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NON-TEXTUAL MARKING SYSTEMS,
WRITING AND PSEUDO SCRIPT
FROM PREHISTORY TO MODERN TIMES

LINGUA AEGYPTIA

Studia monographica 8

Herausgegeben von

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Seminar für Ägyptologie und Koptologie
Göttingen

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edited by

Petra Andrásy, Julia Budka & Frank Kammerzell

Göttingen 2009

Titelaufnahme

Petra Andrásy, Julia Budka & Frank Kammerzell (eds.)

Non-Textual Marking Systems, Writing and Pseudo Script from Prehistory to Modern Times /
Göttingen: Seminar für Ägyptologie und Koptologie, 2009
(Lingua Aegyptia — Studia monographica; Bd. 8)
ISSN 0946-8641

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Printed in Germany

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Genehmigung der Herausgeber.

Reproduktion, Druck und Verarbeitung: Hubert & Co., Göttingen

Gedruckt auf säurefreiem, archivierfähigem Papier

Bestelladresse

Lingua Aegyptia, Seminar für Ägyptologie und Koptologie, Weender Landstr. 2, 37073 Göttingen, Germany

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P R E F A C E

„Non-Textual Marking Systems, Writing and Pseudo Script from Prehistory to Present Times” was the title of an international and interdisciplinary colloquium which took place in Berlin from December 17–19, 2007. It was hosted by the *Seminar für Archäologie und Kulturgeschichte Nordostafrikas (AKNOA)* of *Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin* and organized in connection with *Deutsch-ägyptisches Jahr der Wissenschaften und Technologie*. The organisers are indebted to the *Fritz Thyssen Stiftung* for their substantial financial assistance.

Of the twenty-three papers presented in Berlin, this volume contains fifteen, all in a revised form. Thomas Eißing’s article is unknown to those who participated in the conference and has been included since its content, *Besitzmarken – Sortierzeichen – Abbundzeichen. Nicht-textuale Markierungssysteme im Holzbau*, is a welcome complement to topics dealt with in other papers. A quick notion of the scope of presentations can be gained by means of the summaries in the introductory chapter.

The twenty-five researchers who gave talks at the Berlin conference represented a wide range of disciplines – Egyptology, Sudan Archaeology, Prehistoric Archaeology, Classical Archaeology, Linguistics, Sinology, Cultural Theory, Art History and Architectural Studies. As a consequence, the audience was given notice of an impressive variety of non-textual marking systems, their sign inventories, their particular usage, and, of course, the respective means and methods of seeking information about their meanings and functions. This comparative and typological approach not only enables to uncover analogies across space and time but also offers a broader theoretical perspective, and thus contributes to better comprehending the specific properties of those information systems that belong to the huge realm delimited by writing systems on the one side and pseudo-scripts on the other end.

The congress was connected both conceptually and in terms of its central topics to a preceding conference, which a year before had been organised by the Department of Egyptology of the University of Leiden and the Netherlands Institute of the Near East (NINO). It was entitled: „Pictograms or Pseudo Script? Non-Textual Identity Marks in Practical Use in Ancient Egypt and Elsewhere”.

The idea to place in a common and comprehensive framework the different marks and marking systems of Ancient Egypt and Sudan for a long time had been an ongoing preoccupation for members of both institutions and came to the fore already in 2005 during a visit to Leiden. Together with the conference proceedings of the Leiden colloquium,¹ which also appear in 2009, there are now two publications which elucidate the topic of non-textual marking systems from multiple perspectives. Notwithstanding, we are still very far from a representative (not to speak of a complete) phenomenological inventory of non-textual marking systems, that could give an idea about the entire scope of usages and functions. A goal as such seemed to be unattain-

1 Ben J. J. Haring, Olaf E. Kaper & Carolien van Zoest (Eds.). 2009. *Pictograms or Pseudo Script? Non-textual identity marks in practical use in Ancient Egypt and elsewhere, Proceedings of the conference, Leiden 2006*, Egyptologische Uitgaven 24, Leiden.

able from the outset and deliberately was not attempted. On the other hand, it is obvious that those who primarily aim at gaining information about the specific meaning of signs within one individual system cannot expect to find swift solutions by simply looking onto more familiar systems. However, there is reason for some hope that the papers printed here will bring forth further research into this fascinating area of human communication, stimulate interdisciplinary cooperation, and by this instigate also new paths of interpretations.

The Editors would like to thank the colleagues and students of the host department: Daniel Werning, Katharina Aldenhoven, Tobias Eick, Helen Jahn, Arvi Johan Korhonen, Eliese-Sophia Lincke, Ralf Miltenberger, Jasmin Schiller and Katharina Vogt, without whose enormous engagement the realization of the colloquium would not have been possible. A particular share of these thanks goes to Karin Lippold, who was responsible not only for coordinating the more practical aspects of organisation but also for the first layout of this volume. This volume attained its final form thanks to the work of Eva-Maria Engel, that was financed by the Excellence Cluster *Topoi – The Formation and Transformation of Space and Knowledge in Ancient Civilizations*.

The Editors

Berlin, July 2009