Glossary

BIRADICAL: A root based on two letters.

DIACRITICS: Diacritical mark, mark on a letter that shows its pronunciation (or stress, etc.); distinguishing mark. A sign such as an accent written above or below a letter to indicate a difference in pronunciation from the same letter when unmarked.

ETYMON: A linguistic form from which a later form is derived

MIMATION: Use of the bilabial nasal m as a suffix to indicate plural in a Semitic language

NUNATION: Use of the dental nasal n as a suffix to indicate plural in a Semitic language

PRE-SEMITIC: A form of Semitic preceding Proto-Semitic

RADICAL: One of the consonants comprising a Semitic root

REFLEX: A linguistic form which is derived from a precursor form

SEMEME: A minimal unit of meaning

SEMITIST: An expert in or student of Semitic languages, literature, etc.

SINAITIC INSCRIPTIONS: Also called Proto-Sinaitic Inscriptions, archeological remains that are among the earliest examples of alphabetic writing; they were inscribed on stones in the Sinai Peninsula.

THIRADICAL: A root based on three letters.

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1 Where they were first discovered in 1904–05 by the British archaeologist Sir William Flinders Petrie. Apparently influenced both by Egyptian hieroglyphic writing and by the Canaanitic writing system (1900–1800 BC; probably ancestral to the North Semitic alphabet), the Sinaitic inscriptions date from approximately the beginning of the 16th century BC. As yet not satisfactorily deciphered, the small numbers of different Sinaitic symbols appear to indicate that the writing system was alphabetic rather than ideographic. In 1916 British Egyptologist Sir Alan Gardiner tentatively deciphered one group of symbols as the name of a Semitic female deity, Baʿalat; this conclusion was based on similarities in letter’s form between the Sinaitic symbols and Semitic counterparts and has been accepted by scholars as probably correct. Gardiner’s research indicates a relationship between the Sinaitic writing system and the North Semitic alphabet; a relationship with the South Semitic alphabets of the Arabian Peninsula is also sometimes postulated. see "Sinaitic inscriptions." Encyclopædia Britannica. Ultimate Reference Suite. Chicago: Encyclopædia Britannica, 2009.