

Wadi el-Hol inscriptions

The **Wadi el-Hol inscriptions** are two rock inscriptions which appear to show some of the oldest examples of phonetic alphabetic writing discovered to date.^{[1][2]}

Wadi el-Hol is a valley on the Farshut Road crossing the Qena Bend between Thebes and Hiw, on the west bank of the river Nile in Egypt.^[3]

History

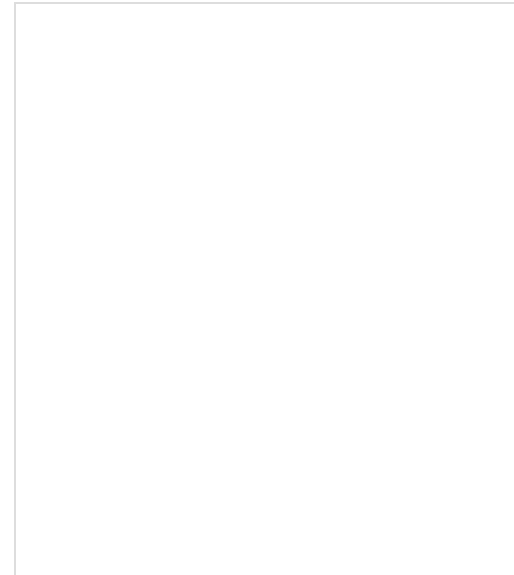
In 1993, American Egyptologists Deborah Darnell and her then husband John Darnell found letters in two single-line rock inscriptions carved into limestone cliffs in the Wadi el-Hol valley. They returned to the site for several seasons through the 1990s to further study the inscriptions. In 1999, they finally published their research, concluding that they had found the earliest surviving alphabet, dating back to around 1800 to 1900 BCE.^{[4][5]} In particular, the inscriptions appear to resemble the Proto-Sinaitic script from Serabit el-Khadem.

See also

- Theban Desert Road Survey
- Proto-Sinaitic script
- Serabit el-Khadim
- Writing system

References

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- Puech, Émile (2024). "Inscriptions alphabétiques du Ouâdî el-Ḥôl" (<https://doi.org/10.2143/RBI.131.1.3292592>). *Revue Biblique*. **131** (1): 5–23. doi:10.2143/RBI.131.1.3292592 (<https://doi.org/10.2143%2FRBI.131.1.3292592>). ISSN 2466-8583 (<https://search.worldcat.org/issn/2466-8583>).
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- "Oldest alphabet found in Egypt" (https://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/521235.stm). *BBC*. 15 November 1999.
- WILFORD, John Noble (13 November 1999). "Discovery of Egyptian Inscriptions Indicates an Earlier Date for Origin of the Alphabet" (<https://archive.nytimes.com/www.nytimes.com/library/national/science/111499sci-alphabet-origin.html>). *The New York Times*.



Wadi el-Hol inscriptions II drawing

Further reading

- Darnell, John Coleman; Dobbs-Allsopp, F. W.; Lundberg, Marilyn J.; McCarter, P. Kyle; Zuckerman, Bruce (2005). "Two Early Alphabetic Inscriptions from the Wadi el-Hôl". *The Annual of the American Schools of Oriental Research*. **59**: 63, 65, 67–71, 73–113, 115–124. JSTOR 3768583 (<https://www.jstor.org/stable/3768583>).

External links

- *WADI EL-HOL* by John Darnell – UCLA Encyclopedia of Egyptology (<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/1sd2j49d/>)
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