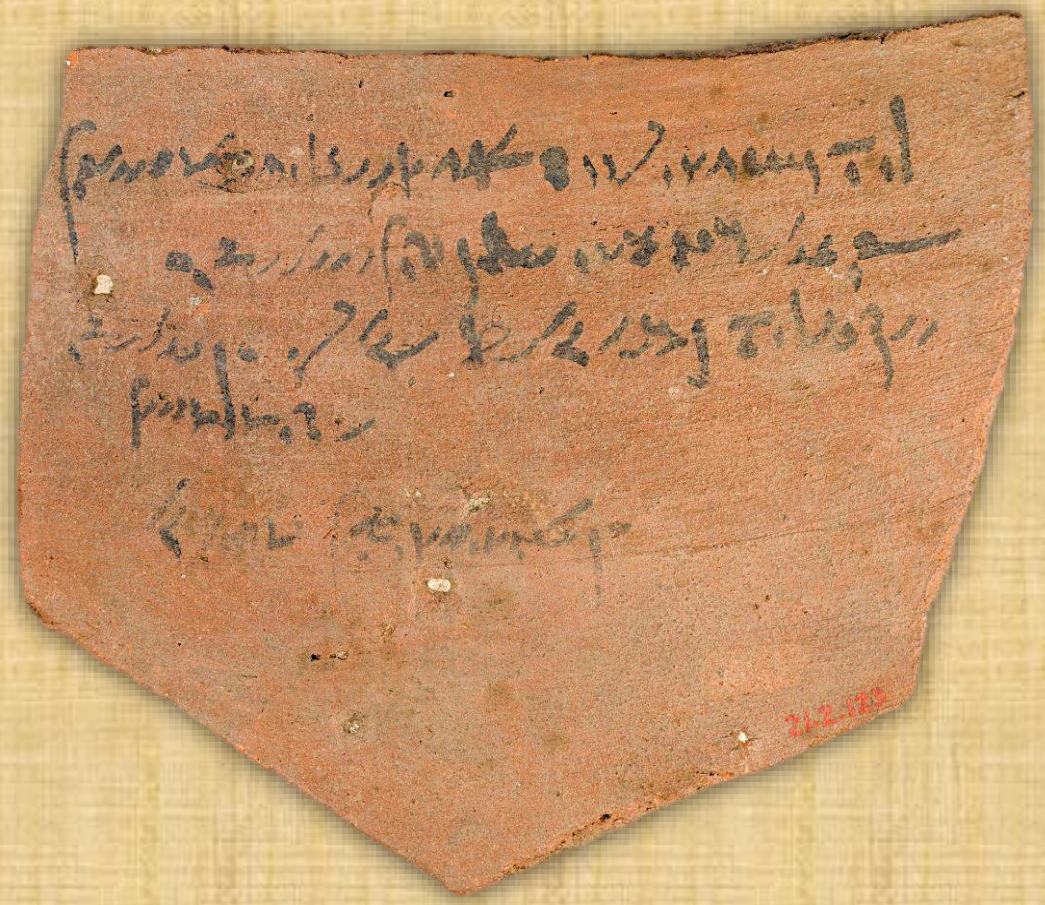


n *mn* *wa* *n-im.tn* *iw.f* *sDm* *mdt* *Km.t*

"Does anybody here speak Egyptian?" (Wenamun 2, 77)

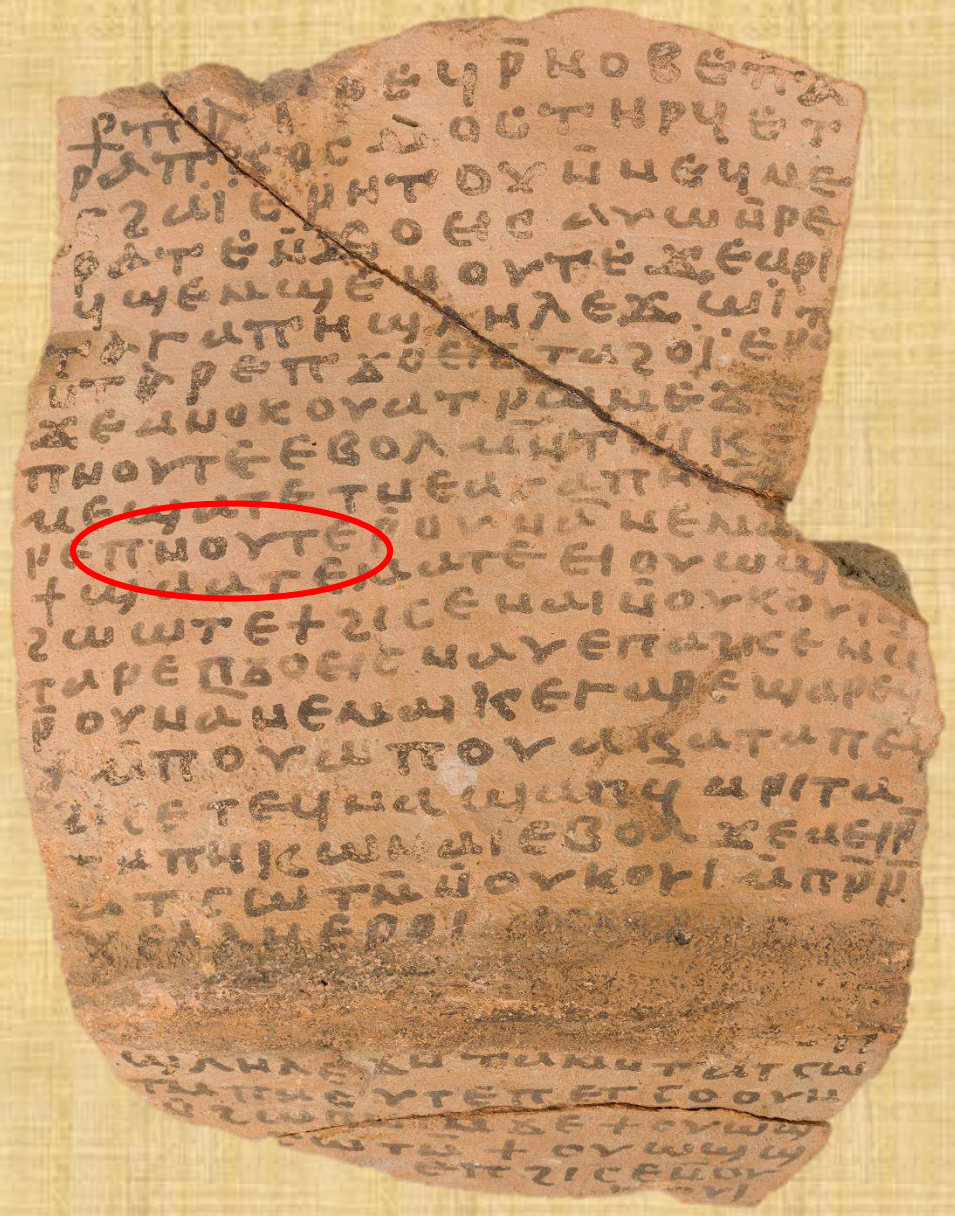
<u>Stage 4 (of 5): Demotic</u> (700 BCE to 400 CE)

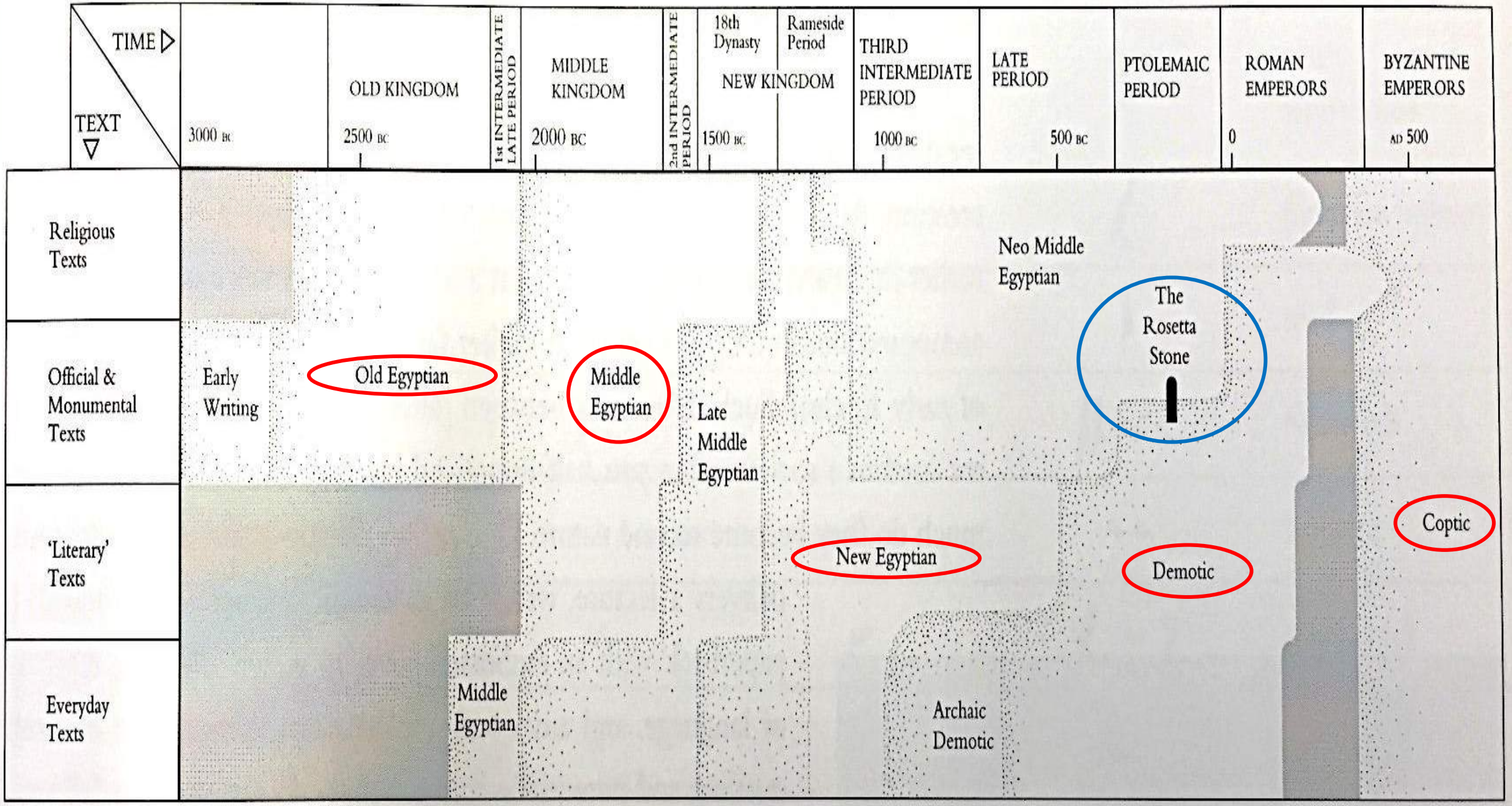
- Main texts: instructions, narrative cycles
- Writing system: Demotic (based on hieratic; difficult, variable)



Stage 5 (of 5): Coptic
(300 CE to 1300 CE)

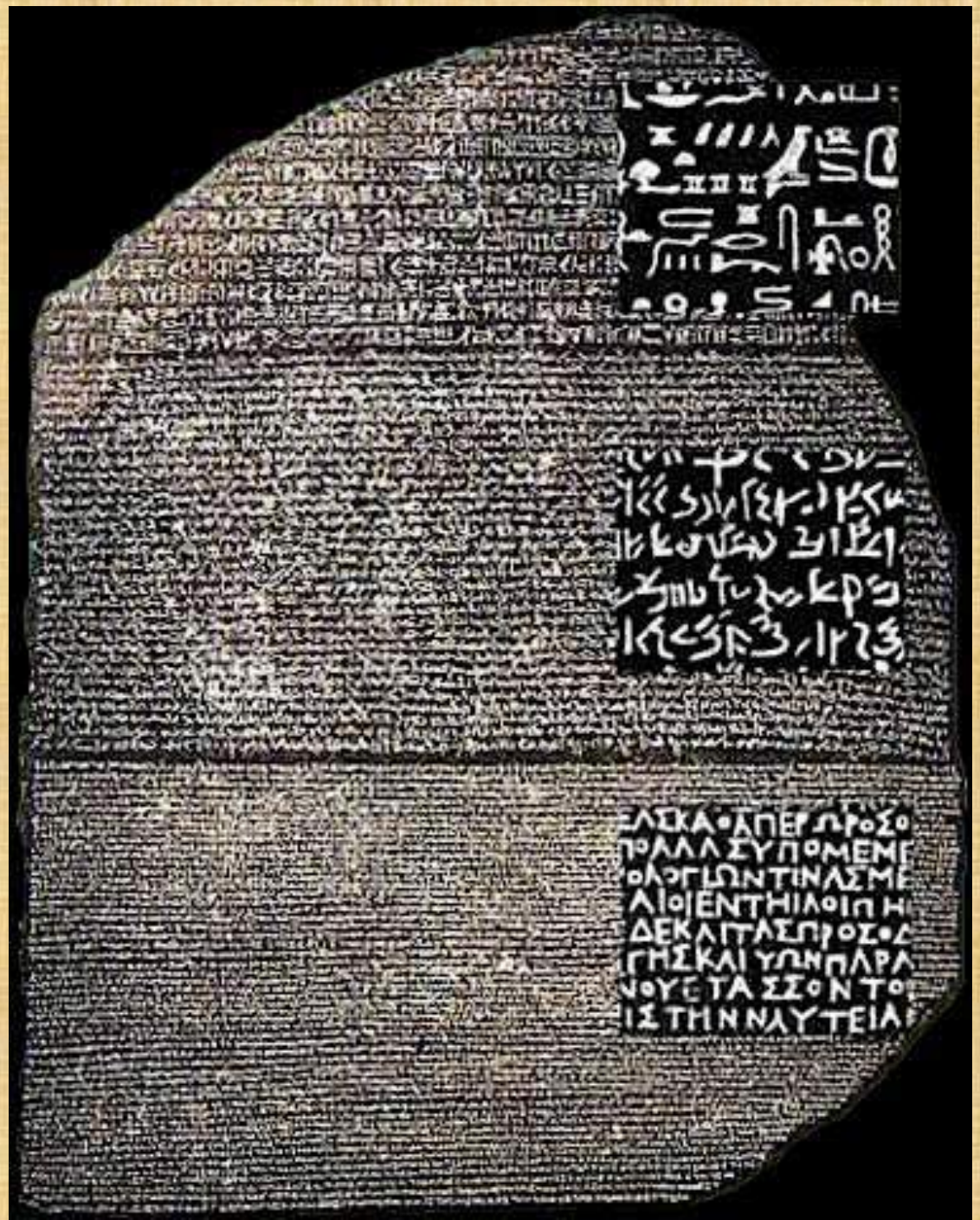
- Language of Christian Egypt (still used liturgically)
- Main texts: Bible, theological writings, letters
- Writing system: Greek, plus an additional six letters




TIME
TEXT
3000 BC
OLD KINGDOM
2500 BC
1st INTERMEDIATE LATE PERIOD
MIDDLE KINGDOM
2000 BC
2nd INTERMEDIATE PERIOD
18th Dynasty
NEW KINGDOM
1500 BC
Rameside Period
THIRD INTERMEDIATE PERIOD
1000 BC
LATE PERIOD
500 BC
PTOLEMAIC PERIOD
ROMAN EMPERORS
0
BYZANTINE EMPERORS
AD 500
Religious Texts
Official & Monumental Texts
'Literary' Texts
Everyday Texts
Early Writing
Old Egyptian
Middle Egyptian
Late Middle Egyptian
Neo Middle Egyptian
The Rosetta Stone
Coptic
New Egyptian
Demotic
Middle Egyptian
Archaic Demotic

Decipherment

Jean-François Champollion



Middle Egyptian

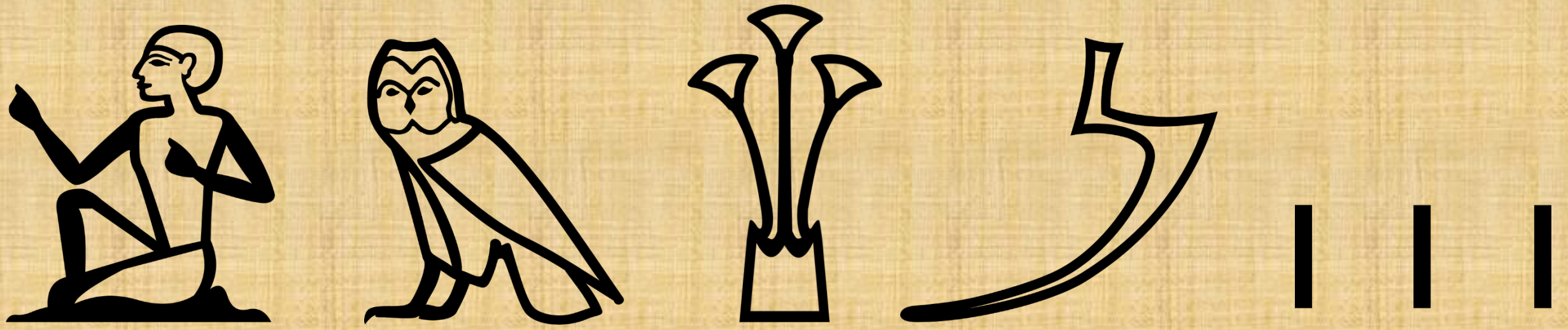
Demotic

Greek

Crash Course in Hieroglyphs

A **hieroglyph** is a picture used as the unit of a writing system.
(The units of the English writing system are letters.)

Pictures of….



Crash Course in Hieroglyphs

Hieroglyphs were used in **four** different ways.

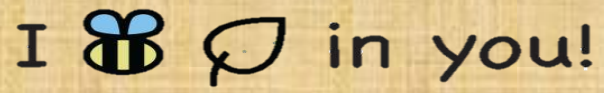
Use 1:
logogram

xpr
‘scarab beetle’

Use 2:
rebus principle

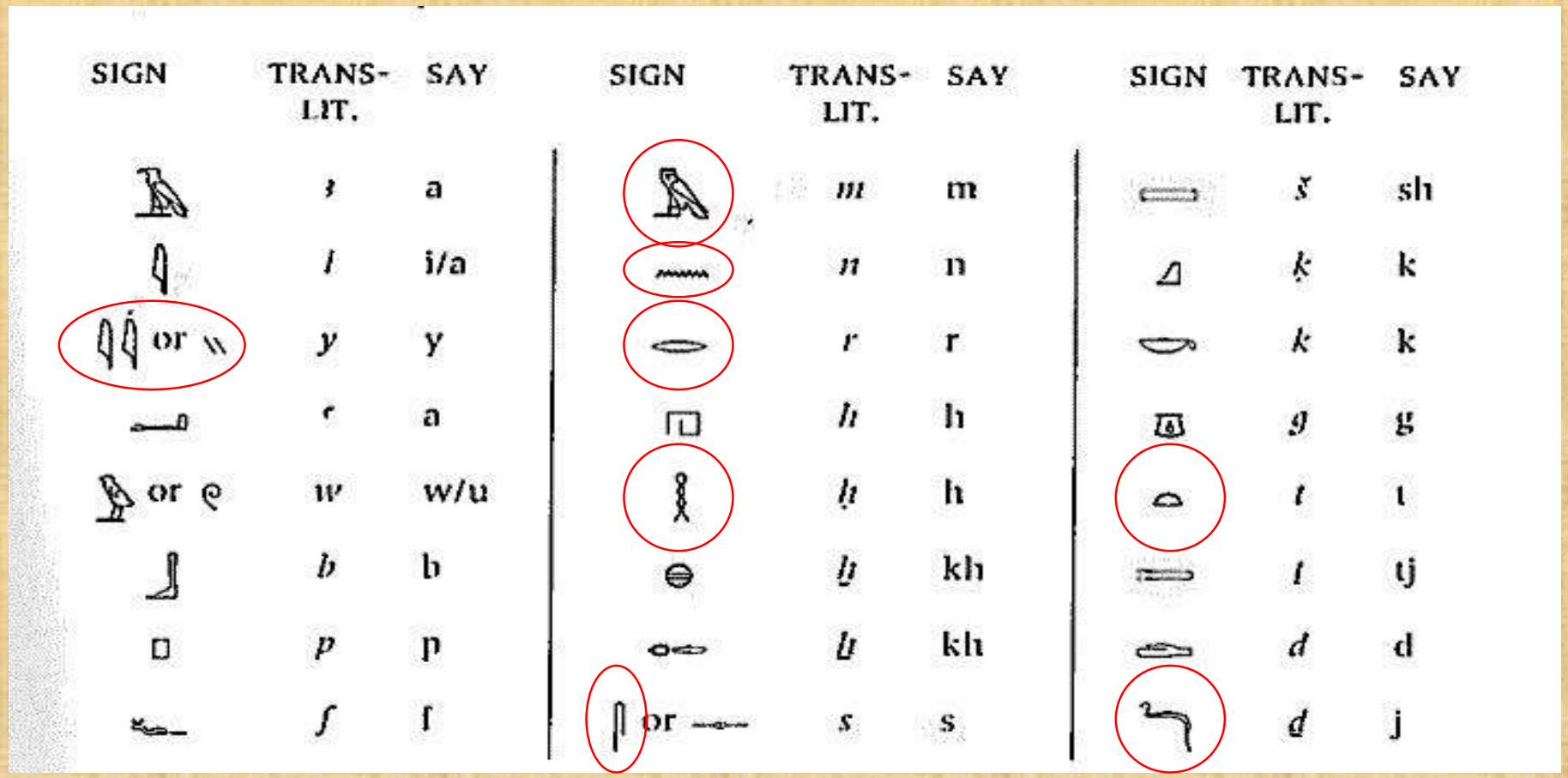
xpr
‘to become’

English rebus:



Crash Course in Hieroglyphs

Some signs were so commonly used as a rebus that they became permanently associated with certain sounds.



SIGN	TRANS-LIT.	SAY
	ꜣ	a
	i	i/a
or	*y*	y
	ꜥ	a
or	*w*	w/u
	b	b
	p	p
	f	f

SIGN	TRANS-LIT.	SAY
	m	m
	n	n
	r	r
	h	h
	ḥ	h
	ḫ	kh
	ḫ	kh
or	*s*	s

SIGN	TRANS-LIT.	SAY
	š	sh
	ḳ	k
	k	k
	g	g
	t	t
	ṯ	tj
	d	d
	ḏ	j

Hieroglyphic "alphabet"

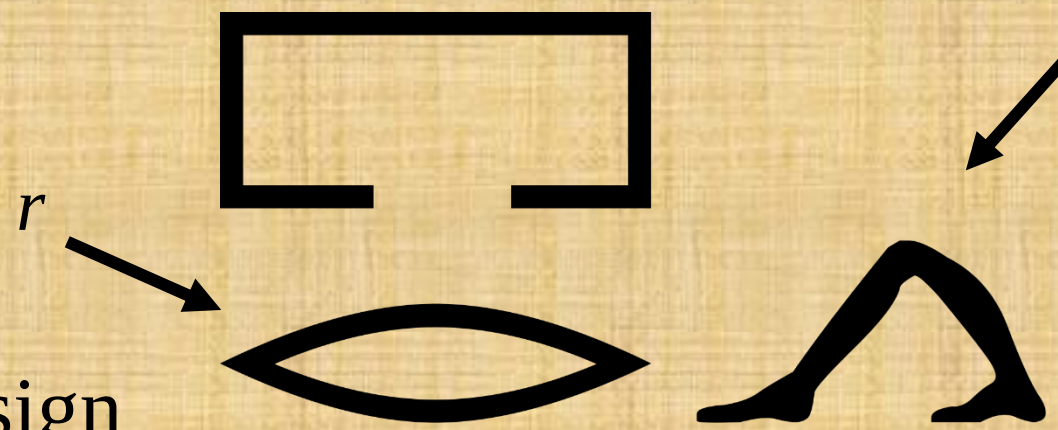
Crash Course in Hieroglyphs

logogram

pr
‘house’

Hieroglyphs were used in **four** different ways.

rebus principle



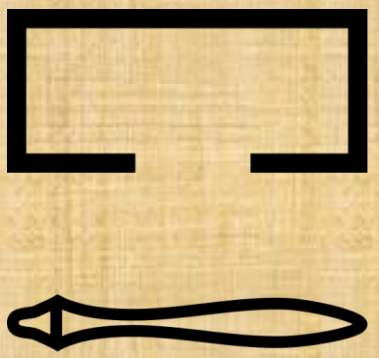
r

pr
‘to come out’

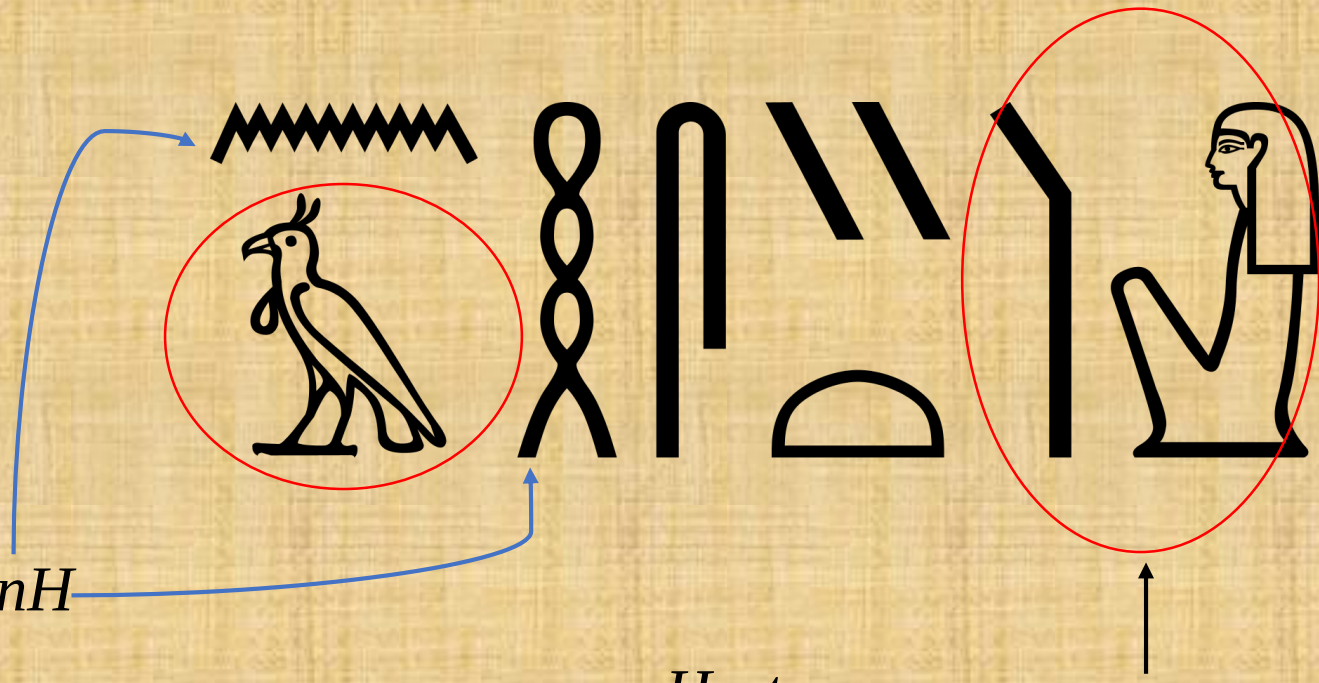
Use 4: **determinative** = unpronounced sign at the end of a word that indicates the word’s meaning

Use 3: **phonetic complement** = sign that repeats a sound already indicated by another sign

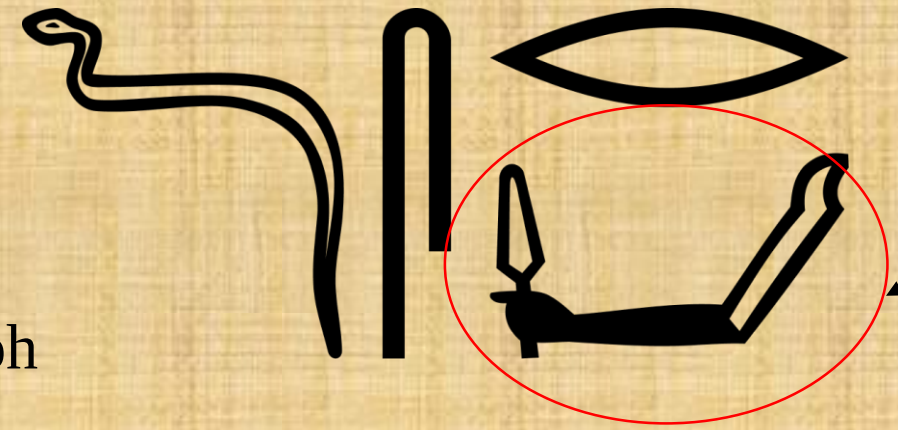
Crash Course in Hieroglyphs: Practice with Aida words!



pr aA
‘big house’
‘pharaoh’

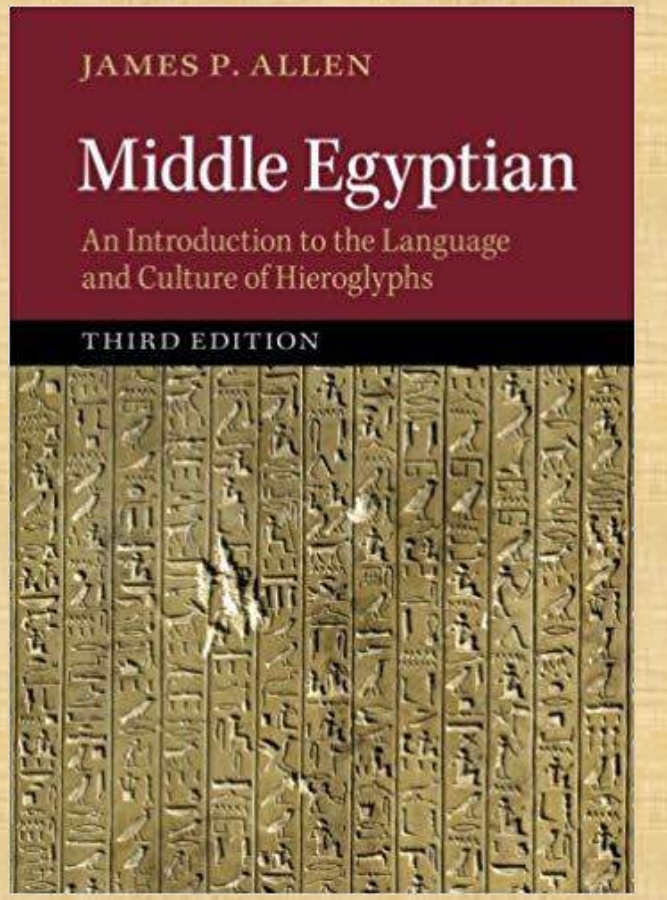


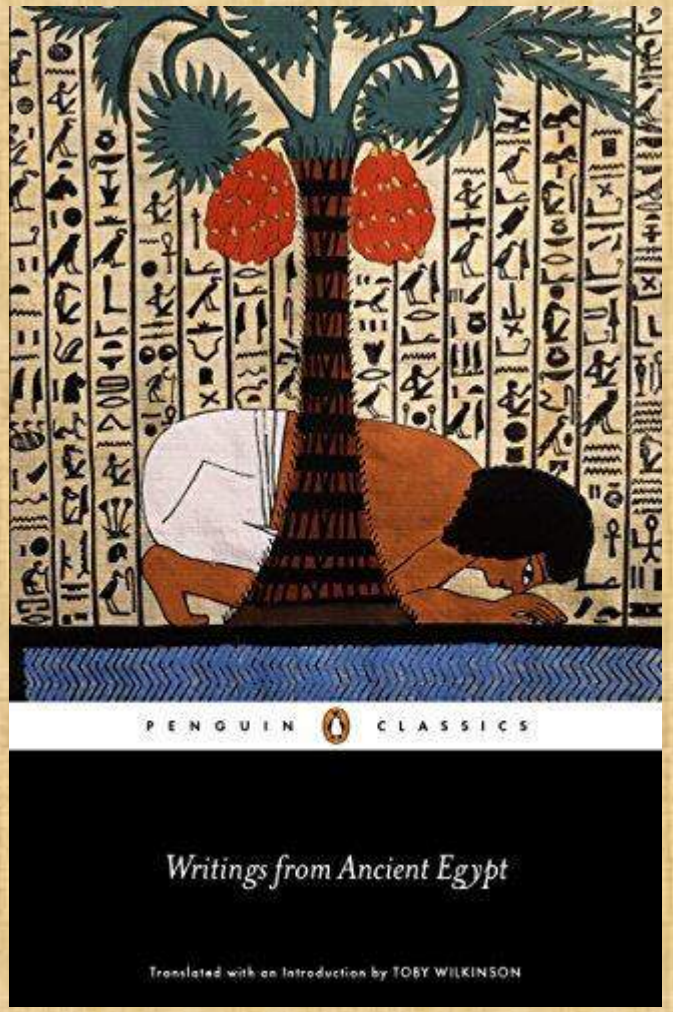
nHsyt
‘Nubian woman’



Dsr
‘holy (adj.)’
Name of 3rd dyn. pharaoh

Further Information





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"Wonders of Ancient Egypt"
Dr. David Silverman

dwA-nTr.i n-Tn

Thank you!

Special thanks to Bryce Huebner, Amy Maude Helfer, and Karen Kramer.

Aida = *ii.ti* ‘she is welcome’

Amonasro = 3rd c. BCE Meroitic king

Anachronisms: Qadesh, Nefertiti

Nubian language