CHAPTER II.2

WHEN CLASSICAL AUTHORS ENCOUNTERED EGYPTIAN EPIGRAPHY

JEAN WINAND

FOR centuries, Egypt attracted Greeks and Romans' attention more than any other countries of the *oikoumene*. In classical times and increasingly later, Egypt became an icon whence all wisdom was supposed to come. According to tradition, the greatest Greek philosophers visited Egypt to learn from the priests. Pythagoras was even credited with speaking Egyptian (Diog. Laert. 8.3). Among various topics, language and script(s) were regularly discussed, but most often in a marginal way (Marestaing 1913; Winter 1991; Iversen 1994; Winand 2005; for the relative lack of interest in other [?] foreign languages, see Thissen 1993, 240–241). It is symptomatic to observe that those who treated the matter in some detail were native Egyptians.

THE CORPUS

The list of authors who mentioned—however briefly—ancient Egyptian writings or language might at first sight seem impressive. Actually, the 120 different authors I have been able to identify can be reduced to 79 once very short notes and insignificant mentions have been dropped. The overwhelming majority (72 versus 7) unsurprisingly wrote in Greek. The time range covers nearly two millennia, from the fifth century BCE to the fourteenth century CE (Table II.2.1).

The time of composition, of course, greatly matters to assess the relevance of a text. As time passed, the number and quality of the informants—especially in Egypt—dramatically declined. After the second century CE, the number of those who still had a detailed knowledge of the written tradition had severely been reduced, to become virtually nonexistent after the fourth century.

a superficial layer of Egyptian culture, in the vein of Egyptomania, others bore witness of the skills of Egyptian specialists who lived in Italy (Iversen 1994).

As can be easily guessed, the Greek and Latin authors were foremost attracted by hieroglyphic inscriptions or iconographic compositions that were closely linked in their mind to the writing system. It seems dubious that they had any informed access to the papyrological material, but some descriptions seem to indicate that at least some had the opportunity of seeing papyri.

The quality of the Greek and Latin authors' informants was, of course, of utmost importance. Occasional visitors probably passed through various hands of more or less specialized or scrupulous guides (dragomen) as they strolled across the Nile Valley. In Greek and Roman times, the knowledge of the ancient Egyptian writings, especially the hieroglyphic script, was deposited in the hands of a handful of the so-called *hierogrammateis* (Derchain 1991). While some authors certainly had the chance of being directly in touch with these famous Egyptian scholars in Egypt or elsewhere, others probably must have relied on second- or third-rate information.

The majority of the authors could not of course read the Egyptian texts, but were wholly dependent on previous sources, as shown by Eusebius (*Praep. evang.* 10.13.1), for instance, who wrote that as he could not use himself the original texts, he had to follow Manetho, who had a direct access to the Egyptian sources.

The Terminology

The terminology we still use in modern Egyptology to name the different types of writings (hieroglyphic, hieratic, and Demotic) come from the Greek tradition. In this section, I first give an overview of the terms found in the Greek and Latin literature, before turning to the practice found in the documentary texts coming from Egypt.

The Literary Sources

The Egyptian writing was sometimes referred to under the generic label "Egyptian letters" (αἰγύπτια γράμματα; Herodotus 2.106 and 125). A more specific, much rarer, term, which alludes to the specific use of the hieroglyphs in epigraphy, was "engraving" (χαράγματα αἰγύπτια, see Julian, *Epistle* 59.17). The Egyptian writing was also commonly called by the Greeks the "sacred letters" (ἱερὰ γράμματα, see Diodorus 1.81) in reference to what they perceived was its main raison d'être. In most cases, this denomination clearly refers to hieroglyphic and/or hieratic texts, as opposed to non-religious ones, but it was sometimes used as a cover term without distinction.

The adjective ἱερογλυφικός is regularly used in Imperial and Byzantine times. Its Latin correspondent *hieroglyphicus* is attested in Ammianus Marcellinus (17.4.8), who also opted, without apparent reason, for the variant *hierographicus* (22.15.30), and

Macrobius (*Sat.* 1.19.13). There is also a related adverb, ἱερογλυφικῶς, which seems to be a technical term in the magical texts. These texts, whose lexical creativity is well-known, sometimes used the adverb ἱερογλυφιστί, which seems to refer to the language, more than the script: "I invoke you, Lord, in bird-like language (ὀρνεογλυφιστί) 'arai,' in hieroglyph-like language (ἱερογλυφιστί) 'lailam'" (*PGM* XIII.81). Finally, there is a verb ἱερογλυφεῖν "draw hieroglyphs" found in "Horapollo" (2.34) and late Byzantine sources like Eustathius and Michael Italicus.

George Syncellus (seventh–eighth century; 41.3–5) seems the only one to make a real distinction between ἱερογλυφικός and ἱερογραφικός. He reports that Manetho used stelae written in a sacred dialect in sacred letters (ἱερογραφικοῖς γράμμασι) by Thoth, which were later translated in hieroglyphs (γράμμασι ἱερογλυφικοῖς). In this text, the first term seems more neutral, being disconnected from the technical process of engraving.

The adjective ἱερατικός can be used in a general and a technical way. The former is the most common. As noted by Damascius, *hieratike*, as opposed to philosophy, means the priestly art (*In Phaed.* 1.172), the service of the gods (θεῶν θεραπεία, *Isid.* 3.9). In some rare cases, *hieratike* seems to have a technical meaning pointing to the cursive writing. In Olympiodoros the alchemist (*Comm. in Arist. Graeca* 2.80.9–11), a distinction is made between what is engraved on the obelisks and what is on/in the hieratic writings. As the subject matter concerns in both cases religious matters, it is tempting to take the latter expression as referring to what Egyptologists in a narrow sense call hieratic writing or cursive hieroglyphs. The same kind of ambiguity occurs in a magical papyrus (*PGM* I.233–237), where the expression λαβὼν χάρτην ἱερατικὸν "(lit.) taking a hieratic sheet of papyrus" can refer to a papyrus covered with hieratic signs or used for the cult. As the purpose of hieratic texts had at the time become exclusively religious, it is probably useless to give an univocal answer to this question.

A special use of the adjective *hieraticus* is made by Pliny (*HN* 13.74) to describe the best quality of a sheet of papyrus. The *hieraticus* was first reserved for the sacred books, but in Augustan times, this top quality papyrus was renamed after Augustus, and *hieraticus* was subsequently applied to a third-rate quality papyrus.

While most authors made no distinction in the written production of ancient Egypt, some were well aware of the complexities of the system as it was in Late Antiquity. I first deal with those who organized the Egyptian scripts according to a binary division, before discussing the tripartite organization that was proposed by a second group of authors.

The binary division is an ancient one, already advanced by Herodotus (2.36), who stated that the Egyptians use two kinds of letters, the ones that are called sacred (ἱρά) and the ones that are called popular (δημοτικά), in the sense of profane. The adjective δημοτικός has been retained in Egyptology for qualifying the script and the language of nonreligious texts. The very general term ἱ(ε)ρός may equally apply to hieroglyphic and hieratic writing systems as both were used at that time almost exclusively for sacred matters. It is unknown whether Herodotus ever had the chance of seeing texts written in hieratic or cursive hieroglyphs. Diodorus reported twice on Egyptian writings in much the same spirit. In 1.18, he differentiates between sacred letters and those whose learning

is simpler. In 3.3, when discussing the education of scribes, he says that one has to learn first what is called public letters (τὰ μὲν δημώδη προσαγορευόμενα) before moving to sacred letters (τὰ δ'ἱερὰ καλούμενα). According to Diodorus, this last category was accessible only to priests who learned it from their fathers. Much later, Heliodorus of Emesa (*Aeth.* 4.8.1), when describing a small text, says that it was not written with Demotic letters (δημοτικοῖς), but with a royal script (βασιλικοῖς), analogous to what the Egyptians call hieratic (ἱερατικοῖς). He might here refer to what Egyptologists technically call hieratic or perhaps cursive hieroglyphs (see Lucarelli chapter, Ali chapter). As the purpose focused on a strip of cloth (ταινία), one cannot exclude that Heliodorus deliberately opted for a term that was connected with the cursive script. One can also mention here the distinction made by Manetho (frag. 42), when discussing the etymology of the noun Hyksos, between the sacred language (καθ' ἱερὰν γλῶσσαν) and the common language (κατὰ τὴν κοινὴν διαλεκτόν).

The tripartite division adopted in Egyptology is found in Clement of Alexandria's *Stromata* (5.4.20). When dealing with the Egyptians' educational system (as already made by Diodorus), he says that they begin with the system used for epistolary purposes, they then learn the system called the sacred one that is used by the *hierogrammateis*, and the ultimate state is that of the *hieroglyphike*. The word "epistolographic" explicitly refers to the practice of using Demotic (language and script) for business matters, be it sending letters or the redaction of commercial or private contracts. This term did not succeed in Egyptology, which instead adopted the Herodotean name, although it was sometimes used in this sense by scholars in the nineteenth century. Finally, a tripartite division is also found in Porphyry (*Vit. Pyth.* 11–12) regarding three kinds of writings in Egypt: one for correspondence by letters (ἐπιστολογραφικός), then what he calls the hieroglyphic (ἱερογλυφικός) letters, and the symbolic (συμβολικός) letters. As is clear, Porphyry, whose source is probably Clement, whom he could not fully understand, based his classification on uses of the writing systems that he perceived as important, hence his division between hieroglyphic and symbolic.

The Egyptian Documentary Sources

The documentary texts from Egypt give a welcome supplement of information. One can here consider the epigraphic material and the countless resources of the documentary papyrological texts.

In business matters, it was not uncommon to have, at least, partial bilingual (Greek and Egyptian) documents. References could also be made to a version written in the other language. There were several expressions to refer to Demotic (without distinguishing between script and language). One common appellation was ἐγχώρια γράμματα, "script of the country." This terminology is found on the Rosetta Stone (l. 14), where it is stipulated that the decree will be inscribed in sacred letters (ἱεροῖς γρ.) (i.e., in hieroglyphs), in indigenous letters (ἐγχωρίοις γρ.), (i.e., in Demotic), and in Greek (ἑλληνικοῖς γρ.). The corresponding hieroglyphic and Demotic versions call the hieroglyphs "(lit.) script

:hat one has to learn
:να) before moving
lis last category was
later, Heliodorus of
is not written with
analogous to what
Egyptologists tech-
lapter, Ali chapter).
lde that Heliodorus
:cript. One can also
:ussing the etymol-
γλῶσσαν) and the

ent of Alexandria's
system (as already
pistolary purposes,
rogrammateis, and
ic" explicitly refers
itters, be it sending
did not succeed in
it was sometimes
ipartite division is
:ings in Egypt: one
s the hieroglyphic
s clear, Porphyry,
d, based his classi-
hence his division

rmation. One can
the documentary

ingual (Greek and
itten in the other
ut distinguishing
γράμματα, "script
where it is stipu-
, in hieroglyphs),
(ἑλληνικοῖς γρ.).
yphs "(lit.) script

of the divine words" and the Demotic *sš n sʒj* "(lit.) script of the letter," which is the prototype of the word ἐπιστολογραφική used by Clement. In other Ptolemaic temple decrees, however, Demotic is more simply called αἰγύπτια γράμματα (Canopus l. 74). This corresponds with what the Demotic language was sometimes called: one regularly finds expressions like "the language of the Egyptians" (ἡ τῶν αἰγυπτίων φωνή) or more simply the adverb αἰγυπτιστί (P.Cair.Goodsp. 3), which is reminiscent of the formulations found in the magical papyri.

As in the literary texts, the word ἱερατικός means "cultic, priestly." One must here note the existence of an extraordinary document attesting that a candidate to the priesthood has the required social background and technical skills (P.Tebt. 291.41–44, dating to 162 CE; Sauneron 1962). After stating that the candidate comes from a family of priests, the text adds that he was able to show in front of the *hierogrammateis* his knowledge of hieratic and Demotic writings by reading from sacred books brought by priests. The word ἱερατικός comes twice. If the translation "cultic, sacred" gives a satisfactory meaning when applied to books, in the second occurrence, one is closer to the modern sense where [ἱε]ρατικὰ qualifies a type of script (γράμ[ματ]α).

The adjective δημοσία, "popular" or "profane" as opposed to sacred (*IFayoum* 2.182), could also be used; it is reminiscent of the terms already found in the classical literature.

The adjective ἱερογλυφικός derives from ἱερογλύφος, which is attested in Ptolemaic times. This noun refers to a category of craftsmen, meaning sculptor. From Byzantine times comes a rare variant, ἱερογλύπτης, glossed "those who know how to engrave the sacred (script)" (Georgios Lekapenos, *Letters*, 7n, 98). The first attestation of ἱερογλύφος might well be from *Nectanebo's Dream*. The job of Petesis, the ἱερογλύφος, is precisely described as "the epigraphy of the sacred texts in stone buildings." In the Demotic versions, it is rendered *ḥm-(n-)sʿnḫ* (Ryholt 2002, 230). The modern noun "hieroglyph" (Fr. *hiéroglyphe*) to name the hieroglyphic sign is consequently unfortunate. It was actually "reinvented" in the Renaissance by Amyot, the famous translator of Plutarch, from the adjective "hiéroglyphique," which is attested in 1529 (Geoffroy Tory, *Champs Fleury* fol. 43ʳ and 73ʳ; Winand 2005, 91–92).

DESCRIBING A HIEROGLYPHIC TEXT?

When they attempted to describe Egyptian writing, the authors largely remained impressionistic. They unsurprisingly mentioned the presence of natural entities like men, animals, and trees, occasionally alluding to the presence of tools and geometric lines.

Even if it was common enough to designate the hieroglyphic signs with the generic noun γράμματα, some authors contrasted the letters as used in the Greek and Latin alphabet with what they call the σημεῖα and the χαρακτῆρες of the Egyptian writing (Lucian, *Hermot.* 44.1–7), or their ἀγάλματα (Plotinus, *Enn.* 5.8.6). The distinction is clearly made by Plutarch (*Cat. Min.* 23.3.3–4), who states that the hieroglyphic signs (σημεῖα) in small and concise forms (τύποι) have the value or power (δύναμις) of several letters.

As already noted, hieratic is not often discussed. One exception could be the well-known passage in Apuleius (*Met.* 11.22.8), where the author notes that one could see the books brought by priests "have their meaning protected from the curiosity of the uninitiated by letters that are intricate, twisted into themselves like a wheel, and thickly knotted like vine-tendrils" (transl. Keulen et al. 2015, 377).

UNDERSTANDING THE MECHANISMS, PRINCIPLES, AND USES OF ANCIENT EGYPTIAN WRITING

When trying to understand the mechanisms and purpose of hieroglyphic writing, the theories put forward by classical authors repeatedly cluster around four major points: sacred, secret, symbolic, and wisdom. They also quite understandably opposed this enigmatic writing to their own alphabetic system.

Mechanisms and Purpose of the Hieroglyphic Writing

The *sacrality* of the hieroglyphs is inscribed in the first component ιερα-/ιερο- that appears in many Greek words connected with the Egyptian writing. The knowledge of hieroglyphs was entirely deposited into the hands of specialized priests (the so-called *hierogrammateis*) and only transmitted within this caste. According to Clement of Alexandria, the knowledge of hieroglyphs was the last stage that could be reached by a priest, an observation also supported by P. Tebt. 291.

The exclusive link of the hieroglyphs with the temple and the small number of experts who could handle them naturally suggested that the script and the texts must be kept *secret* and hidden (Porphyry, *Anebo's Letter* 2.12.2). Apuleius (*Met.* 11.22.29) notes that the books presented to Lucius come from a hidden place of the sanctuary and that the texts must be kept away from the curiosity of the noninitiated. Clement, in a passage already discussed (5.4.20), notes that knowledge of hieroglyphs was only communicated to priests and to those who were destined to become kings. The hieroglyphic writing— or something that had the appearance of it—was also an important ingredient in many magical formulae.

Hieroglyphic texts must be kept secret because they concealed a *wisdom*, an ancient one that was transmitted unaltered from the origin (compare Flavius Josephus 1.28; Ammianus Marcellinus 16.4.8). This antique wisdom was about mysteries (John Tzetzes, twelfth century), more precisely the true nature of the gods and the immortality of the soul (Chaeremon frags. 12 and 2, resp.). Hieroglyphic texts also dealt with natural phenomena (Pliny, *HN* 36.71), like the geography of the Nile (Heliodorus, *Aeth.* 2.28.2), the movements of stars (Claudius Aelianus, *HN* 11.10.24–25), and the cosmos (Olympiodoros). Generally speaking, hieroglyphic symbols conveyed a philosophy

(Philo of Alexandria, *Vit. Mos.* 1.23; Clement, *Strom.* 1.23.152; *Suda* 1.159.7). The *hiero-grammateis*, who were the depositors of hieroglyphic writing, were not infrequently credited with the capacity of predicting the future (Flavius Josephus 2.205; Synesios, *Aegyptii sive de providentia* 1.18.53; *Suda* 1.176.1). According to some authors, hieroglyphs could record more mundane affairs, like a victory inscription (Herodotus 2.106.12) or even workers' daily rations (Herodotus 2.125.17). In this respect, the interpretation of a Roman obelisk reported by Ammianus Marcellus remains unique. It was not properly speaking a translation, but a relatively fair attempt at giving a sense of the inscriptions (Winter 1991, 88–89; Nobbs 2013). Unfortunately, it did not find many echoes among the scholarly world of the Renaissance and early modern times. Some isolated signs had also survived in memory, such as the so-called crux, actually the *ankh* sign (ʿnḫ), which was correctly interpreted as meaning "life."

The *symbolic* function of hieroglyphs was very often discussed and debated. A semantic link was supposed to exist between what a sign represents and the word expressed by this sign. When Ammianus Marcellinus (16.4.8) reports that the picture of a bee means "king," he explains it by a connection between the activities of the bee and the expected behavior of a beneficent king. This kind of explanation was widespread. Diodorus (3.4) notes that Egyptians depict a vulture or a crocodile to signify entities or properties that can metaphorically be transferred from the behavior or aspect of these animals. The same kind of explanation is given by Damascius (*Isid.* 98) when discussing the choice of the hippopotamus to express injustice.

In Byzantine times, the symbolic nature of hieroglyphs has become a topos that was endlessly repeated without much comment. For instance, Michael Psellos (eleventh century), while conceding that the Egyptians' viewpoint was not very clear, flatly stated that everything was symbolic (ἀλλὰ πάντα συμβολικά). In Imperial times, the idea that hieroglyphs were symbolic in nature was already firmly rooted. When discussing Pythagoras's stay in Egypt, Plutarch (*De Is.* 354E8) says that he imitated the Egyptians' symbolic way and their mysteries and that he mixed up his dogmas with enigmas. Thus, Plutarch concludes, Pythagorean precepts are not very different from what we call hieroglyphic writing. Secrecy and symbolism were complementary, as is clear from a fragment of Chaeremon (frag. 12; Van Der Horst 1984), who explains that the hieroglyphic script was invented "to conceal the theory about the nature of the gods … by way of such allegorical symbols and characters." The symbolic approach culminates in Horapollo's *Aegyptiaca*, which appears as the last testimony of a specialist issued from a well-known family of scholars living in Egypt in Late Antiquity. According to a paper presented by Jean-Luc Fournet in June 2018 (Collège de France), Horapollo's Aegyptiaca should now be considered a pseudepigraphical work written by a Byzantine scholar around the sixth or seventh century. The schema of exposition adopted by Horapollo is roughly like this: "when the Egyptians want to express X, they draw Y, because there is the following relation between X and Y." While the connection between a hieroglyph and a given meaning can be proven as correct in many cases, the explanation given (or transmitted) by Horapollo often takes its origin in later philosophical speculations or in more or less well documented knowledge in the natural sciences. For instance, when he states (sec. 26) that Egyptians draw the image of a rabbit (Gardiner E34) to mean "open," which is correct, he fails to see

that the connection is made through the phonetic value of the sign/wn/, which is the same as the word *wn*, which means "open." According to the presupposition that the link between the *significans* and the *significatum* is symbolic in essence, he explains that the image of a rabbit is appropriate here because it always keeps its eyes open, an opinion that was common in Late Antiquity scientific treatises, like the Physiologus or Aelianus' De Natura Animalium.

By exclusively focusing on this aspect of hieroglyphic writing, classical authors probably did not contribute to a quick (re)discovery of the original system in modern times, but it must be stressed that a strong semantic link was actually present in the mechanisms of writing. If, for instance, words connected with greed were often written with the crocodile as classifier, or words dealing with anger with the porcupinefish, whose body covered with sharp spines can inflate when attacked, it was probably because the Egyptians had perceived some similitudes between the behavior of these animals and these social behaviors (Vernus 2003). Thus, the *interpretatio graeca* should not be dissociated from a genuine Egyptian tradition. Several Egyptian texts coming from Ptolemaic and Roman times persuasively show that this kind of reasoning was common enough in the practice of the temple culture. The most elaborate texts that survive so far are P.Carlsb. VII (third/second century BCE), dubbed a hieroglyphic dictionary by its editor (Iversen 1958; see also Assmann 2003; von Lieven 2010, with previous literature; Bolshakov and Soushchevsky 2003), and P.Tanis (= P.Brit.Mus. ESA 10672, first century CE). The same mode of reasoning was also at work in religious treatises (P.Jumilhac) and literary texts (P.Mythus).

One probably also has to take into account iconographic representations that could in a sense be "read" in the same way that emblems, allegories, or heraldic compositions of the Renaissance would also be interpreted and glossed (Winand 2013). Indeed, some classical authors, when dealing with hieroglyphs, seem to rather describe monumental scenes than actual writing. For instance, Clement (*Strom.* 5.20.3) describes a scene from Diospolis where one can see a child and an old man surrounded by a hawk, a fish, and a crocodile. He then suggests the following "translation" of this symbolic representation: "lo you who are born and die, do not forget that God hates shamelessness." The two "hieroglyphs" of the child sitting on a lotus bud and of the god in the sun bark discussed by Iamblichus (7.2) also belong to what Assmann (2003, 50) felicitously calls an iconogram. In the same spirit, the example of the hippopotamus that was mentioned earlier, even if parallels in later texts can be found, can also be related to well-known representations of the king killing this wild beast with a harpoon as a metaphor for triumphing over chaos. In doing so, ancient classical authors are very close to what some scholars now call "visual poetry" (Morenz 2008). It is important to note here that this component of hieroglyphic writing was not first intended to be cryptic, but rather aimed at arousing the spectator's curiosity by showing the inventiveness of high-skilled scribes.

The neo-Platonists' ideas on the place of writing in a general theory of wisdom could not but welcome a direct link between the *significans* and the *significatum* as they could perceive it in the Egyptian writing system. What was an important—but not exclusive—

/wn/, which is the
ısition that the link
e explains that the
 open, an opinion
ologus or Aelianus'

classical authors
system in modern
lly present in the
were often written
he porcupinefish,
, it was probably
behavior of these
itio graeca should
ian texts coming
of reasoning was
iborate texts that
d a hieroglyphic
ieven 2010, with
: P.Brit.Mus. ESA
vork in religious

ations that could
lic compositions
d 2013). Indeed,
r describe mon-
10.3) describes a
nded by a hawk,
of this symbolic
iates shameless-
f the god in the
2003, 50) felici-
opotamus that
 also be related
a harpoon as a
uthors are very
is important to
ed to be cryptic,
nventiveness of

f wisdom could
m as they could
not exclusive—

epistemological tendency in the temple scholarship of Hellenistic and Roman Egypt captured the attention of Late Antique philosophers who systematized and paradigmatized these explanatory etymographies (in the sense of Assmann) into a coherent and unified system. This conception reached its most refined expression with Plotinus (5.8.6), who says: "for me, that is what the Egyptian wise men have realized, whether by exact knowledge or spontaneously: to name what they wish in wisdom, they do not use the forms of letters (τύποις γραμμάτων), which give way to discourses and sentences and which imitate sounds and propositions of reasoning; they rather draw pictures, each one being for one distinct entity; and they engrave them in the temples for presenting all the details of this entity. Each image (ἄγαλμα) is a science, a wisdom, a real thing, an immediate unity, and not (something coming out of) reasoning or deliberation."

The hieroglyphic writing and—to some extent—the Egyptian language itself had an intrinsic efficiency (energeia) that could not be preserved when transposed or translated, a concept that was most forcefully expressed in the Hermetic Corpus (XVI).

Hieroglyphs versus Alphabet

Although some authors curiously saw no difference between Egyptian writing and their own, except for the forms of letters (τύπος τῶν γραμμάτων: Stephanus of Alexandria, Int. Arist. 1.18–22), the majority more or less intuitively knew how differently both systems worked. While many authors stick to the general idea that Egyptians used letters, γράμματα, some, like Lucian, explicitly preferred to speak of signs and characters. According to Chaeremon (frag. 12), Egyptians do not have letters for their characters; for this, he uses the expression στοιχεῖα γραμμάτων, which usually refers to the alphabet.

The idea that there was no connection between hieroglyphic signs and any kind of phonetic expression was common enough (Plotinus, Enn. 5.8.6: "they don't use the shape of letters nor do they try to imitate the sounds of words"). This is what Diodorus (3.4) has in mind when he writes that the meaning does not come out of a composition of syllables (ἐκ τῆς τῶν συλλαβῶν συνθέσεως).

Among these various, sometimes contradictory, conceptions, the concise but detailed report made by Clement of Alexandria stands out as an exception. After naming the three main types of writing, Clement proceeds to detailing the hieroglyphic script. Roughly speaking, Clement's presentation can be summarized as follows: "the Egyptians use a kind of alphabet (like the Greeks), but their writing can also have some other uses." He first makes a binary distinction between what he calls the kyriologic and the symbolic manner (Table II.2.2). Kyriologic, which means "simple, clear," is here defined as "with the first radical letters" (διὰ τῶν πρώτων στοιχείων). Clement has in mind the simplified form of hieroglyphs (uniliteral signs) that functioned at the time as an alphabet. Under the category symbolic, kyriologic once more occurs. Three types of symbols are here considered: kyriologic (i.e., by direct representation of ideas), tropic (i.e., by transposing a sign in another domain), and allegoric (i.e., enigmatic) (Vergote 1941; Derchain 1991; Assmann 2003; Winand 2005).

Table II.2.2. The System of Egyptian Writings in Clement of Alexandria
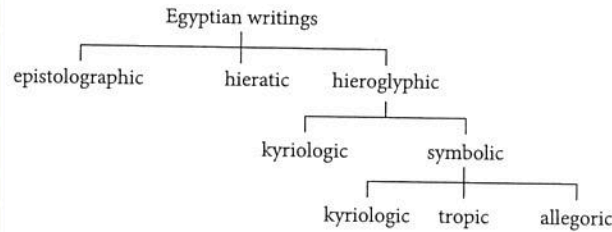
After this brief presentation, Clement gives some examples as illustrations. It should be noted that Clement (or his source) does not mention the existence of classifiers (semantic determinators).

CONCLUSION

The impact of classical authors—above all, philosophers—on subsequent scholarship must be appreciated with some nuance. The symbolic approach, of course, paved the way for the studies that were en vogue during the Renaissance and the first half of the modern times. This branch of premodern Egyptology would finally reach its climax with Kircher, who unwillingly made the final proof that it led to a dead end (Winand 2018). But what preoccupied the antique Greek and Latin authors does now experience a second life that meets some concerns of contemporary scholars, who take a renewed interest in the semantic potentialities of hieroglyphic writing.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Assmann, J. 2003. "Etymographie: Zeichen im Jenseits der Sprache." In *Hieroglyphen: Stationen einer anderen abendländischen Grammatologie*, edited by A. Assmann and J. Assmann, 37–64. ALK 8. Munich.

Bolshakov, A. O., and A. G. Soushchevsky. 2003. "Образ и письменность в восприятии древнего египтянина" (Image and script in the perception of the ancient Egyptians). Вестник древней истории 1:45–59.

Derchain, P. 1991. "Les hiéroglyphes à l'époque ptolémaïque." In *Phoinikeia Grammata: Lire et écrire en Méditerranée. Actes du colloque de Liège, 15–18 novembre 1989*, edited by C. Baurain, C. Bonnet, and V. Krings, 243–256. Leuven.

Fournet, J.-L. 2016. "Alexandrie et la fin des hiéroglyphes." In *Alexandrie la Divine: Les sagesses barbares: Échanges et réappropriation dans l'espace culturel gréco-romain*, edited by S. Aufrère, 599–607. Geneva.

Hahn, J., S. Emmel, and U. Gotter, eds. 2008. *From Temple to Church: Destruction and Renewal of Local Cultic Topography in Late Antiquity*. RGRW 163. Leiden.

Horst, P. W. van der. 1984. *Chaeremon: Egyptian Priest and Stoic Philosopher*. EPRO 101. Leiden.

Iversen, E. 1958. *Papyrus Carlsberg nr. VII. Fragments of a Hieroglyphic Dictionary*. Copenhagen.

Iversen, E. 1994. "Eg
    edited by C. Berge
Keulen, W. H., S. T
    Mal-Maeder. 2015
Kristensen, T. M. 20
    in Late Antiquity.
Marestaing, P. 1913. *I*
Morenz, L. 2008. *S*
    Poiesis 21. Cologn
Nobbs, A. 2013. "Eg
    24:81–88.
Ryholt, K. 2002. "Ne
    Eine kritische An
    by A. Blasius and
Sauneron, S. 1962. "I
    BIFAO 61:55–57.
Sternberg-el Hotab
    Schrifttod im Äg
Thissen, H.-J. 1993. "
    der griechisch-rö
Vergote, J. 1941. "Clé
Vernus, P. 2003. "Idé
    de l'homophonie.
    196–218. Turin.
von Lieven, A. 2010.
    Ägypten." In *Hor*
    und spätantiken J
    D. von Recklingh
Winand, J. 2005. "L
    terminologie." In
    J.-M. Verpoorten
Winand, J. 2013. *La*
    en poche 29. Bru
Winand, J. 2018. "
    Signatures: (Essai
    J.-M. Klinkenber
Winter, E. 1991. "Hi
Young, D. W. 1981. "
    to Hans Jakob Po

Alexandria

c

rations. It should
nce of classifiers

....

uent scholarship
ourse, paved the
e first half of the
h its climax with
l (Winand 2018).
ow experience a
take a renewed

ʒlyphen: Stationen
and J. Assmann,

гъ в восприятии
cient Egyptians).

Grammata: Lire et
ted by C. Baurain,

ʾivine: Les sagesses
main, edited by

:tion and Renewal

ЕPRO 101. Leiden.
ary. Copenhagen.

Iversen, E. 1994. "Egypt in Classical Antiquity: A résumé." In *Hommages à Jean Leclant* III, edited by C. Berger, G. Clerc, and N. Grimal, 295–305. BdE 106. Cairo.

Keulen, W. H., S. Tilg, L. Nicolini, L. Graverini, S. Harrison, S. Panayotakis, and D. van Mal-Maeder. 2015. *Apuleius Madaurensis Metamorphoses, Book XI: The Isis Book*. Leiden.

Kristensen, T. M. 2013. *Making and Breaking the Gods: Christian Responses to Pagan Sculpture in Late Antiquity*. ASMA 12. Aarhus.

Marestaing, P. 1913. *Les écritures égyptiennes et l'antiquité classique*. Paris.

Morenz, L. 2008. *Sinn und Spiel der Zeichen: Visuelle Poesie im Alten Ägypten*. Pictura et Poiesis 21. Cologne.

Nobbs, A. 2013. "Egypt in Late Antiquity: The Evidence from Ammianus Marcellinus." *BACE* 24:81–88.

Ryholt, K. 2002. "Nectanebo's Dream of the Prophecy of Peteisis." In *Apokalyptik und Ägypten: Eine kritische Analyse der relevanten Texten aus dem griechisch-römischen Ägypten*, edited by A. Blasius and B. U. Schipper, 221–241. OLA 107. Leuven.

Sauneron, S. 1962. "Les conditions d'accès à la fonction sacerdotale à l'époque gréco-romaine." *BIFAO* 61:55–57.

Sternberg-el Hotabi, H. 1994. "*Der Untergang der Hieroglyphenschrift: Schriftverfall und Schrifttod im Ägypten der griechisch-römischen Zeit*." CdE 69:218–248.

Thissen, H.-J. 1993. "…αἰγυπτιάζων τῇ φωνῇ…: zur Umgang mit der ägyptischen Sprache in der griechisch-römischen Antike." ZPE 97:239–252.

Vergote, J. 1941. "Clément d'Alexandrie et l'écriture égyptienne." *CdE* 16:21–38.

Vernus, P. 2003. "Idéogramme et phonogramme à l'épreuve de la figurativité: Les intermittences de l'homophonie." In *Philosophers and Hieroglyphs*, edited by L. Morra and C. Bazzanella, 196–218. Turin.

von Lieven, A. 2010. "Wie töricht war Horapollo? Zur Ausdeutung von Schriftzeichen im Alten Ägypten." In *Honi soit qui mal y pense: Studien zum pharaonischen, griechisch-römischen und spätantiken Ägypten zu Ehren von Heinz-Josef Thissen*, edited by H. Knuf, C. Leitz, and D. von Recklinghausen, 567–574. OLA 194. Leuven.

Winand, J. 2005. "Les auteurs classiques et les écritures égyptiennes: Quelques questions de terminologie." In *La langue dans tous ses états*, edited by C. Cannuyer, A. Schoors, R. Lebrun, J.-M. Verpoorten, and J. Winand, 79–104. AOB 18. Brussels.

Winand, J. 2013. *La réception des hiéroglyphes de l'Antiquité aux Temps modernes*. L'Académie en poche 29. Brussels.

Winand, J. 2018. "Un Frankenstein sémiotique: Les hiéroglyphes d'Athanase Kircher." In *Signatures: (Essais en) Sémiotique de l'écriture/(Studies in the) Semiotics of Writing*, edited by J.-M. Klinkenberg and S. Polis, 213-251. Liège.

Winter, E. 1991. "Hieroglyphen." In *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum* XV, col. 83–103.

Young, D. W. 1981. "A Monastic Invective against Egyptian Hieroglyphs." In *Studies Presented to Hans Jakob Polotsky*, edited by D. W. Young, 348–360. East Gloucester.