

# Reading the Rosetta Stone: Introduction to Ptolemaic Hieroglyphs

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1 1/26/2026

- most signs in “Ptolemaic” hieroglyphs reflect standard, conventional use, as reflected in e.g. Gardiner’s sign list
  - example from temple text: the one unusual sign is a dog [jackal?] signifying the phonetic value *ii*
  - Ptolemaic has “7000” signs, but in practice, most texts rely predominantly on the “700” or so standard signs that most students will know
  - Leitz on a ritual scene from the temple of Dendara: 362 signs, 342 of which are conventional, 10 are common Late Egyptian substitute uniliterals
- Ptolemaic inscriptions often juxtapose playful or unusual writings against more standard writings

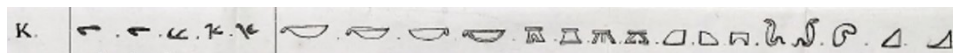


*hwi.n=f h3=sn m inb pn r ifd nn iry m ifd*

He made protection around them with this wall on the four sides of these [gods].

- standing baboon with arms raised: an unusual but common Ptolemaic writing of *nfr*
- **TempleTexte:** <https://www.templetexte.uni-tuebingen.de/portal/>
- [ *The Temple of Esna: An Evolving Translation*, by David Klotz: <https://bookdown.org/shemanefer/Esna3/> ]
- “Ptolemaic” can be a misleading term. Ptolemaic hieroglyphs do not only appear in Ptolemaic or Roman inscriptions. Conversely, not all such inscriptions stick to “Ptolemaic” readings/values of given hieroglyphs, but may use older readings/values.
- *P3-di-Imn-nb-ns.t-t3.wy*: In his copy of the Book of the Dead, his name uses the Ptolemaic obelisk sign for the name Amun
- *m-hnw* evolves phonetically to sound like *mw hr nw*, which is then spelled: *m(w) hr nw*
- *pri* spelled with an *f* viper leaving a box(!); *k* spelled with the viper entering the box
- the principles by which Ptolemaic glyphs derive their values were not new to the Ptolemaic Period, but (expansions of) older, existing principles

- Traditional Egyptian: “From 404 BCE [to] 394 CE hieroglyphic texts were in general composed in the high-status language variety termed Traditional Egyptian.” <https://escholarship.org/uc/item/8g73w3gp>
  - inconsistent n vs m distinction
  - inconsistent sDm=f vs sDm.n=f
  - reduction of statives, infinitives, affixes
  - phonetic changes reflected in script
  - imitation of earlier phases
  - text-specific idiosyncrasies
  - attested from the New Kingdom through Roman Periods
  - “linguistic interference” from all stages of the language
- Joachim Quack doesn’t believe that Ptolemaic hieroglyphs exist as a true separate category: There is no phase of the language that can be definitively called Ptolemaic.
- The following glyphs all signified phonetic k in what Champollion read:



- puns
- ??? (*t3.wy* < two lands < scarab?)

**2. 2/2/26**

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**3. 2/9/26**

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**4. 2/16/26**

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**5. 2/23/26**

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**6. 3/2/26**

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**7. 3/9/26**

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**8. 3/16/26**

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