

## Basic Lessons in Hieratic

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- [The Story of the Shipwrecked Sailor](#) - Papyrus Leningrad 1115

*Reproductions of an actual Hieratic story for you to practice your skill with, and to continue with your study of Hieratic.*

- [Examples of Hieratic Documents](#) - Short, non-literary hieratic documents.



## Basic Lessons in Hieratic

This series of lessons in reading Hieratic is written with the aim of helping those who wish to learn this style of Egyptian writing. While there are a number of books and other resources for learning the Hieroglyphic form of Egyptian writing, there practically nothing available for learning Hieratic. I hope that this will help to fill the gap a little.

I am not an expert at reading Hieratic, in fact I am just learning it myself. Creating these lessons is my way of being both teacher and student in teaching myself to read Hieratic. Hopefully they will succeed in this, and also in helping others to learn.

*You will also need to install the Transliteration font on your computer, if it is not installed yet. You can download this [here](#) for [PC](#) or [here](#) for [Mac](#). You will have to restart your browser for the new font to be recognized.*

*These pages are best viewed with Netscape Navigator 3 or higher at a screen resolution of 800X600.*



*The automatic mailing forms used on the exercise pages don't appear to work properly with Internet Explorer. Those of you using Internet Explorer may have to send your comments or answers to the exercises the hard way with your e-mail program.*

**- Stephen Fryer**  
**04/12/09**

## **Introduction**

Hieratic is the cursive form of Hieroglyphic writing which the Egyptians used for everyday writing. Hieratic developed very early in Egyptian history, and remained in use for most documents until around 700BCE when it was replaced by Demotic. However, Hieratic was still used for religious documents on papyrus until the old priesthood was disbanded.

Hieratic, as the practical form of writing, was the first type of writing that the Egyptian scribes learned. Hieroglyphics were only taught to advanced students. As a result, many scribes could not read Hieroglyphic inscriptions, or only with difficulty. This is, of course, exactly the opposite of what occurs now - Hieroglyphs first, then Hieratic for a select few. Hieratic texts are now usually transcribed into Hieroglyphs in order to be studied.



Hieratic signs correspond exactly to the Hieroglyphic signs which would be used to write the same text. The same rules of spelling and arrangement of signs applies to Hieratic as to Hieroglyphic.

Over the course of its history, Hieratic changed. A major change occurred around 1300BCE, resulting in "Ramesside" style writing. What we shall be looking at here will be "Middle Egyptian" style Hieratic, used in the Middle Kingdom and 18th Dynasty. Most of the Hieratic signs will be taken from Papyrus Leningrad 1115, the Story of the Shipwrecked Sailor, since the scribe who wrote it had nice, clear handwriting.

Hieratic was written from right to left. In the earlier part of the Middle Kingdom, it might be written either in columns or lines, however later it was only written in lines. The individual signs were drawn starting from the top left of the sign, which is easier for right-handed people. Horizontal lines were generally drawn from left to right; verticals from top to bottom. [More Information](#)








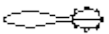



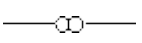




I plan to create a series of lessons, each with exercises to practice reading Hieratic. At first the Hieratic will be rather artificial, but later I shall try to include as much actual
























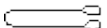



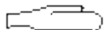




Hieratic as possible. The exercises will also include places for you to type in your answers and any questions or comments and automatically have them sent by e-mail so you can be sure whether you're on the right track, or to ask for assistance if you are having difficulty with some part of a lesson.





Before you begin these lessons, I recommend that you know at least the basics of reading the Hieroglyphic version of the writing, and that you have some knowledge of Middle Egyptian, the language which was written in this form of Hieratic. These lessons are intended to build on those skills.

## Lesson 1- "Alphabetic" Signs

As with Hieroglyphics, the best place to start is to learn the "alphabetic" signs - those signs representing a single consonant. Since most people using these lessons will probably already be familiar with Hieroglyphic writing, the following table gives correspondences between the Hieratic characters, and the equivalent Hieroglyphs (from which they are derived). Since Hieratic was written from right to left, the signs (both Hieratic and Hieroglyphic) are shown facing right as they would in actual texts.

| <b>Hieratic</b>   | <b>Value</b> | <b>Hieroglyph</b>   | <b>Hieratic</b>   | <b>Value</b> | <b>Hieroglyph</b>   |
|---|--------------|---|---|--------------|---|
|  | <b>A</b>     |  |  | <b>x</b>     |  |
|  | <b>i</b>     |  |  | <b>X</b>     |  |
|  | <b>a</b>     |  |  | <b>s</b>     |  |
|  | <b>w</b>     |  |  | <b>s</b>     |  |

|   |   |   |  |   |   |
|---|---|---|--|---|---|
|    | b |    |   | s |    |
|    | p |    |   | q |    |
|    | f |    |   | k |    |
|    | m |    |   | g |    |
|    | n |    |   | t |    |
|    | r |    |   | T |    |
|    | h |    |   | d |    |
|  | H |  |  | D |  |

The Hieratic form of  was originally  , which you will notice corresponds with the other two bird signs  and  , however this was gradually replaced by the sign given in the table above.

There was also a second form of  in Hieratic:  which was taken over into Hieroglyphic as .

Reading Hieratic does take practice of course, and most especially since some signs

are rather easily confused. You can use [Exercise 1A](#) and [Exercise 1B](#) to help you become familiar with some of the signs.

## Drawing Hieratic Signs

### Introduction

The instructions given here are based on study of a [student writing board](#) from the early Middle Kingdom, which shows clearly for many signs the order and direction in which the strokes were made. I don't know whether these hold true for earlier or later periods.

If you want to study the writing board for yourself, it is in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, or there is a good photograph of it in *The Scepter of Egypt, vol.1*, by W.C. Hayes, on p.295.

There are also a couple of books about writing Late Egyptian Hieratic which you might find interesting (though the language and spelling conventions, as well as the style of handwriting, had changed considerably by that period):

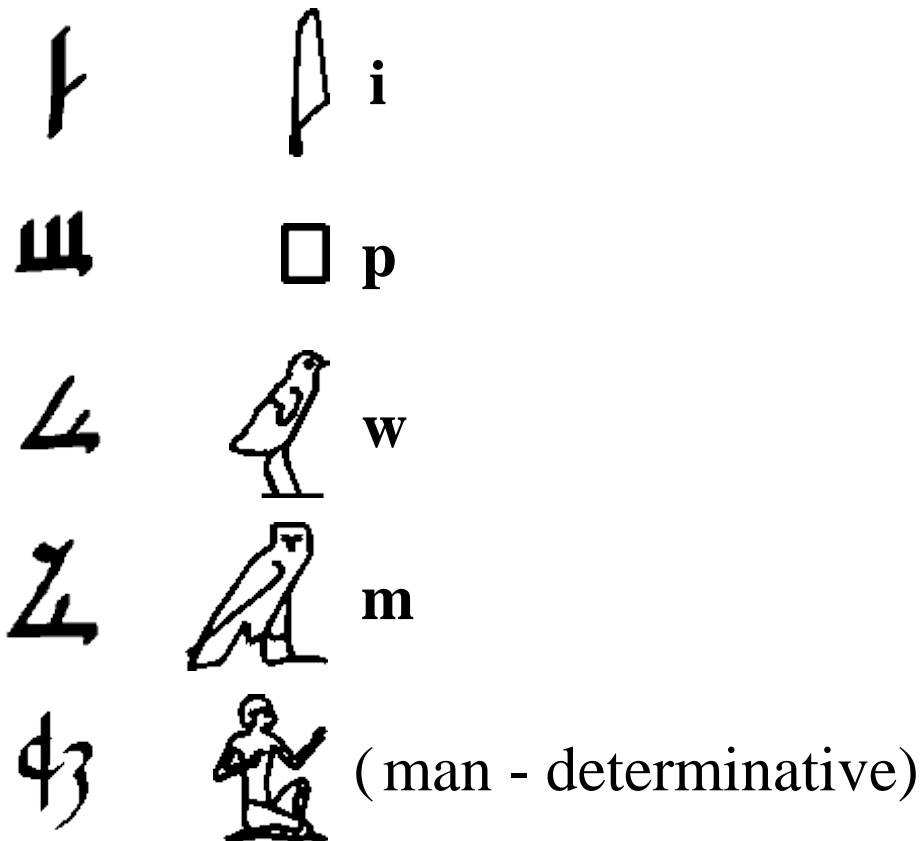
*Writing Egyptian Hieratic: A Beginners Primer* by Sheldon Gosline  
*Hieratic Palaeography 1: Introductory Late Egyptian* by Sheldon Gosline

### Basic Concepts

1. Hieratic was written with a brush made from a reed. The end was cut at an angle to produce a point, and then bruised to separate the fibers into a brush. This resulted in a tip that was wider than thick, rather like a medium width calligraphy pen. You could use a calligraphy pen or a fairly stiff little brush. The brush was held pretty much like we hold a pen, but without resting the hand on the paper, and with the width of the tip at about a 45° angle to the right (/) to produce lines of varying thickness (this is most noticeable in curved lines).
2. While Hieratic was written and read from right to left, the individual signs were generally drawn from left to right and top to bottom (this is true of Japanese also).
3. Vertical and diagonal strokes (either straight or curved) are drawn from top to bottom, and were usually drawn before the horizontal strokes.
4. Horizontal strokes are mostly drawn from left to right.

Here are a few examples to help you get started understanding the order in which the strokes were drawn. (*Keep in mind that vertical and diagonal strokes were drawn from top to bottom and horizontal strokes from left to right.*)

To see an animation of drawing one of the signs, click on the button next to the sign. It is a good idea to close one animation window before opening another.

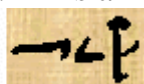


## Exercise 1A

In this exercise, some words are presented which are spelled with only alphabetic signs. The signs may not be grouped as they would be in an actual text. For practice reading properly grouped signs, you can use [Exercise 1B](#).












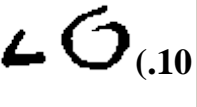

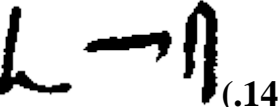

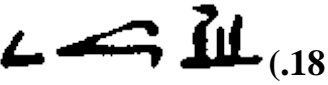




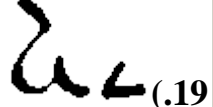
Remember that Hieratic is written right-to-left whereas our alphabet (and your transliterations) are written left-to-right. So for example if you have the hieratic word you would start reading from the right side, and put down **i** as the transliteration of the first sign, then **t** for the next, and **n** for the last sign. So you would have **itn** as your transliteration, which is the spelling of Aten, the name of one of the Egyptian gods. This animation may help to visualize the

procedure:



All the words in these exercises are actual ancient Egyptian words, spelled as the Egyptians usually spelled them. You won't be able to do the translation part of the exercises unless you know the words already or have a dictionary or vocabulary list of some kind available. You should be able to find most of the words in these exercises in [Jim Loy's online dictionary](#) .

If you wish, you can type your answers in the text boxes provided, and send them to be checked by clicking on the "Submit Answers" button at the bottom. (Please note that you must be on-line to submit your answers.) I will respond as soon as possible.

|   |  |   |
|---|--|---|
|  (.3)    |  (.2)    |  (.1)    |
|  (.6)    |  (.5)    |  (.4)    |
|  (.9)   |  (.8)   |  (.7)   |
|  (.12) |  (.11) |  (.10) |
|  (.15) |  (.14) |  (.13) |
|  (.18) |  (.17) |  (.16) |
|  (.21) |  (.20) |  (.19) |

## Exercise 1B

Once again, some words are presented which are spelled with only alphabetic signs. The signs in this exercise *are* grouped as they would be in an actual text. (The grouping is based on the same principles as that in Hieroglyphic writing).

The basic rules of order are that you read from right to left and top to bottom. So in a word written as we read first the sign on the right (**i**) then we have a group of two signs, which we read top to bottom (**tn**). The whole word is transliterated as **itn** and translated as "Aton," the Egyptian god of the sun disk.

If you wish, you can type your answers in the text boxes provided, and send them to be checked by clicking on the "Submit Answers" button at the bottom. (Please note that you must be on-line to submit your answers.) I will respond as soon as possible.

Your Name:

|      |      |      |
|------|------|------|
| (.3) | (.2) | (.1) |
| (.6) | (.5) | (.4) |
| (.9) | (.8) | (.7) |

## Lesson 2- Common Determinatives

Since Hieratic is simply a cursive form of Hieroglyphic, it has the same types of signs. One of these with which you are no doubt familiar is determinatives. Most words in Egyptian are accompanied by one or more determinatives. In fact, picking out determinatives in a text is one way of finding where one word ends and the next




begins. They are of course essential in many cases for us to know which of several words of different meaning that are otherwise spelled the same.


In this lesson a number of common and useful determinatives are presented. Some of these are also used as phonetic signs, so they will be your first signs representing more than one consonant. The phonetic values (if any) are indicated after the meaning as a determinative, in larger type.

| <b>Hieratic</b>   | <b>Meaning</b>               | <b>Hieroglyph</b>   | <b>Hieratic</b>   | <b>Meaning</b>                  | <b>Hieroglyph</b>   |
|---|------------------------------|---|---|---------------------------------|---|
|    | man,<br>person               |    |    | town, city                      |    |
|    | talk, eat                    |    |    | singular <b>*</b>               |   |
|    | strike,<br>force, effort     |    |    | plural                          |   |
|  | praise,<br>worship           |  |  | abstract                        |  |
|  | walk, run                    |  |  | writing<br><b>sS</b>            |  |
|  | small, weak<br>evil          |  |  | star<br><b>dwA</b>              |  |
|  | wood                         |  |  | house,<br>building<br><b>pr</b> |  |
|  | sky, heaven<br><b>pt</b>     |  |  | god<br><b>nTr</b>               |  |
|  | irrigated<br>land            |  |  | boat, ship                      |  |
|  | foreign<br>country<br>desert |  |  | sun, day,<br>time               |  |

|   |                       |   |   |                            |   |
|---|-----------------------|---|---|----------------------------|---|
|  | eye, see<br><b>ir</b> |  |  | ear, hearing<br><b>sDm</b> |  |
|  | woman                 |  |  | child                      |  |
|   |                       |   |  | negative                   |  |

\* This sign is used after another to indicate that the first sign is to be read as an ideogram, that is, as the object the sign is a picture of.

\*\* When there is a need to fit this sign into a small space, it is reduced to .

\*\*\* When this sign is fitted into a small space, it is reduced to .

\*\*\*\* The dot on top of this sign was sometimes quite small, leading to confusion

with  "n"

Reading Hieratic does take practice of course, and most especially since some signs are rather easily confused. You can use [Exercise 2A](#) and [Exercise 2B](#) to help you become familiar with some of the signs. Then you can try your hand at reading some simple sentences in [Exercise 2C](#).

## Exercise 2A

In this exercise, some words are presented which are spelled with alphabetic signs and determinatives. The signs may not be grouped as they would be in an actual text. For practice reading properly grouped signs, you can use [Exercise 2B](#).

If you wish, you can type your answers in the text boxes provided, and send them to be checked by clicking on the "Submit Answers" button at the bottom. (Please note that you must be on-line to submit your answers.) I will respond as soon as possible.

 (.1) (.2) (.3)

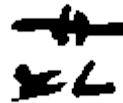
ቀቢ (.6) ከታየ (.5) ለታየ (.4)  
 ለባ (.9) ከባ (.8) ለታየ (.7)

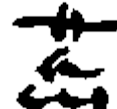
## **Exercise 2B**

In this exercise, some words are presented which are spelled with alphabetic signs and determinatives, grouped as they would be in an actual text. For some practice reading sentences, try [Exercise 2C](#).

If you wish, you can type your answers in the text boxes provided, and send them to be checked by clicking on the "Submit Answers" button at the bottom. (Please note that you must be on-line to submit your answers.) I will respond as soon as possible.

ቀቢ (.3) ከታየ (.2) ለታየ (.1)  
 ለታየ (.6) ከታየ (.5) ለታየ (.4)  
 ለታየ (.9) ለታየ (.8) ለታየ (.7)  
 ለታየ (.12) ለታየ (.11) ለታየ (.10)  
 ለታየ (.15) ለታየ (.14) ለታየ (.13)

 (.18)

 (.17)

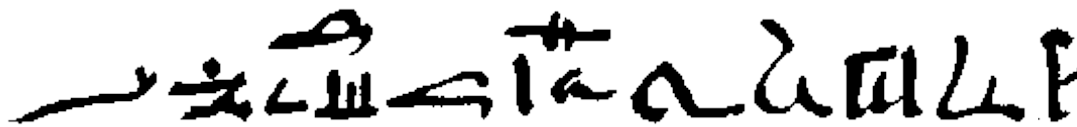
 (.16)

## Exercise 2C

In this exercise, you can try reading some simple sentences using the signs you have learned so far. If you wish, you can type your answers in the text boxes provided, and send them to be checked by clicking on the "Submit Answers" button at the bottom. (Please note that you must be on-line to submit your answers.) I will respond as soon as possible.

 (.1)

 (.2)

 (.3)

 (.4)

 (.5)


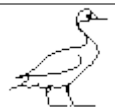

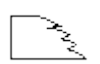

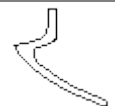

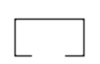



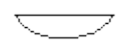



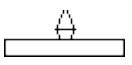



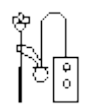







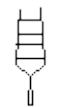








## Lesson 3- Common Bi- and Tri-Consonant Signs




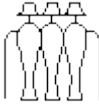












Since Hieratic is simply a cursive form of Hieroglyphic, it has the same types of signs. Beside the signs representing a single consonant (the "Egyptian alphabet") and determinatives, there are many signs which represent several consonants. In this

lesson a number of common bi- and tri-consonant signs are presented. There are of course **many** more!

You will notice that some of the signs are ones you saw in the last lesson as determinatives. There is no firm distinction between phonetic signs and determinatives - it depends entirely upon the context in which the signs are used.

As in the preceding lessons, you can use the Exercises ([3A](#), [3B](#), [3C](#)) to practice your ability to recognise these signs.

| Hieratic  | Value | Hieroglyph  | Hieratic  | Value | Hieroglyph  |
|---|-------|---|---|-------|---|
|    | sA    |    |    | km    |    |
|    | mA    |    |    | pr    |    |
|   | nfr   |   |   | nb    |  |
|  | pH    |  |  | Htp   |  |
|  | Xn    |  |  | sS    |  |
|  | nw    |  |  | dwA   |  |
|  | gm    |  |  | aHa   |  |
|  | pt    |  |  | nTr   |  |
|  | ii    |  |  | mr    |  |

|   |     |   |   |     |   |
|---|-----|---|---|-----|---|
|  | sw  |  |  | xnt |  |
|  | ir  |  |  | sDm |  |
|  | anx |  |  | DA  |  |
|  | ini |  |  | mwt |  |

Reading Hieratic does take practice of course, and most especially since some signs are rather easily confused. You can use [Exercise 3A](#) and [Exercise 3B](#) to help you become familiar with some of the signs. Then you can try your hand at reading some simple sentences in [Exercise 3C](#). In all of these exercises you can use the interactive form to automatically submit your answers and questions *via* e-mail if you want assistance or confirmation.

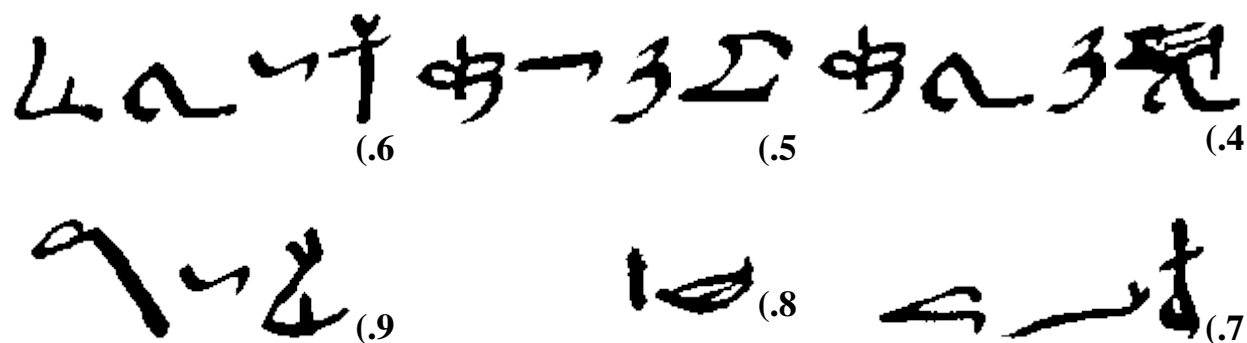
## Exercise 3A

In this exercise, some words are presented which are spelled with alphabetic signs and determinatives. The signs may not be grouped as they would be in an actual text. For practice reading properly grouped signs, you can use [Exercise 3B](#).

If you wish, you can type your answers in the text boxes provided, and send them to be checked by clicking on the "Submit Answers" button at the bottom. (Please note that you must be on-line to submit your answers.) I will respond as soon as possible.



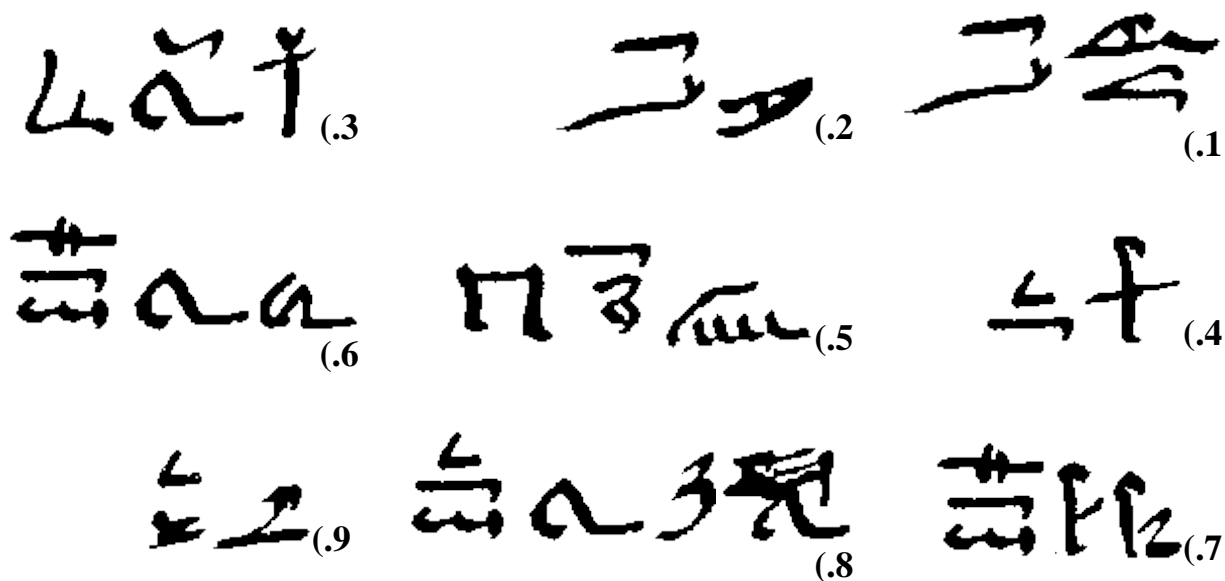




### Exercise 3B

In this exercise, some words are presented which are spelled with phonetic signs and determinatives, grouped as they would be in an actual text. For some practice reading sentences, try [Exercise 3C](#).

If you wish, you can type your answers in the text boxes provided, and send them to be checked by clicking on the "Submit Answers" button at the bottom. (Please note that you must be on-line to submit your answers.) I will respond as soon as possible.



### Exercise 3C

In this exercise, you can try reading some simple sentences using the signs you have learned so far.

If you wish, you can type your answers in the text boxes provided, and send them to be checked by clicking on the "Submit Answers" button at the bottom. (Please note that you must be on-line to submit your answers.) I will respond as soon as possible.

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ቀደምት ስራዎች (1)

---

ወንጌል ቀረጽ (2)

---

ሀይማኖት ስራዎች (3)

---

ግብረሰብ (4)

---

ደብዳቤ (5)

---

ገቢ ስራዎች (6)

---

ቀረጽ ስራዎች (7)

---

ደብዳቤ ስራዎች (8)

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## Lesson 4- Ligatures

Hieratic was written quickly with a brush. This resulted in a tendency to not lift the brush entirely between signs. Therefore the signs tend to be more or less connected. Some scribes tended to run signs together more than others, leading to variations in the writing even within the same period of history. This is very much like the case with our own cursive writing.

Since Hieratic signs were drawn generally from top left to bottom right, connections were generally from the bottom right of one sign to the top left of the sign below.

When signs are joined together, we call this a *ligature*. We can distinguish two classes of ligature:




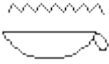






















- A simple connection, which leaves the basic shapes of the connected signs the same
- A true ligature, where the shape one or more of the signs is considerably modified. The signs essentially are blended together to form a new, compound sign.

In this lesson we shall pay particular attention to the true ligatures. The simple connections are easier to recognize because the shapes of the individual signs are still quite recognizable. A number of the most common ligatures are given in the following table. You will notice that many of them involve the signs for **k**, **n**, **a**, and **t**.

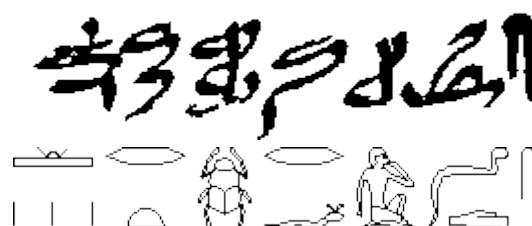
Most ligatures also involve only two signs, and this is especially the case in horizontal lines of text. Text written in columns tends to have more ligatures, and may have ligatures involving several signs.

As in the preceding lessons, you can use the Exercises ([4A](#), [4B](#)) to practice your ability to recognise these signs.

|                 |              |                   |                 |              |                   |
|-----------------|--------------|-------------------|-----------------|--------------|-------------------|
| <b>Hieratic</b> | <b>Value</b> | <b>Hieroglyph</b> | <b>Hieratic</b> | <b>Value</b> | <b>Hieroglyph</b> |
|-----------------|--------------|-------------------|-----------------|--------------|-------------------|

|   |            |   |  |              |  |
|---|------------|---|--|--------------|--|
|    | <b>a-k</b> |    |  | <b>n-k</b>   |   |
|    | <b>r-k</b> |    |   | <b>r-x</b>   |   |
|    | <b>n-t</b> |    |   | <b>w-t</b>   |   |
|    | <b>d-t</b> |    |   | <b>n-t-t</b> |   |
|    | <b>p-t</b> |    |   | <b>m-t</b>   |   |
|   | <b>n-f</b> |   |  | <b>m-r</b>   |  |
|  | <b>D-d</b> |  |  |              |  |

Here is an example of a sentence written horizontally with a number of ligatures, which should give you a little idea of the sort of thing you can expect to see.



Reading Hieratic does take practice of course, and most especially since some signs are rather easily confused. You can use [Exercise 4A](#) to help you become familiar with some of the signs. Then you can try your hand at reading some simple sentences in [Exercise 4B](#). In all of these exercises you can use the interactive form to

automatically submit your answers and questions *via* e-mail if you want assistance or confirmation.

## Exercise 4A

In this exercise, some words are presented which involve ligatures, taken from the actual text of the Shipwrecked Sailor - in both line and column format. This is not a trivial exercise by any means! Don't expect to zip through it effortlessly. But don't get discouraged - remember that most signs in documents of this period do not involve ligatures or joins.

There are ligatures which were not in the lesson page. Try to see what signs could be the constituent parts of the ligature and try that out. There are also determinatives in some of the words, remember that they don't affect the transliteration. When you think you are getting a word figured out, look in your dictionary and see if you can find the word. Once you have mastered this exercise, you can get some practice reading sentences in [Exercise 4B](#), and then you're ready to try reading at least parts of an actual hieratic text ([The Shipwrecked Sailor](#))!

If you wish, you can type your answers in the text boxes provided, and send them to be checked by clicking on the "Submit Answers" button at the bottom. (Please note that you must be on-line to submit your answers.) I will respond as soon as possible.

𓆎𓆏 (.3)

𓆑𓆒𓆓 (.2)

𓆔𓆕 (.1)

𓆖𓆗 (.6)

𓆘𓆙𓆚 (.5)

𓆛𓆜 (.4)

𓆞𓆟 (.9)

𓆡𓆢 (.8)

𓆣𓆤 (.7)

## Exercise 4B

In this exercise, a number of sentences taken from the actual hieratic are presented to you. These may involve any of the items covered in these lessons - phonetic signs, determinatives, ligatures, etc. All are in the original early 12th Dynasty handwriting.

Now you're ready to try reading at least parts of an actual hieratic text ([The Shipwrecked Sailor](#))!

If you wish, you can type your answers in the text boxes provided, and send them to be checked by clicking on the "Submit Answers" button at the bottom. (Please note that you must be on-line to submit your answers.) I will respond as soon as possible.

(1) ۲۳۴۵۶۷۸۹۱۰۱۱۲

[illegible]

主心骨 (3)

48 61210 457 48

(.4

2 40 11 45 2

(.5



## **The Shipwrecked Sailor**

**Papyrus Leningrad 1115**

---

*This is the complete, original Hieratic text of the story to practice and further develop your skills in reading Hieratic, and the Middle Egyptian language. Parallel pages in Hieroglyphic transcription are provided to help you. I have also added a complete [transliteration](#) of the story. Good luck with your studies!*

## **The Shipwrecked Sailor**

**Papyrus Leningrad 1115**

Papyrus Leningrad was written during the Middle Kingdom, probably during the early 12<sup>th</sup> Dynasty.

The papyrus contains the *Story of the Shipwrecked Sailor*, a fabulous tale of adventure which may be an ancestor of the story of Sinbad in the Arabian Nights. A translation is available in *Ancient Egyptian Literature, vol.1* by Miriam Lichtheim. The hieroglyphic text is available in *Egyptian Readingbook* by Adriaan deBuck, and also (with a few omissions) is presented and used as reading material in the course of *Middle Egyptian Grammar* by James Hoch.

It was written in fairly clear Hieratic, whose style is close to being a norm for the Middle Kingdom. Its language is also pretty standard Middle Egyptian, with little or

no evidence of Late Egyptianisms. Most of the language and vocabulary is straightforward, although there are a few passages that have scholars arguing still!

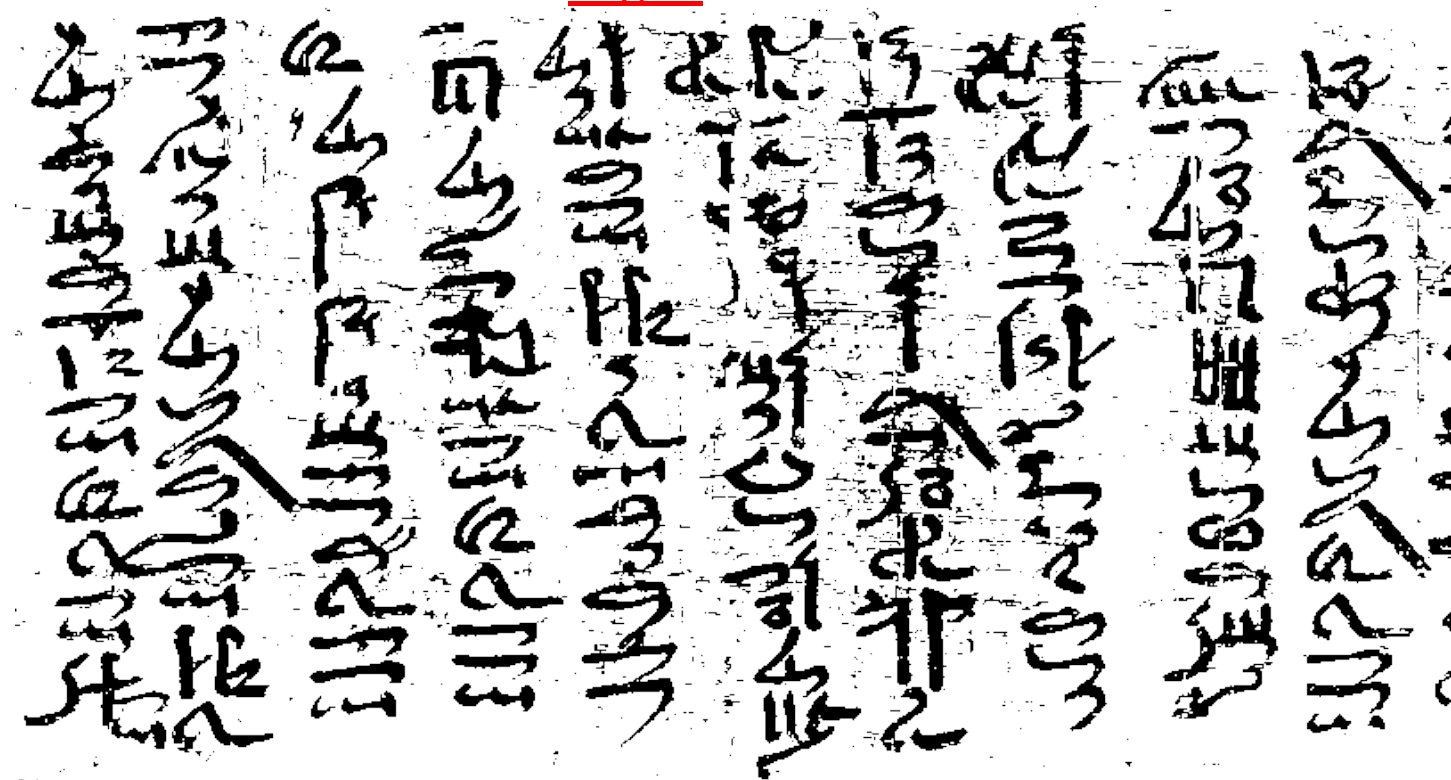
The text is written from right to left. The first nine pages are written in columns, as is the last page also. The rest is written in horizontal lines, also from right to left. The sections in columns are a little easier to decipher than those in lines.

The images are displayed at about 75% of their actual size to (almost) fit on an 800X600 screen - if you save an image on your computer, it will be displayed larger and somewhat more clearly in a graphic viewing program.

The hieroglyphic transcriptions are divided into the same pages, and with the same column or line breaks as the original, and are also written from right to left. I hope this will make it easier for you to find the corresponding symbols.

*Good luck on your voyage into Hieratic with the "Sailor"!*

### Page 1



Note that the scribe had problems fitting all of column 10 on the page so he wrote the last two signs between the bottom of columns 10 and 11.

### Hieroglyphic Transcription - Page 1

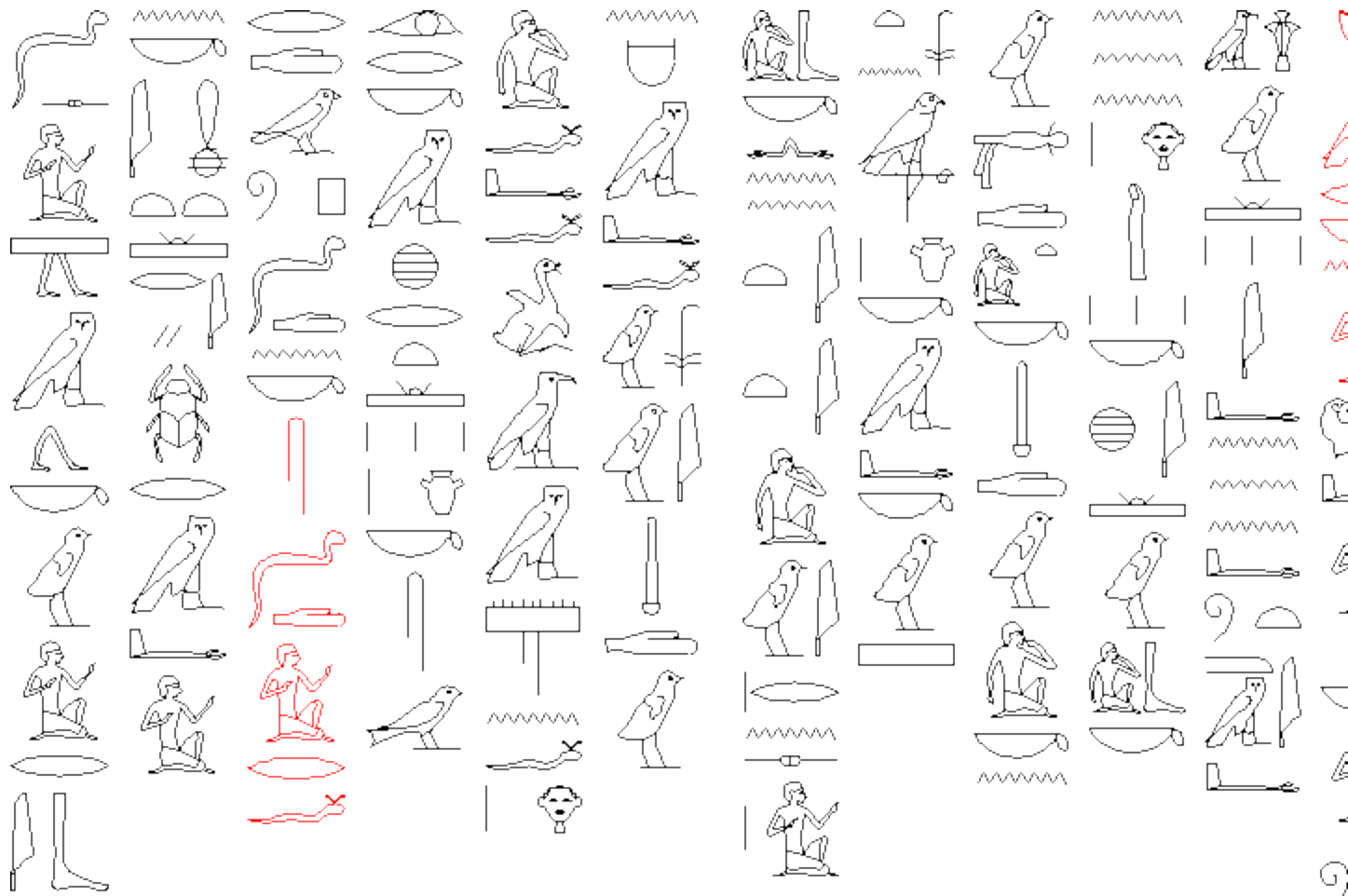


Note that the scribe had problems fitting all of column 10 on the page so he wrote the last two signs between the bottom of columns 10 and 11.

## Page 2



Handwritten text in a cursive script, likely a form of shorthand or a specific dialect. The text is arranged in approximately 10 vertical columns, reading from right to left. The characters are highly stylized and interconnected, with some characters appearing to be repeated or modified. The overall appearance is that of a personal or working manuscript.



Handwritten text in a cursive script, likely a form of shorthand or a specific dialect. The text is arranged in approximately 12 vertical columns, reading from right to left. The characters are highly stylized and interconnected, typical of cursive handwriting. The text appears to be a transcription of a document, possibly a letter or a record, given the context of the page number.



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Note that the scribe had trouble fitting all of column 12 of this page on the page, so he wrote the last sign between column 12 and column 13.

### **Hieroglyphic Transcription - Page 4**



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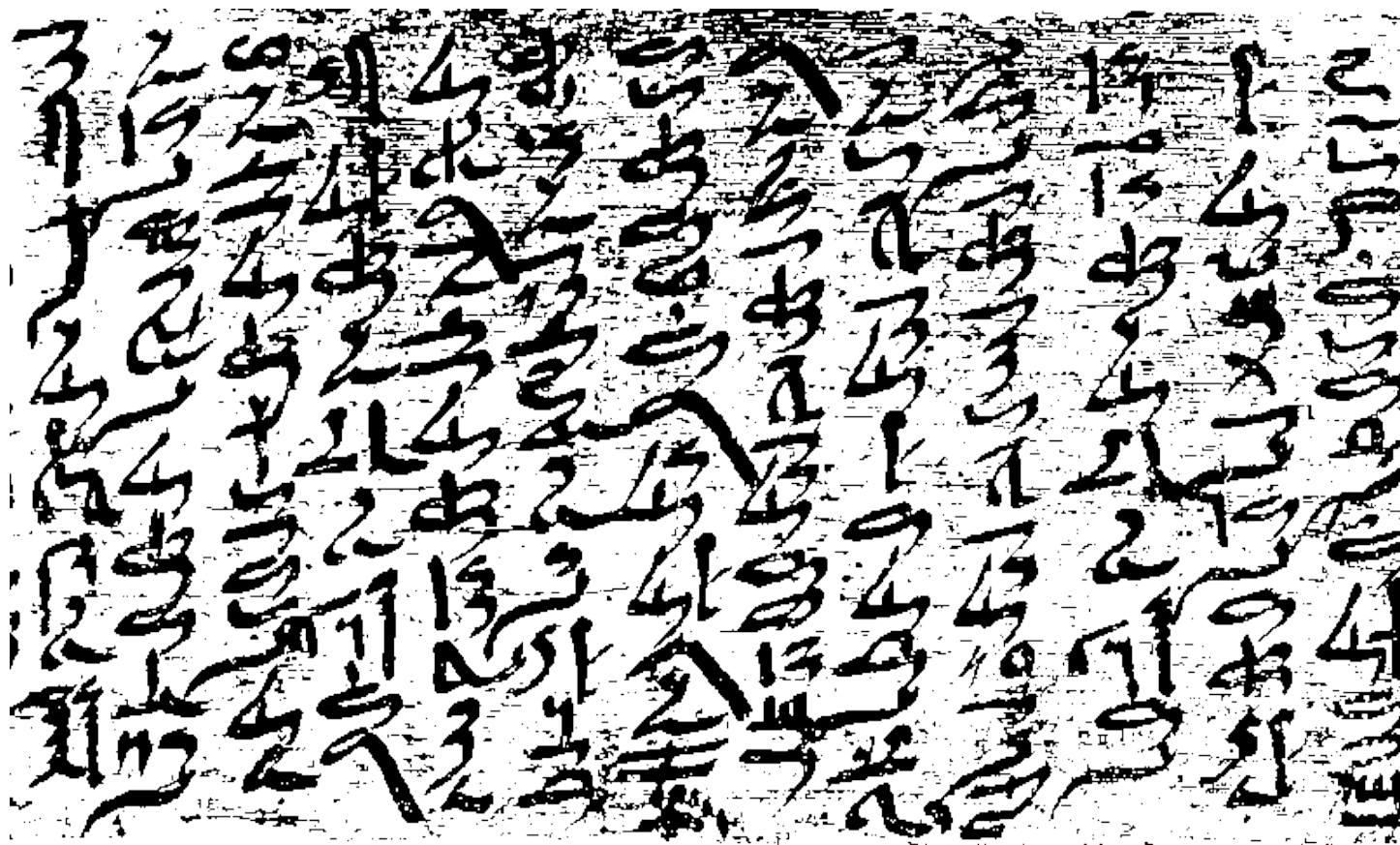
Note that the scribe had trouble fitting all of column 12 of this page on the page, so he wrote the last sign between column 12 and column 13.

### **Page 5**

Handwritten text in a cursive script, likely a form of shorthand or a specific dialect, arranged in approximately 12 vertical columns. The characters are stylized and difficult to decipher without a key.



Note that the scribe had trouble fitting all of the fourth column of this page in the space, so he wrote the last two signs at the bottom of the fifth column. I have arranged the hieroglyphs the same way here - for the same reason.



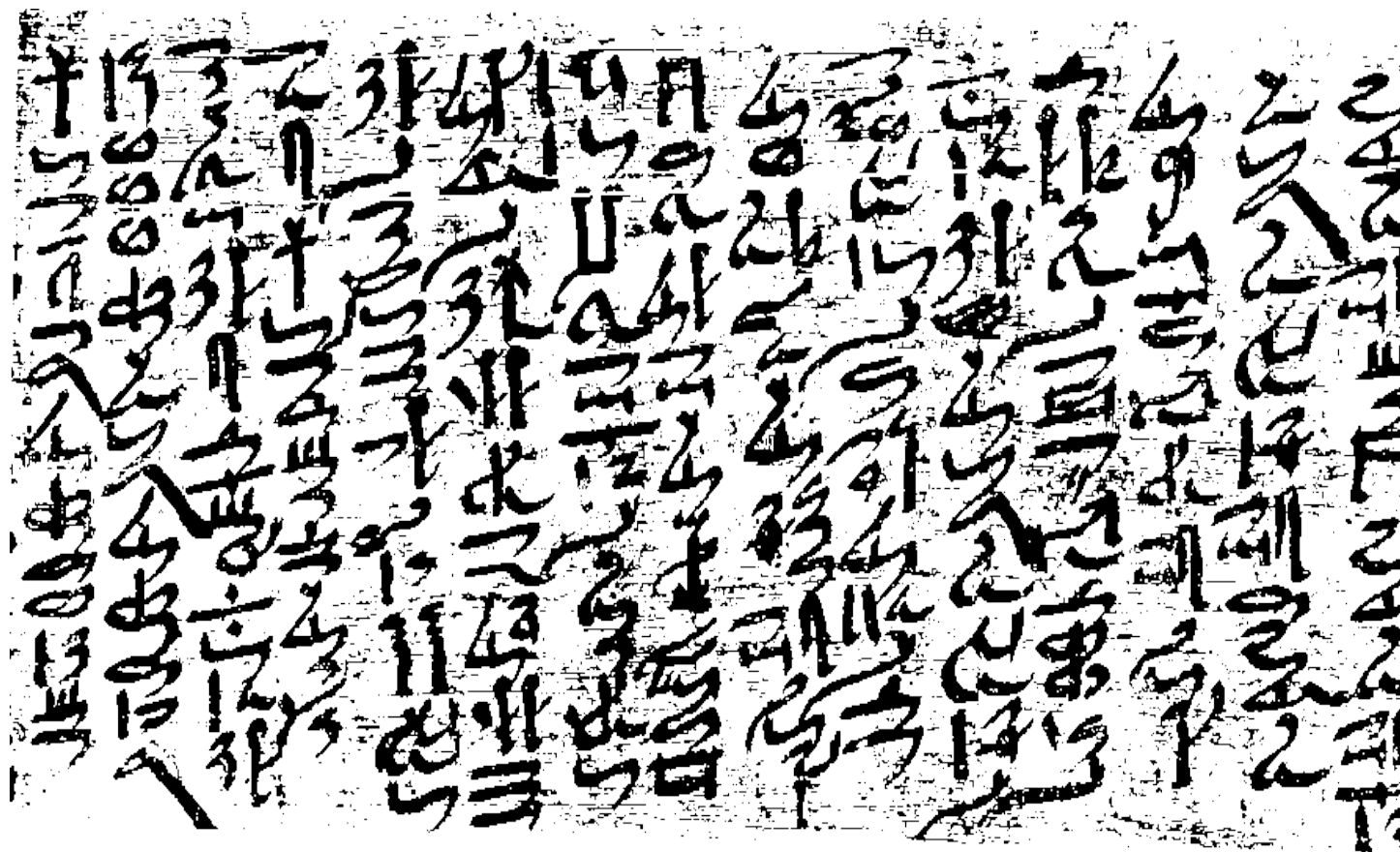


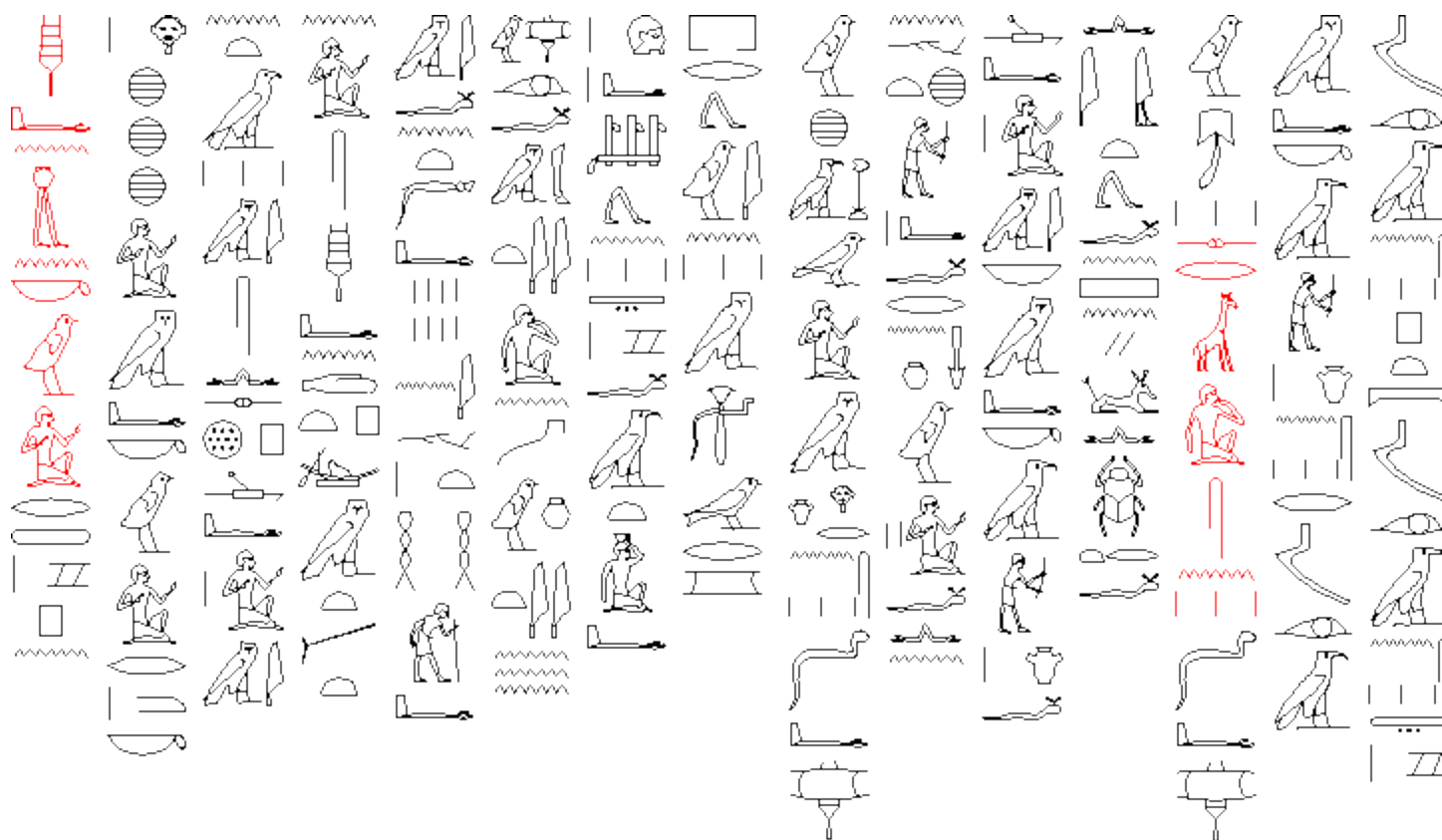


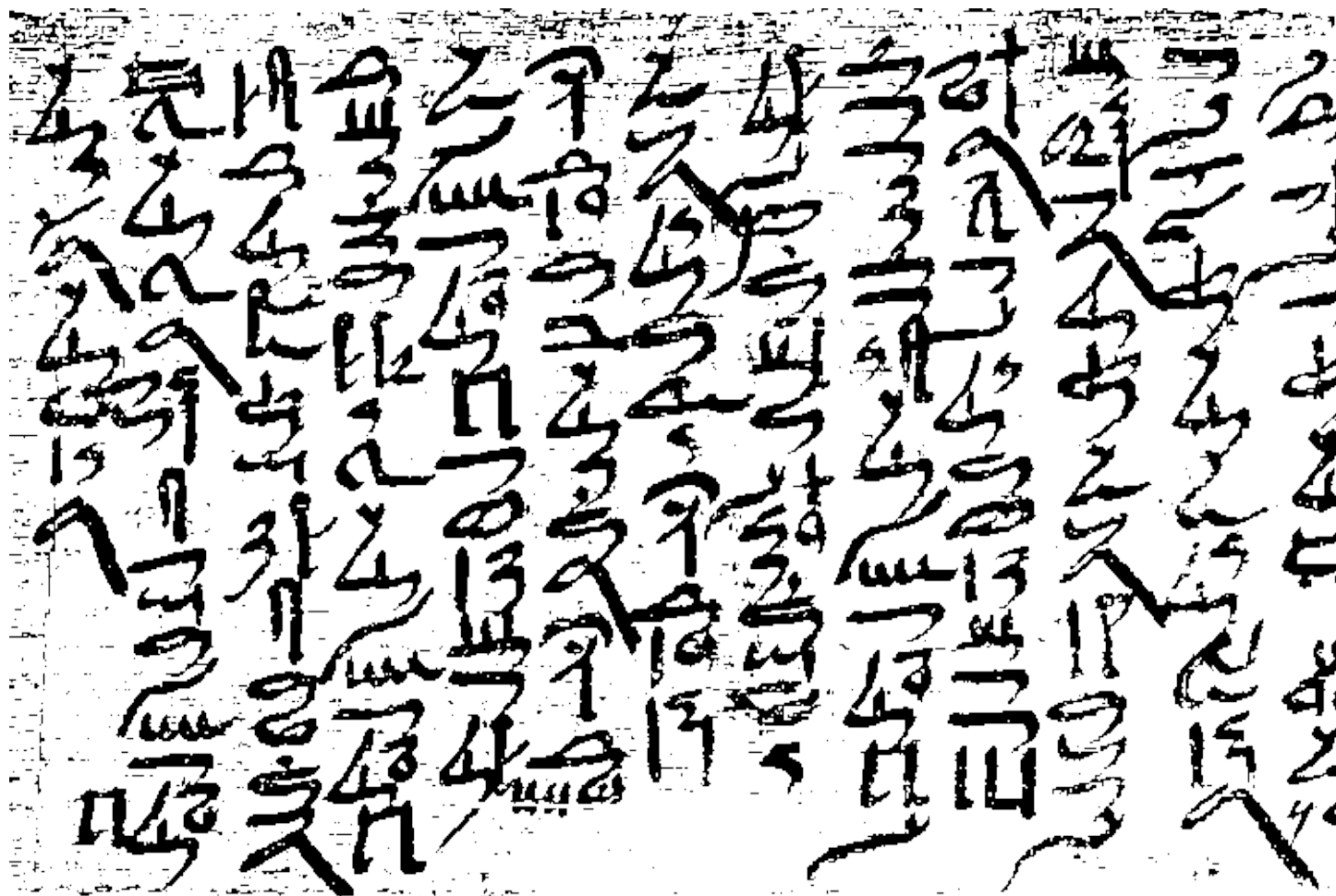
Note that the Last two signs in the second column, and the last sign in the fifth column are cut off in the picture of the Hieratic page.

Handwritten text in a cursive script, likely a transcription of a document. The text is arranged in approximately 12 vertical columns, reading from right to left. The script is dense and fluid, with many characters resembling stylized letters or symbols. The overall appearance is that of a historical manuscript or a personal note.



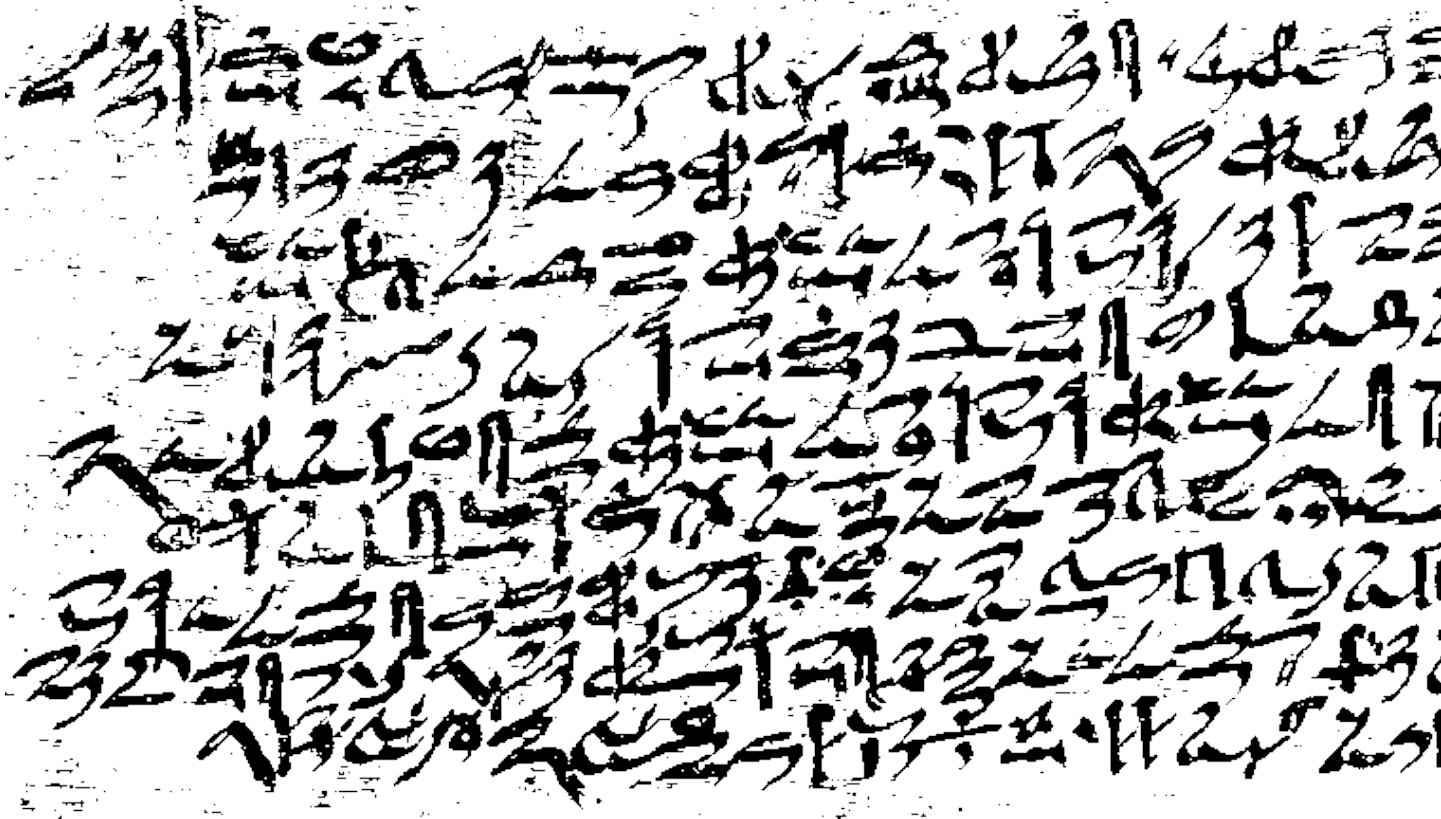




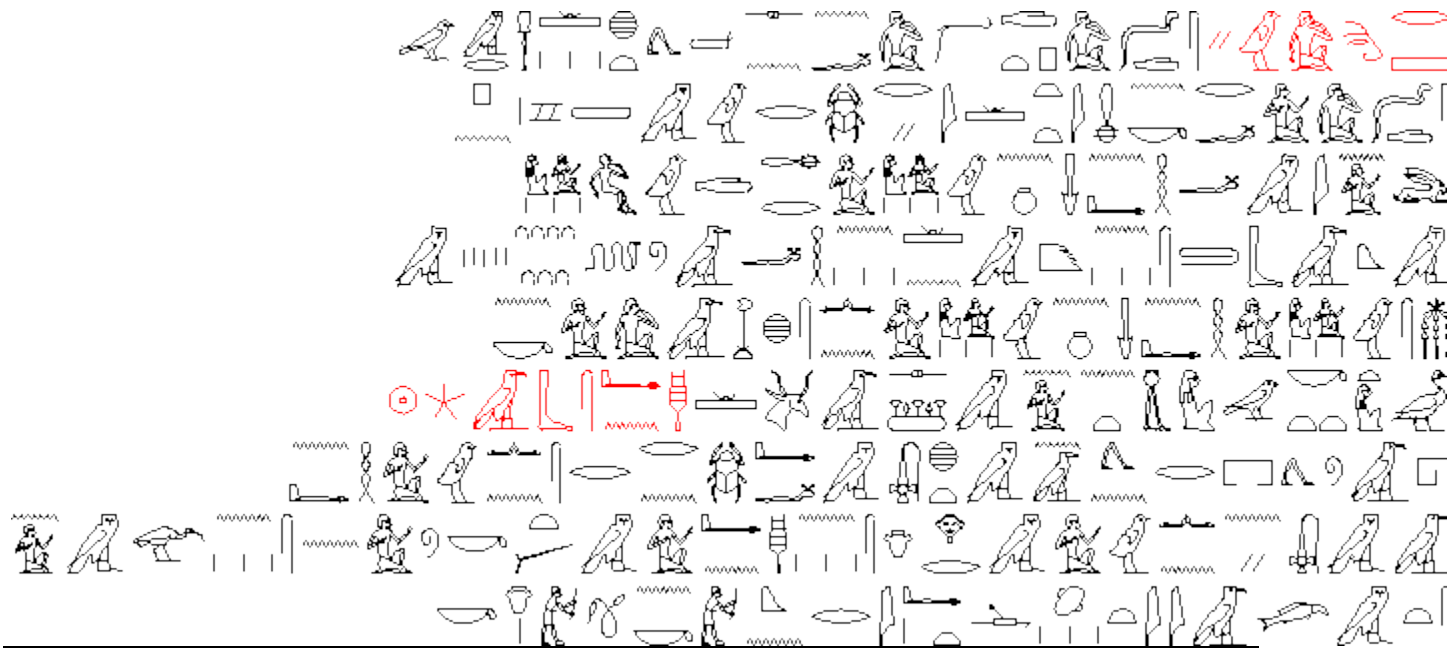




Page 10



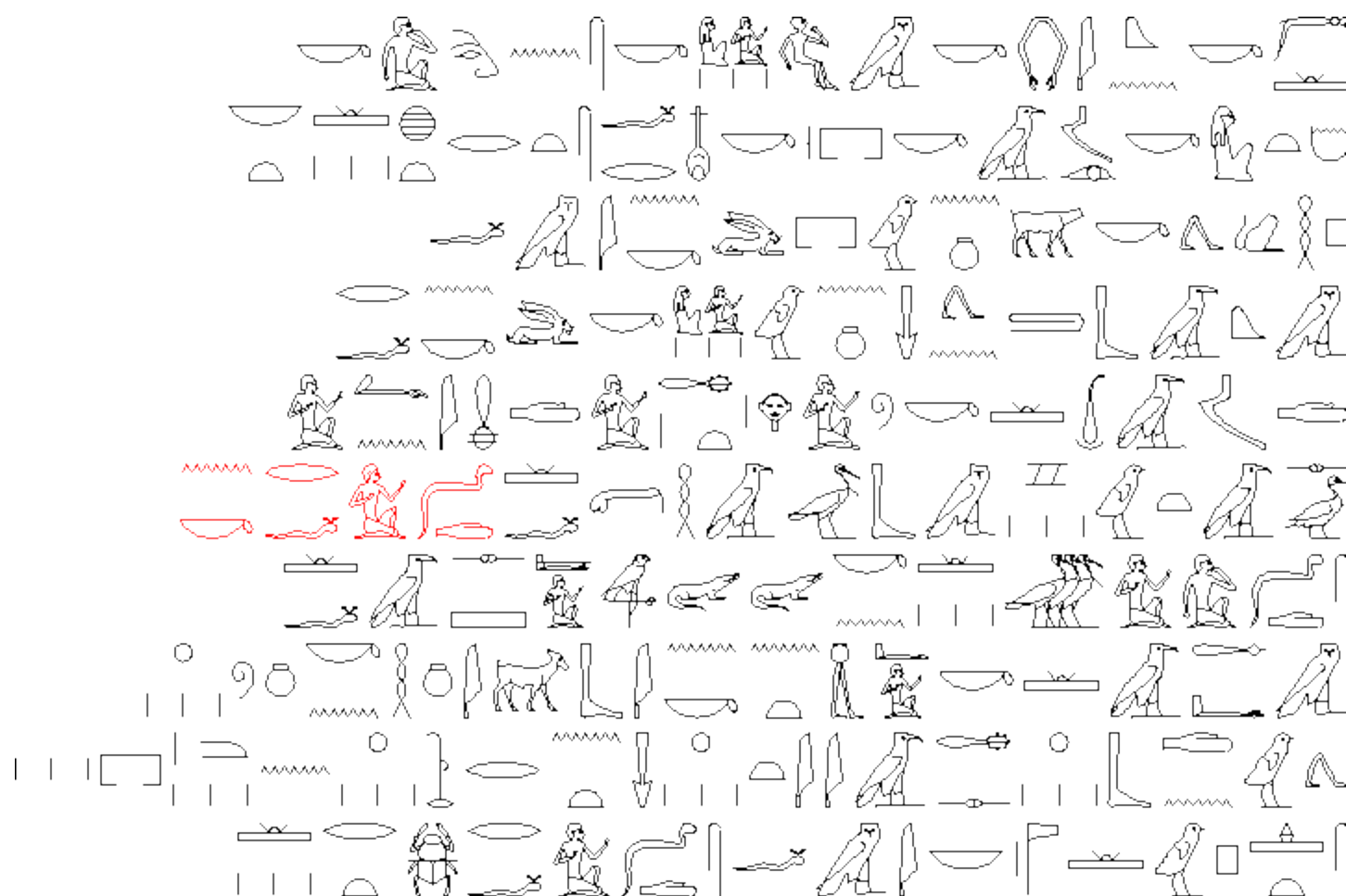
Hieroglyphic Transcription - Page 10



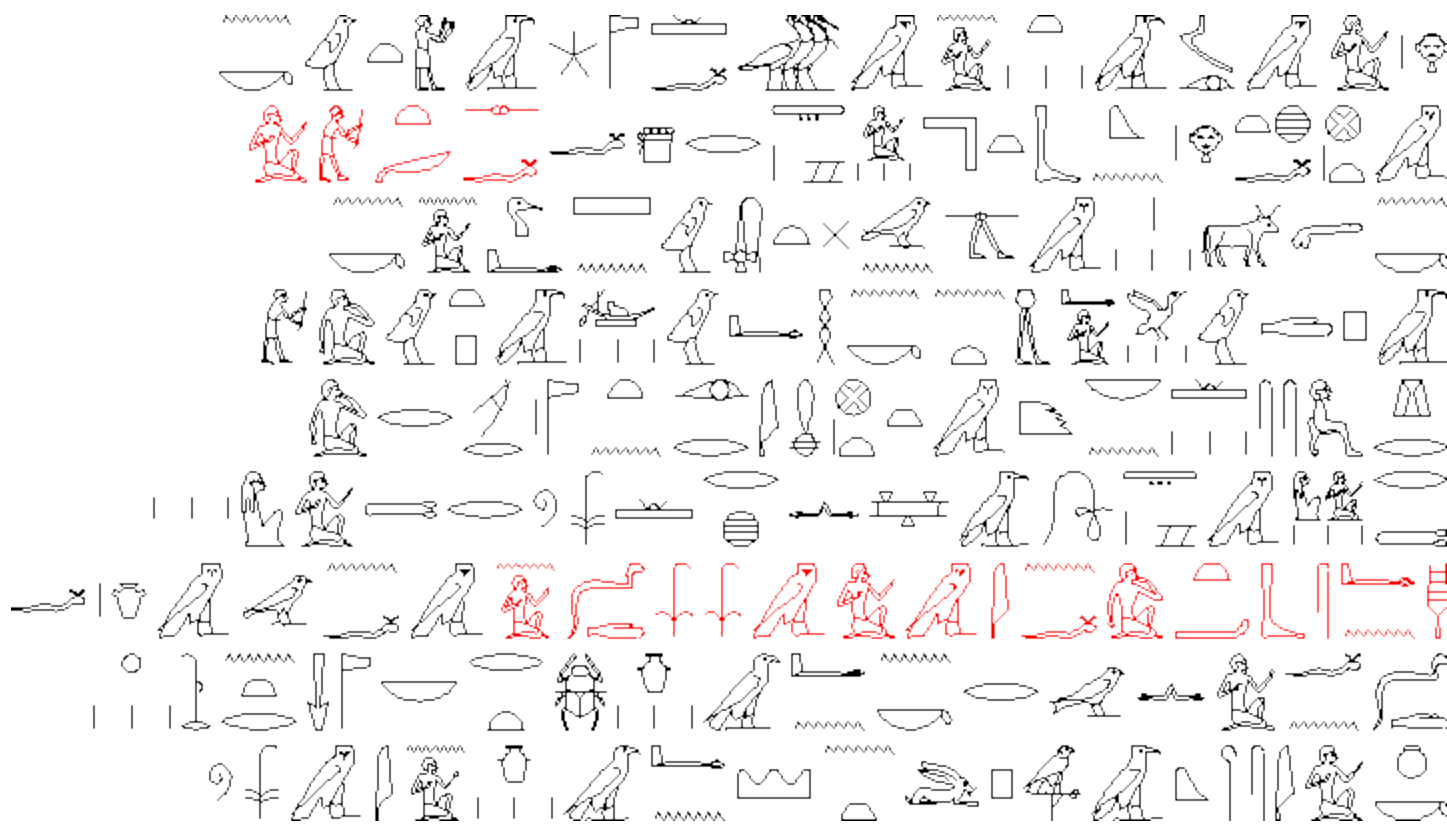
Starting with this page, the scribe (or scribes) changed from writing in columns to writing in horizontal lines. The reason for the change is unknown.



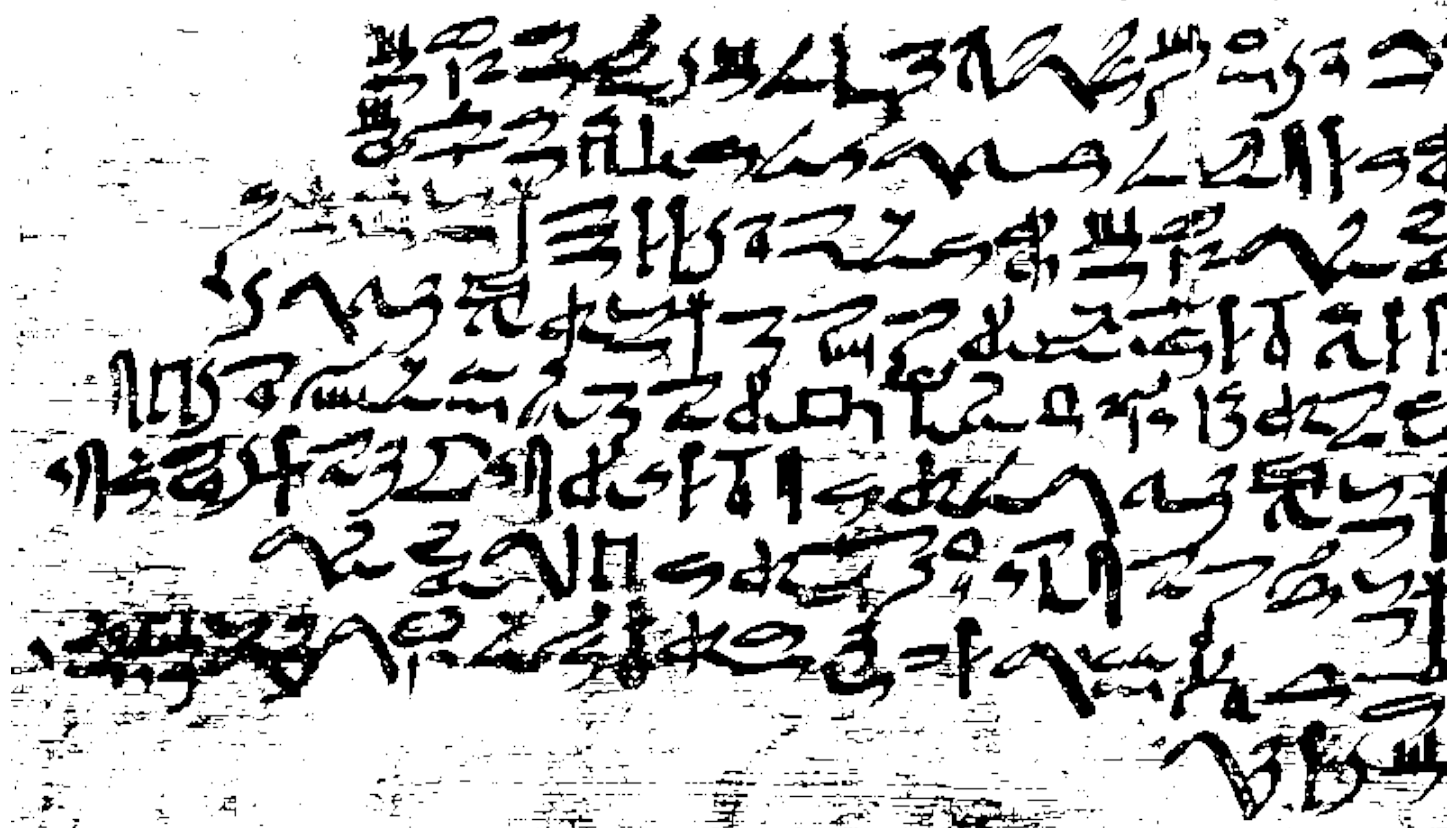
Handwritten text in Arabic script, likely a transcription of a document. The text is dense and covers most of the page area.



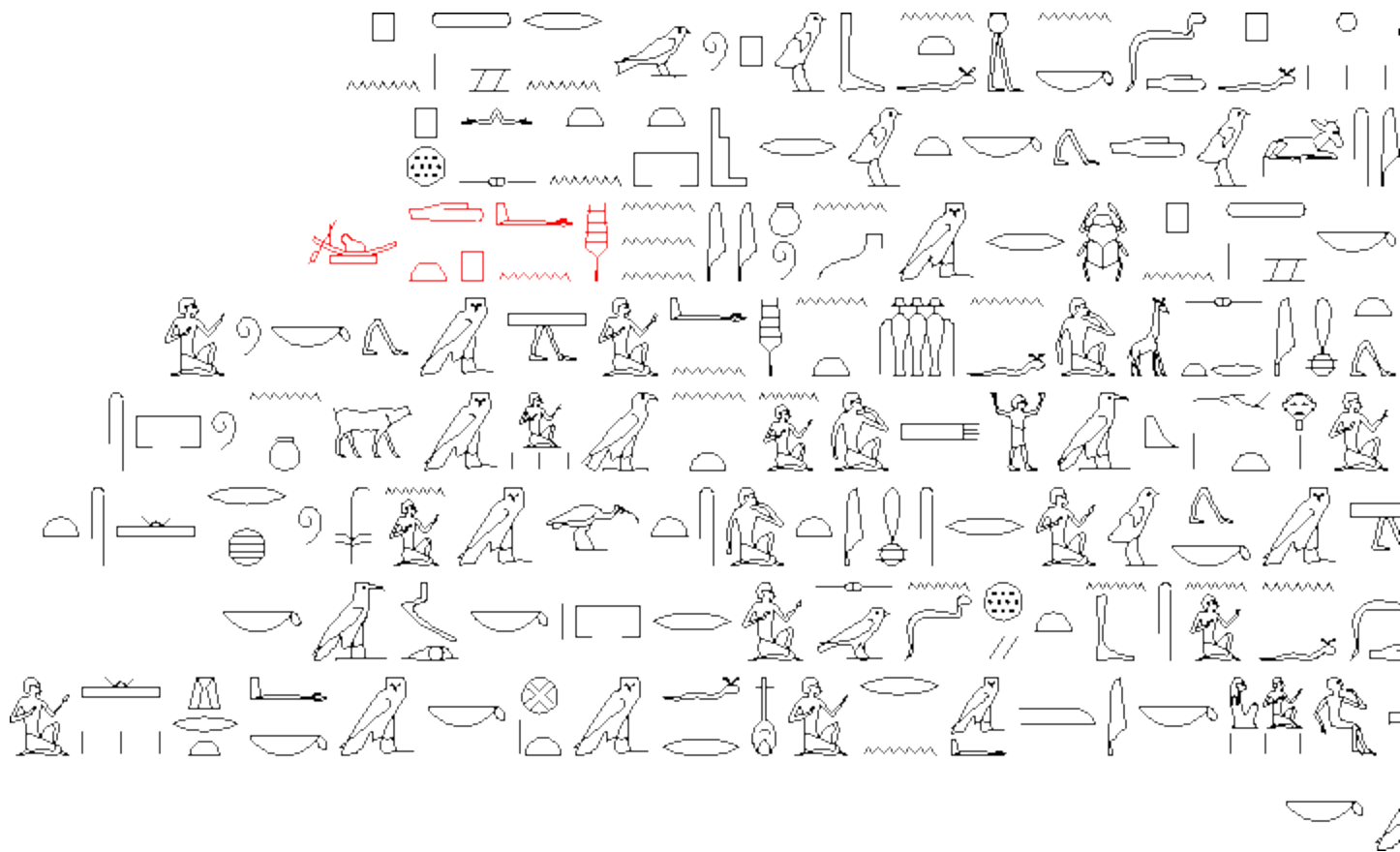
Handwritten text in a cursive script, likely a transcription of a document. The text is dense and spans multiple lines, with some characters appearing to be stylized or abbreviated. The script is written in black ink on a light background.



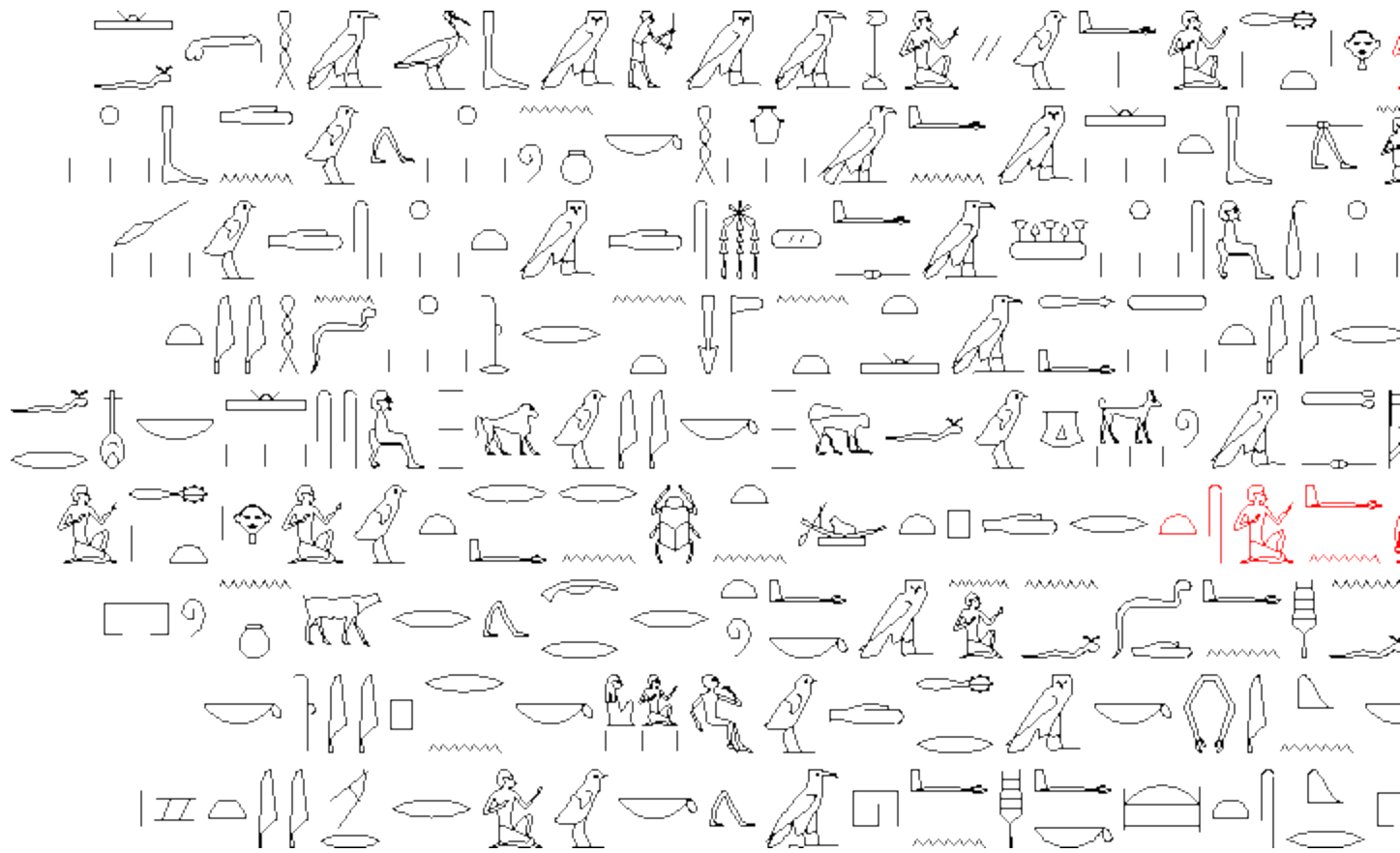
Page 13

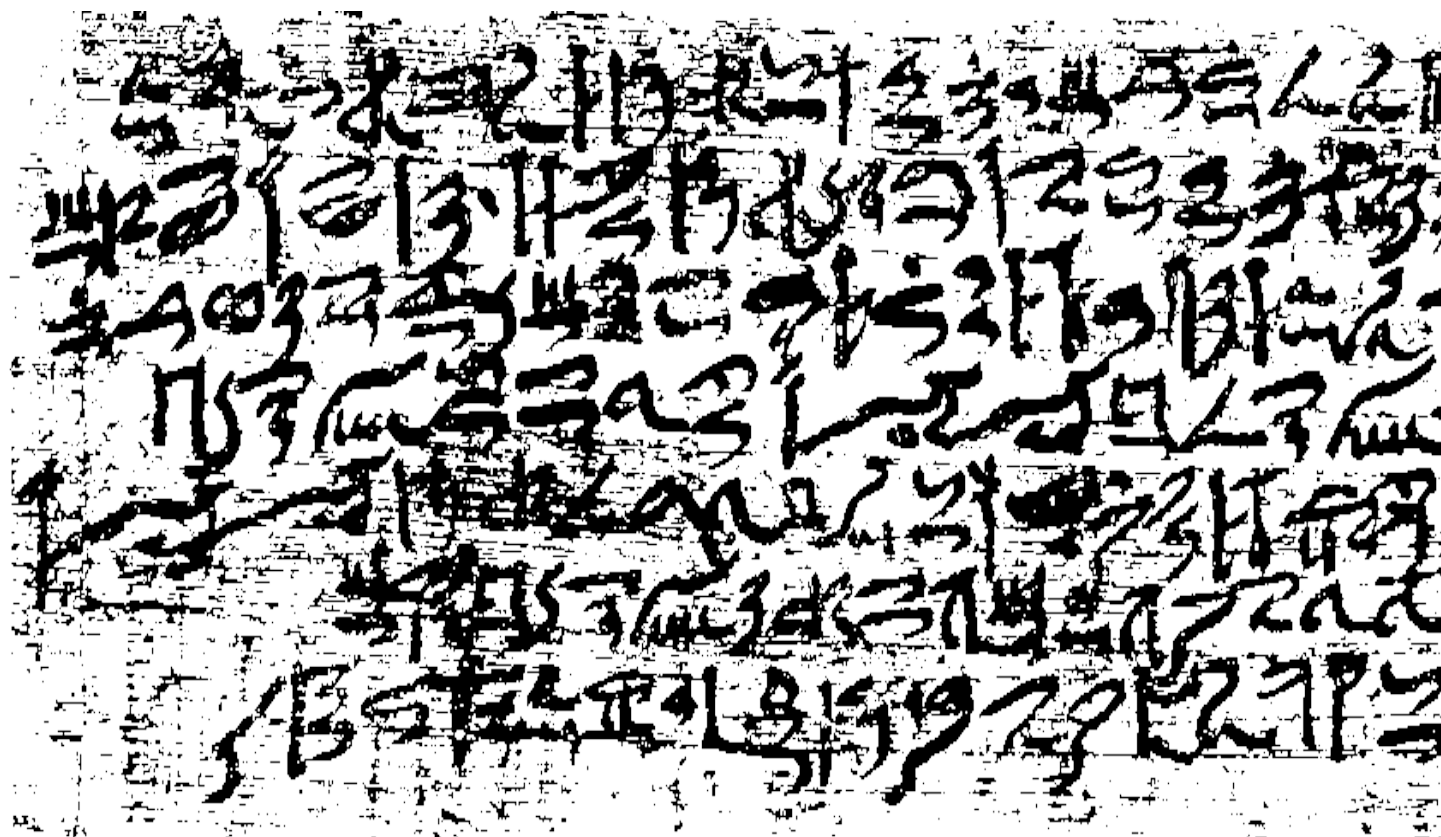


## Hieroglyphic Transcription - Page 13

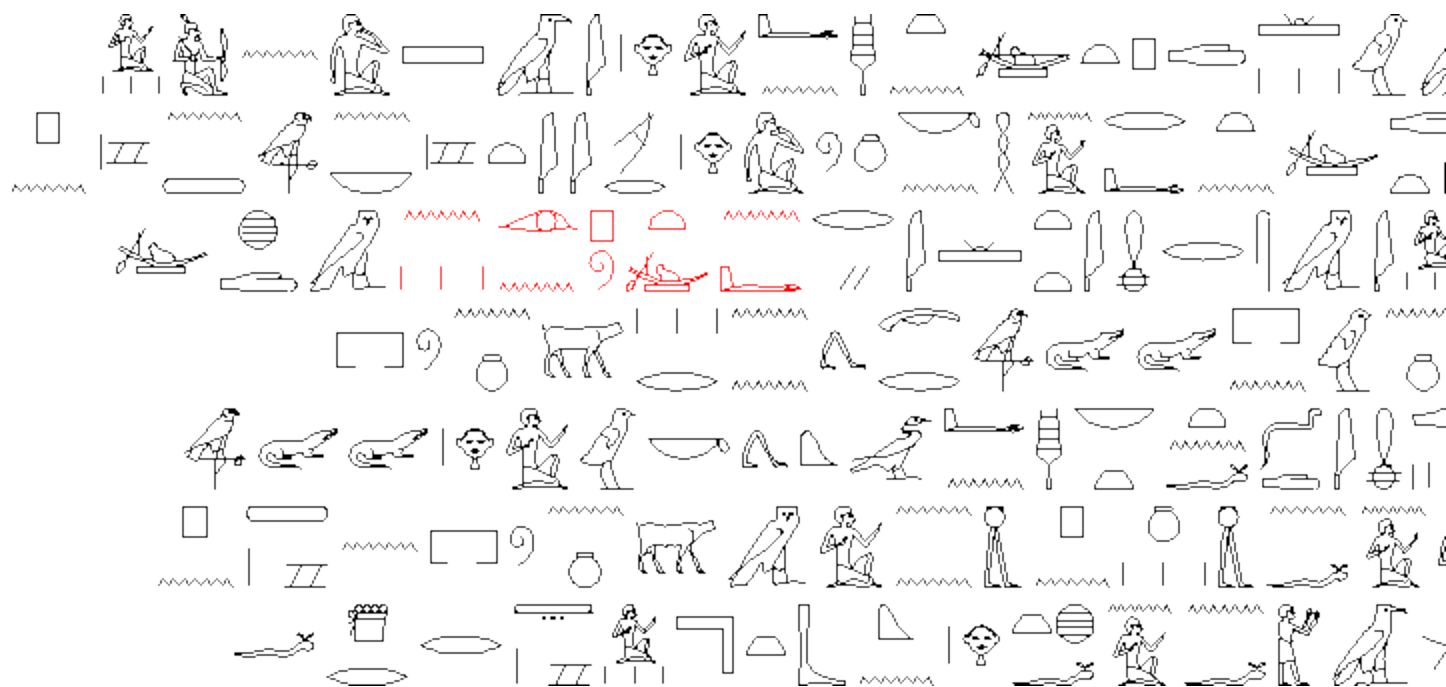


Handwritten text in a cursive script, likely a form of shorthand or a specific dialect, covering the upper portion of the page.

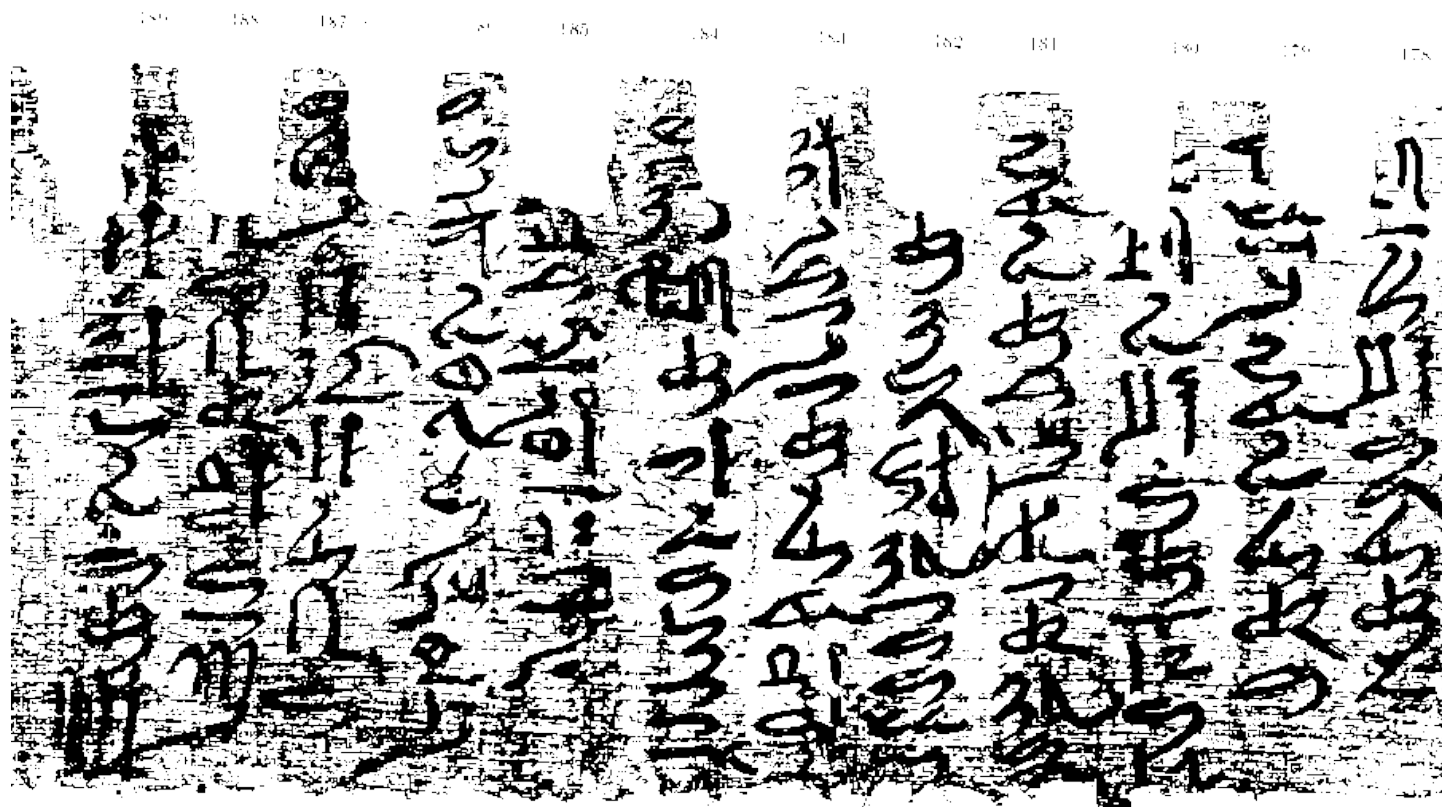





### Hieroglyphic Transcription - Page 15








Although the other pages of this papyrus scroll were remarkably well preserved, this page has suffered a certain amount of damage, especially along its top edge. This makes some of the signs rather difficult to read, and at the top of the second-to-last column an unknown number of signs are lost entirely. One suggestion is that this was

an "m"  sign (Hoch,1995).

### **Hieroglyphic Transcription - Page 16**



The damaged or missing signs in the original papyrus are indicated here by shading. The transcriptions given here are the ones generally accepted. Note that the only suggestion I have seen for restoring the top of the next-to-last column is to place

an "m"  there, resulting in a translation of "...as it is found in writing in a document of ..." (Hoch, 1995)

## Examples of Hieratic Documents

A wide variety of documents written in Hieratic remain from the Middle Kingdom. Many of these are from excavation of the town of Kahun in central Egypt. They give us a broader look at everyday life in ancient Egypt than the political and religious propaganda written in hieroglyphs, so much of which has survived.

I shall be posting documents here from time to time, as time and inspiration permit. The hieratic in which they are written is not as careful as the literary hieratic of The Shipwrecked Sailor or the Teachings of Ptah-Hotep, as well as being mostly from the end of the Middle Kingdom, when writing style had changed noticeably from the beginning.

I hope you be able to use these to help you in learning to read hieratic documents, and will try to provide transcriptions into hieroglyphs to assist you when you have

difficulty. As for translating them, they are written in Middle Egyptian, and any good textbook should give you the grounding necessary.

Good fortune!

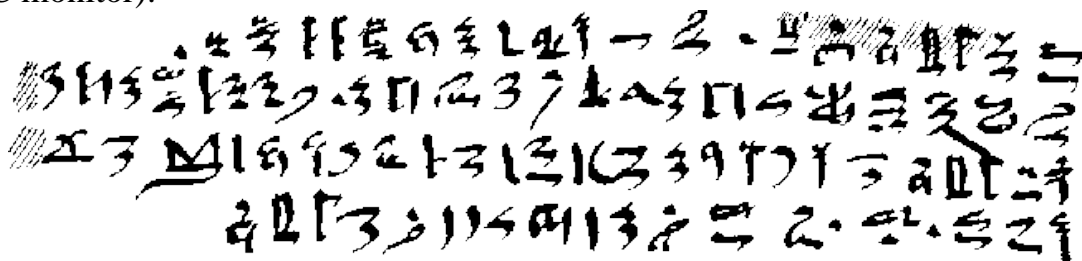
- [A Letter of Reminder](#)
- [A Letter from the Boss](#)
- [A Note of Request](#)

- **A Letter from the Boss**

- This is a letter which was copied into the temple daybook at el-Lahun, and refers specifically to this practice; presumably other, less important, messages were simply discarded.

This letter is important for the chronology of the period, since it appears to refer to the heliacal rising of Sirius in 'Year 7, month 3 of Peret, day 25.' The king's name is not given but was presumably Senwosret III. [Adapted from R.B.Parkinson, *Voices from Ancient Egypt*.]

- You will notice that, unlike the "Letter of Reminder," where the writer is addressing a superior, this letter does not include the same formal phrases of greeting and respect. Letters written to inferiors tend to be very brusque and to the point, as this one is.
- The image shown here should display at approximately the original size (on a PC monitor).



[Go to a hieroglyphic transcription](#)

[Return to Examples Index](#)

- The letter was originally published in
- Ludwig Borchardt *Zeitschrift für ägyptische Sprache und Altertumskunde* 37:89-103, "Der Zweite Papyrusfund von Kahun und die zeitliche Festlegung des mittleren Reiches der ägyptischen Geschichte."
- This version is based on the facsimile in
- G. Möller, *Hieratische Lesestücke für den akademischen Gebrauch* I, 19.
- Translations of this letter can be found in

- E. Wente, *Letters From Ancient Egypt*, p.73, and in R. B. Parkinson, *Voices from Ancient Egypt*, p.89.

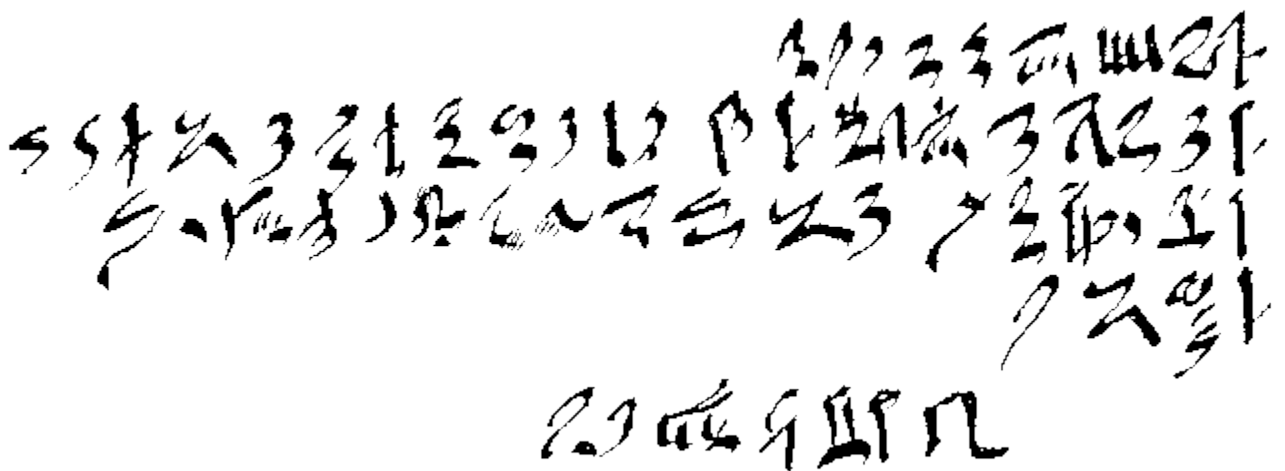
- **A Letter from the Boss**

- This transcription is my own based on the Hieratic shown on the previous page - that is, there may be some errors.



- **A Note of Request**

- This is a terse practical note without any formulae, similar to "Letter from the Boss." Traces of additional signs along the left edge (*see [original papyrus](#)*) suggest that this sheet was cut out of an already used roll, or that it is a copy of the message kept by the recipient. This would explain the placing of the sender's name at the end: it generally comes first in actual letters. This note dates to the reign of Amenemhat III. (*Adapted from Parkinson, [Voices from Ancient Egypt](#)*)
- The image shown here should display at approximately the original size (on a PC monitor).



[Go to a hieroglyphic transcription](#)

[Return to Examples Index](#)

- The letter was originally published in

- Ludwig Borchardt *Zeitschrift für ägyptische Sprache und Altertumskunde* 37:89-103, "Der Zweite Papyrusfund von Kahun und die zeitliche Festlegung des mittleren Reiches der ägyptischen Geschichte."
- This version is based on the facsimile in
- G. Möller, *Hieratische Lesestücke für den akademischen Gebrauch I*, p.18.
- 
- Translations of this letter can be found in
- E. Wente, *Letters From Ancient Egypt*, p.79, and in
- R. B. Parkinson, *Voices from Ancient Egypt*, p.90.

### • **A Note of Request**

- This transcription is my own based on the Hieratic shown on the previous page  
- that is, there may be some errors.



- 
- Transliteration:
- rnp.t-sp 4 Abd 4 Smw hrw 13  
imi in.t mskA n iwA m xt nfr mk sw r  
Hnt.w=f mk rdi.n=i Tbw Htpi r=f  
ix di=k n=f  
sS Hwt-nTr Hr-m-sA=f

### • **A Letter of Reminder**

- The underling Neni writes to his superior, the steward Iyib, decorously reminding him to deal with some property. Two previous letters have not produced any response. A man called Waah is known from a will and may be the same man as the property owner mentioned here; if so, this letter may date to the reign of Amenamhet IV (c. 1790 BC). [Adapted from R.B.Parkinson, *Voices from Ancient Egypt*.]
- The image shown here should display at approximately the original size (on a PC monitor).



- The letter was originally published in  
F. Ll. Griffith *The Petrie Papyri: Hieratic Papyri from Kahun and Gurob*,  
p.72 and Plate XXIX.  
This version is from the facsimile in  
G. Möller, *Hieratische Lesestücke für den akademischen Gebrauch I*,  
**19B**
- Translations of this letter can be found in  
E. Wente, *Letters From Ancient Egypt*, pp.70-80, and in  
R. B. Parkinson, *Voices from Ancient Egypt*, pp.90-92.
- I have added a few notes on some "peculiarities" of the writing in this letter  
[here](#).
- I have presented a modified version of this letter in "[Neni Writes A Letter](#),"  
where you may find some assistance with the background, structure and special  
vocabulary of formal letters of the Middle Kingdom.
  - **A Letter of Reminder**
- This transcription is my own based on the Hieratic shown on the previous page  
- that is, there may be some errors.

