
































## 2.3 Uniliteral signs

The table below shows the uniliteral hieroglyphs of Middle Egyptian, along with their transliteration in the European system and the names by which Egyptologists commonly refer to them. The table is arranged in the order used in dictionaries of ancient Egyptian. To be able to use the dictionaries (including the one in the back of this book), you will need to memorize this order.

SYMBOL	TRANSL.	NAME
 (vulture)	ʾ	aleph ("AL-if")
 (reed-leaf); also  (dual strokes)	j	j
 (double reed-leaf)	y	y
 (arm)	ʿ	ayin ("EYE-in")
 (quail-chick); also  (curl of rope)	w	w
 (foot)	b	b
 (stool)	p	p
 (horned viper)	f	f
 (owl); also  (unknown object)	m	m
 (water); also  (red crown)	n	n
 (mouth)	r	r
 (enclosure)	h	h
 (rope)	ḥ	"dotted h"
 (unknown object)	ḥ	"third h"
 (belly and udder)	ḥ	"fourth h"
 (doorbolt)	z	z
 (bolt of cloth)	s	s
 (pool)	š	shin
 (hill)	q	q
 (basket) (also  )	k	k
 (jar-stand); also  (bag)	g	g
 (bread-loaf)	t	t
 (hobble)	ʿ	"second t"
 (hand)	d	d
 (cobra)	ḏ	"second d"

These signs are among the most common of all Egyptian hieroglyphs; every text contains some of them, and most words were written with one or more of them — some words, only with them. Your first exercise should be to study this table until you can reproduce it and can give the transliteration of each sign from memory.

The next table shows the differences between the European system of transliteration and the other three systems mentioned above. It is given here only for reference; but you will find it useful to know the others, particularly the traditional system, in reading other books about Middle Egyptian language and writing.

	TRADITIONAL	BUDGE	COMPUTER		TRADITIONAL	BUDGE	COMPUTER
3	3	a	A	h	h	χ, kh	x
j	l	ā	i	h	h	χ, kh	X
y	y	ā, y	ii	z	s	s	z, s
c	c	ā	a	s	ś	s	s
w	w	u	w	ʃ	š	ś, sh	S
b	b	b	b	q	k	q	q
p	p	p	p	k	k	k	k
f	f	f	f	g	g	ḳ	g
m	m	m	m	t	t	t	t
n	n	n	n	ʔ	ʔ	θ, th	T
r	r	r	r	d	d	ḏ	d
h	h	h	h	ḏ	ḏ	t', tch	D
ḥ	ḥ	ḥ	H				

## 2.4 Sounds

It is important to remember that the transliteration symbols are only a convention that Egyptologists use to represent the consonants of Middle Egyptian: they are *not* an accurate guide to the way those consonants actually sounded. We cannot know exactly how the consonants were pronounced, though we can make some educated guesses based on their Coptic descendants and on how Egyptian words were written in other ancient languages (and vice-versa). The following list shows the sounds that most Egyptologists now think the consonants may actually have had in Middle Egyptian:

- 3 Uncertain, probably a kind of *l* or *r*. This sound began to disappear from the spoken language during the Middle Kingdom. Most words simply lost the consonant, but in some cases, it was replaced by *y* or by a "glottal stop" (the sound at the beginning of the two vowels of "uh-oh").
- j In most cases, *j* probably had no sound of its own, but only served to indicate that a syllable began or ended with a vowel. In some words, however, *j* seems to have had the same sound as *y*.
- y Like English *y* as in "yet."
- c A sound made deep in the throat, somewhat like the *r* of modern French and German. It exists in Hebrew and Arabic as the consonant named "ayin." Originally c probably sounded like English *d* as in *deed*, and in Middle Egyptian it may still have had that sound in some words in some dialects.

- w Mostly like English *w* as in *wet*. In some cases, however, it may have been pronounced like the English vowel *u* in *glue*.
- b Probably like English *b* as in *bet*. In some words (or dialects), it may have had a softer sound, like that of Spanish *cabo* (to approximate it in English, try pronouncing the word *hobo* without putting your lips completely together).
- p Probably like English *p* as in *pet*.
- f Probably like English *f* as in *fat*. In some words, perhaps like the sound of German *Pferd* (an *f* sound that starts out as a *p*).
- m Like English *m* as in *met*.
- n In most cases like English *n* as in *net*. In some words, however, this consonant seems to have been pronounced like English *l* as in *let*.
- r Probably a "flapped" *r* as in Spanish *pero*, made with a single tap of the tongue against the roof of the mouth. To English speakers, this often sounds like *d*. In some words, *r* seems to have been pronounced like English *l* as in *let*. Some dialects may have pronounced every *r* this way, as that of the Fayum did later in Coptic.
- h Probably like English *h* as in *hot*.
- ḥ A sound like English *h*, but deeper in the throat. It exists in Arabic and Hebrew, and is similar to the sound made by someone breathing on their glasses before cleaning them.
- ḥ Probably a sound like the *ch* in German *ach*. To approximate it in English, try saying *loch* without closing your throat completely. Some Egyptologists think it may have been closer to the Arabic and Hebrew consonant called "ghayin" (try saying *log* without completely closing your throat).
- ḥ Probably like the preceding sound followed by *γ* (try saying *cue* without closing your throat, or *hue* with a very strong *h*). Egyptologists who believe *ḥ* sounded like "ghayin" think *ḥ* sounded like the *ch* in German *ach*.
- z/s In Middle Egyptian, these two consonants were pronounced the same, probably like English *s* as in *set*. Originally, *z* was different, perhaps like English *th* as in *think*. Although *z* and *s* were essentially one consonant in Middle Egyptian, and could often be written interchangeably, it is important to learn the original spelling of words with these consonants, because they are often arranged separately in dictionaries, like the one in the back of this book (*z* comes before *s*).
- š Like English *sh* as in *shot*.
- q A kind of *k*, probably either like Arabic and Hebrew *q* (as deep in the throat as possible), or with some kind of "emphasis," like *q* in some Ethiopic languages (a sound difficult to describe in English).