Contract for long term loan of a field without interest for 5 years

Scribe: Sapik-zer son of Nadna
Uruk Clay Tablet  ~ 3000-2000 BCE
British Museum

The story of Handwriting in 12 objects by Cameron Laux
Review of exhibit Writing: Making Your Mark
Sumerian cuneiform tablet, Uruk

Beer pay slip
5000BP
Hieroglyphic-Billboard
El-Khawy  Egypt 3250 BCE
An example of Egyptian hieroglyphs: the funerary papyrus of Princess Entiu-ry.
Grand portico of the Temple of Isis at Philae

David Roberts
1796-1864
Lithograph
Hand colored
Hieroglyphs/Hieratic/Demotic

Hieroglyph = character in ancient Egyptian writing, which is a mixture of phonograms and logograms.

- Ideographic = character represents either the object or a symbolic idea
- Phonetic = character represents either an alphabetic sound or a whole syllable

Hieratic (#4-6) = an abridged form of hieroglyphics which assumed a cursive character used for both secular and religious writing

Demotic (#7) = simplified form of hieratic script used in Egypt after 6-7 century BCE
Papyrus

is a thick paper-like material produced from the pith of the papyrus plant, *Cyperus papyrus*, a wetland sedge that was once abundant in the Nile Delta of Egypt. Hieratic script in ink on papyrus.
Mummies in the Ptolemaic and Roman Periods often had a label with an inscription in Greek or demotic, more rarely in hieroglyphs, giving the name and sometimes further information on the dead person.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Icon</th>
<th>Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>vulture, ( j ) (glottal stop)</td>
<td>horned viper, ( f )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>reed leaf, ( l )</td>
<td>owl, ( m )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>arm, ( ^{(a)} )</td>
<td>water, ( n )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>quail chick, ( w )</td>
<td>mouth, ( r )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>leg, ( b )</td>
<td>reed hut, ( h )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mat, ( p )</td>
<td>twisted flax, ( h )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>basket, ( k )</td>
<td>pot stand?, ( g )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>animal’s belly, ( kh )</td>
<td>door bolt, ( s )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>loaf of bread, ( t )</td>
<td>tethering rope, ( ch )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>folded cloth, ( s )</td>
<td>pool of water, ( s )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hand, ( d )</td>
<td>swimming serpent, ( dj )</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Funerary stela of Dusobek
Middle Kingdom: 4040-3640 BP

Hieroglyphs may be classified:
1. Uniconsonantal signs
2. Biconsonantal signs
3. Triconsonantal signs
4. Phonetic complements
5. Determinatives/logograms
Cartouche of Tutankhamun

- feather = i
- game board = mn
- WWW = n (phonetic complement)
- Indicates imen or amon (Amun was god of Luxor)
- half circle = t
- chick = w (weak consonant) or u
- ank sign = ank
- shepherd’s crook = ruler
- column = Heliopolis (logogram)
- plant = Upper Egypt (logogram)

Tutankhamun, Ruler of Thebes
**Glazed tile of Ramesses II ~1250 BCE**

Praenomen (throne name) of Ramasses II in blue faience inlaid with white faience.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Icon</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>☀️</td>
<td>(sun) logogram: the god Re</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>🐽</td>
<td>(jackal head) triconsonantal <em>wsr</em>: ‘be strong’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☥️</td>
<td>(goddess with a feather) logogram: the goddess of justice, Maat (<em>Mȝt</em>), who carries an ‘ankh’ (life)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>🔪</td>
<td>(adze on a block of wood) triconsonantal <em>stp</em>: ‘chosen’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>🌊</td>
<td>(water) ‘alphabetic’ sign <em>n.</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Staatliche Sammlung Ägyptischer Kunst, Munich

Ramses II Abu Simbel
Rosetta stone dated 196 BCE

- Found at Rashid, on Nile, near Alexandria
- Celebrates arrival of Ptolemy V (12 yrs old) at Memphis with a decree in his honor
- Composed in Greek (bottom), engraved in stone, preceded by translations in demotic (middle) and hieroglyphs (top inscription).

British Museum, London
Rosetta stone dated 196 BCE

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In 1814, Briton Thomas Young finished translating the demotic text of the Rosetta stone, and began work on the hieroglyphic script. He concluded that hieroglyphs were a mixture of phonetic and non-phonetic elements. He correctly assigned sound values \((p,t,m)\) to various hieroglyphs but he could not break the code.
Jean Francois Champollion (1790-1832)

- French linguist who studied Latin, Greek, Hebrew, Arabic, Syriac, Persian, Sanskrit, Chinese and Coptic (derived from ancient Egyptian)
- Theorized that some hieroglyphs had phonetic value, not only symbolic ideograms
- Using Greek text of the Rosetta stone & an obelisk he was able to attribute phonetic values to glyphs for PTOLMY & KLIOPADRA

Cartouche spelling out the name of Ramesses II, Pharaoh of Egypt from 1279-1213 BCE
Obelisk from Philae
discovered by English
nobleman, William John
Bankes in 1815. He took it to
his own estate in Kingston
Lacy, Dorset in 1821. Its base
was inscribed with the names
of PTOLEMY VII and his
sister CLEOPATRA in Greek.
The obelisk itself was
decorated with names of
kings and gods. It is
generally assumed that the
Rosetta Stone alone was the
key to the decipherment of
hieroglyphs but the Philae
Obelisk also played a role.
In Egypt, as in Mesopotamia, knowing how to read and write was both a mark of privilege and power.

Considering the number of signs (750, with ~300 in general use) that had to be memorized and the great complexity of the hieroglyphic system, it was a hard task.
1854 Charles Foster proposed link between Egyptian and Semitic writing.

1859 de Rougé speculated relationship between Alphabetic letters & Egyptian hieroglyphs.

1883 Isaac Taylor inferred visual correspondences between Egyptian hieratic and Semitic writing.
Emojis meet Hieroglyphs “Emoglyphs”

If King Tut could text
Map of Minoan Crete
Cretan pictographic writing

Phaistos
Crete
Dated
~1700 BCE
punched on wet clay
p.150
Robin-son
Phaistos world’s oldest hard disc double sided (1700 BCE)
‘Out in the middle of the wine-dark sea there is a land called Crete, a rich and lovely land, washed by the sea on every side; and in it are many peoples and ninety cities. There one language mingles with another…….

Among the cities is Knossos, a great city; and there Minos was nine years king, the boon companion of mighty Zeus.’

Homer
Linear B found in Crete & mainland Greece

Right: Sir Arthur Evans, archeologist
Left: Michael Ventris, architect and philologist
Clay tablets Knossos, Crete 1400-1240 BCE

Proto-Greek Mycenaean: Minute bureaucratic records of petty commercial transactions, prosaic details of goods recorded in Linear B script
Frescos from Palace at Knossos

Throne room, leaping bull, dolphins, Minoan ladies
Bilingual Cypriot and Greek inscriptions have enabled deciphering of Cypriot signs, some of which are similar to Linear B. The top two lines are in classical Greek script, the bottom line in Cypriot script.
Six horse head tablet from Knossos

Greek *polos* is a young horse or foal, shown in tablet as horse’s head without a mane. Evans refused to accept that Linear B was in Greek not Minoan language.
Michael Ventris used a grid of vowels (horizontal) and consonants (vertical) guessing at the sound values of both. He suspected that some tablets contained place names of Cretan towns.
Pylos tablet found on mainland Greece in 1953 by Carl Blegen

Prof. Blegen, a renowned American archeologist had also excavated Troy in 1930s and the palace of Nestor in Pylos in 1939 resumed in 1952-66
Linear B
1500-1200 BCE

- Syllabic signs (>90), plus logograms, quite ambiguous
- Short vertical lines as word separators
- Not deciphered until mid 1953
- Lexicon of Archaic Greek, oldest surviving record of the Greek dialect known as Mycenaean
- Many Greek sounds missing in Linear B signs
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>sign sequence</th>
<th>transliteration</th>
<th>Mycenaean Greek</th>
<th>Classic Greek</th>
<th>word meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ku-mi-no</td>
<td>*kuminon</td>
<td>kuminon</td>
<td>cumin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ku-na-ja</td>
<td>*gunaia</td>
<td>gune</td>
<td>woman <em>(gynecology)</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ku-ru-so</td>
<td>*khrusos</td>
<td>khrusos</td>
<td>gold <em>(chrysanthemum)</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>pa-te</td>
<td>*pater</td>
<td>pater</td>
<td>father</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>pa-ma-ko</td>
<td>*pharmakon</td>
<td>pharmakon</td>
<td>medicine <em>(pharmacy)</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>to-so</td>
<td>*toso</td>
<td>tosos</td>
<td>so many</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>to-ra-ke</td>
<td>*thorakes</td>
<td>thorax</td>
<td>thorax</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>qo-u-</td>
<td>*gwou-</td>
<td>bou-</td>
<td>cow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>i-qo</td>
<td>*hikkwou</td>
<td>hippos</td>
<td>horse</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Greek tablet may shed light on bureaucratic practices

Tablet, 2 inches by 3 inches, was uncovered in 2010 CE in an olive grove in southwest Greece, near village of Iklaina. Judging by other nearby pottery the tablet dates to sometime from 1490 to 1390 B.C.E. This script appears to be Linear B, the tablet has one readable word, a verb meaning to prepare to manufacture.
Volcanic eruption destroys ancient civilization
Bronze age wall painting Thera
Scientists who link Thera to the Minoan decline say the evidence is still emerging and in some cases sketchy. Even so, they say it is already compelling enough to have convinced many archaeologists, geologists and historians that the repercussions probably amounted to a death blow for Minoan Crete.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Script</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Person</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hieroglyphs</td>
<td>1823</td>
<td>Young Champollion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cuneiform</td>
<td>1838</td>
<td>Grotefend Rawlinson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linear B</td>
<td>1953</td>
<td>Ventris</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phaistos signs</td>
<td>Undeciphered</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maya Glyphs</td>
<td>1952</td>
<td>Knorosov et al.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# Major Undeciphered scripts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of script</th>
<th>Where found</th>
<th>Earliest known</th>
<th>Script known?</th>
<th>Language known?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Proto-Elamite</td>
<td>Iran/Iraq</td>
<td>c. 3000 BC</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indus</td>
<td>Pakistan/N.W. India</td>
<td>c. 2500 BC</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'Pseudo-hieroglyphic'</td>
<td>Byblos (Lebanon)</td>
<td>2nd mill. BC</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linear A</td>
<td>Crete</td>
<td>18th cent. BC</td>
<td>Partially</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phaistos Disc</td>
<td>Phaistos (Crete)</td>
<td>18th cent. BC</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Etruscan</td>
<td>N. Italy</td>
<td>8th cent. BC</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Partially</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meroïtic</td>
<td>Meroë (Sudan)</td>
<td>c. 200 BC</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Partially</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>La Mojarra</td>
<td>Mesoamerica</td>
<td>c. AD 150</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rongorongo</td>
<td>Easter Island</td>
<td>pre-19th cent. AD</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* indicates that there is no scholarly consensus.