



Review

PICTOGRAMS OR PSEUDO-SCRIPT? NON-TEXTUAL IDENTITY MARKS IN PRACTICAL USE IN ANCIENT EGYPT AND ELSEWHERE

B. J. J. Haring and O. E. Kaper (eds.) with the assistance of C. H. van Zoest

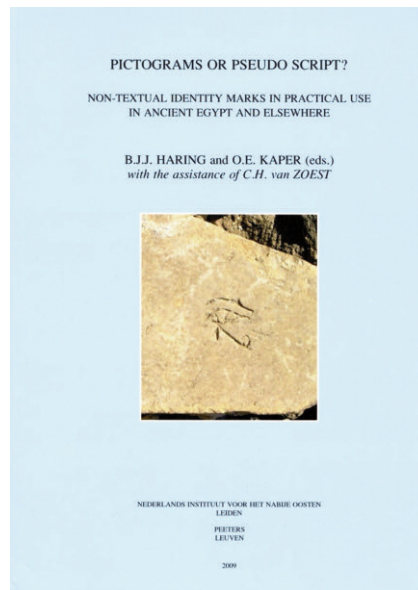
Egyptological Publications / Egyptologische Uitgaven Volume 25
Netherlands Institute for the Near East, Leiden
and Peeters Publishers, Leuven (2009)
236 pp.; ISBN 978-90-6258-225-9

The result of a conference organized by the Egyptology Department at the University of Leiden, December 19–20, 2006, only parts of this volume may be of interest to scholars of Egyptian interconnections, but the parts that are relevant are very worthwhile.

As B. J. J. Haring remarks in his introduction to the volume, “The development of the earliest writing systems in ancient societies has been explained as the rationalization of visual information, as an ongoing process of organization and *Einzauberung* of graphic representations. This development led to the combination of ideographic and phonetic writing in . . . the Ancient Near East.” But as Haring points out, writing did not supplant the systematic use of other graphic representations, and many societies continued to use graphic signs that have no direct phonetic equivalence. These signs form the subject of *Pictograms or Pseudoscript*.

The papers comprising this volume explore different corpora and aspects of marking systems—such as masons’ marks, property marks, pot marks, quarry marks, and team marks—that, while similar to writing, do not represent scripts in the strictest sense of the word. There are many areas of overlap with the functions and uses of regular scripts, however; the papers collected here consider these areas and offer analyses of the use and meanings of a number of discrete groups of signs.

The signs and groups of signs considered in this volume extend through a broad spatial and temporal range—from the Old Kingdom to the Greco-Egyptian period and beyond (with one paper even dealing with European material from the Middle Ages). While several papers mention marks from outly-



ing cultures, or in relation to the parallel development of marks in Egypt and elsewhere, three papers are of particular interest in this regard:

1. “Soldier’s Identity Marks of the Old Kingdom in the Western Desert” (pp. 169–178) by Olaf E. Kaper, Professor in the Institute for Area Studies, SMES Egyptology, at the University of Leiden.

2. “Meroitic ‘Property Marks’ in Fourth Nile Cataract Rock Art? A Re-Evaluation of an Enigmatic Class of Graphic Markings” (pp. 179–198) by Cornelia Kleinitz, Lecturer, Department for Northeast African Archaeology and Cultural Studies, Humboldt University, Berlin. As an aside, though in direct relation to this chapter, Kleinitz is co-responsible for the **Nubian Rock Art**

Virtual Archive open-access project, summarized on the author’s website as follows:

The Nubian Rock Art Virtual Archive, a freely accessible online archive, is being developed to ensure the survival of Fourth Cataract rock art at least in a virtual sense. It will contain the entire photographic documentation of the rock art of the H.U.N.E. [Humboldt University Nubian Expedition] and SARS [Sudan Archaeological Research Society] concessions, which amount to c. 40,000 high-resolution digital images on the rock art and its landscape context. The motifs, panels and sites are being presented in their spatial relationship to each other, using tools that were developed during the EU-financed ECHO [**European Cultural Heritage Online**]

Project at the Max Planck Institute for the History of Science, Berlin [2002–2004]. The archive is hoped to eventually include the entire photographic documentation of rock art in the various concessions across the Fourth Cataract, as well as rock art images concerning other regions of the Nubian Nile valley, thus providing easy access to this fascinating resource for research and the interested public. The project uses open source software. A prototype of the archive is functional.

This archive promises to be of great interest for the study of comparative developments in Egypt and Nubia.

3. “Sakrale Motiviertheit alphabetischer Zeichenwelten, Bildhaft-kanaanäisch, meroitisch-hieroglyphisch und eine gräko-

ägyptische, hieroglyphische Alphabetschrift” (pp. 199–210) by Ludwig D. Morenz, Privatdozent in Egyptology at the University of Leipzig.

Overall, the book has been produced with the highest level of care, and no typographical errors were noted. Text and illustrations are clear and well printed, and the volume closes with useful indexes (so often lacking in volumes of conference papers) of subjects, sites and monuments, source documents, and Egyptian words.

The “Egyptological Publications” series is co-published by the Netherlands Institute for the Near East, Leiden, and Peeters Publishers, Leuven; the present volume may be ordered for €45 from either of the co-publishers at www.nino-leiden.nl or www.peeters-leuven.be.

—*JAIE Editorial Staff*