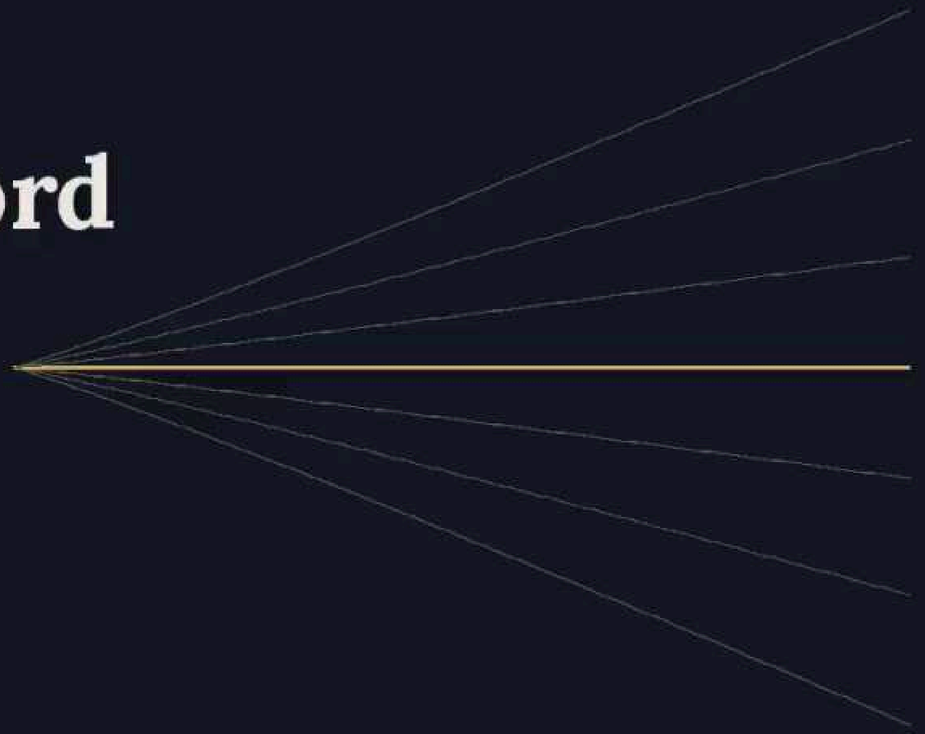
ANDERSON ACADEMY

EGYP 101 B · Introduction to Egyptian Hieroglyphs Middle Egyptian (Brief course)

Lecture 3 · about 6 min

Multi-Consonant Signs, Word Signs, and Phonetic Complements



A library of university-level courses

Questions or feedback: garyanderson@mail.grokbot.com · @garyanderson

This lecture

- Two-consonant signs
- Three-consonant signs
- Word signs
- Phonetic complements

¶ 3.1

This lecture introduces the most common of them, shows how a sign can also stand for a whole word,

Common biliterals

Sign	Sounds
O1 house plan	pr
Y5 game board	mn
G36 swallow	wr
V30 basket	nb
G39 pintail duck	s3

¶ 3.2

The basket, V30, stands for n b.

Signs borrowed for sound

- Game board mn: to remain
- Game board mn: in Amun, imn
- Basket nb: lord
- Basket nb: all, every

¶ 3.3

The basket, n b, means lord in nb, and also all or every in nb. Like a rebus puzzle,

Common triliterals

Sign	Word
S34 ankh	anx, life
F35 heart and windpipe	nfr, good
R4 loaf on mat	Htp, peace
R8 cloth on pole	nTr, god

¶ 3.4

The loaf on a mat, R4, writes H t p, offering or peace.

Word signs

- A logogram writes a whole word
- A stroke, Z1, marks it
- N5 sun disc with stroke: ra, sun
- D2 face with stroke: Hr, face

¶ 3.5

The sun disc, N5, with a stroke means ra, the sun or the sun god Ra.

Phonetic complements

- Repeat sounds already in a sign
- Swallow wr plus mouth r
- Ankh plus n and x
- Read the sounds once only

¶ 3.6

The ankh is often followed by the water, n, and the placenta, x.

Why complements help

Purpose

- Show which reading is meant
- Fill out the group neatly

Example

- Htp plus t and p
- Confirms hotep

¶ 3.7

When you see the loaf on a mat followed by the bread loaf, t, and the stool, p,

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Honorific transposition

- Gods and kings written first
- Read in their natural place
- Tutankhamun: Amun written first
- A mark of respect

¶ 3.8

but the signs for Amun are written first.

Flexible spelling

- Complements optional
- Full or short spellings
- Determinatives vary
- Recognise the core signs

¶ 3.9

A scribe could expand a word to fill a column or abbreviate it on a small object.

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Classical and late writing

Middle Kingdom

- Several hundred common signs
- Values fairly stable

Greek and Roman temples

- Thousands of signs
- Clever new values

¶ 3.10

making those inscriptions far harder than classical Middle Egyptian.

Useful words

Transliteration	Meaning
pr	house
wr	great
anx	life, to live
nfr	good, beautiful
nsw	king

¶ 3.11

The heart and windpipe, nfr, means good and beautiful, as in the name Nefertiti, the beautiful one has come.

From Egyptian to Coptic

Middle Egyptian	Coptic
nTr, god	noute
anx, life	onkh
Hm, majesty	hom

¶ 3.12

but the word survived for over three thousand years.

Reading ambiguous signs

- Many signs have more than one use
- Mouth: r, or the word for mouth
- pr aA: great house, pharaoh
- Context decides

¶ 3.13

which Greek turned into pharaoh.

Reading a new word



¶ 3.14

Fourth, look the consonants up in a dictionary, such as Raymond Faulkner's Concise Dictionary of Middle Egyptian.

Practice

- Write nfr with complements
- Write anx with complements
- Say nefer and ankh
- Next: determinatives and nouns

¶ 3.15

Now write anx with the water and the placenta as complements.