

this papyrus scribes wrote with ink, and very soon a shortened form of the hieroglyphic writing, called hieratic, became common, in which a group of two or three hieroglyphics would often be represented by a greatly abbreviated line or figure. Great numbers of hieroglyphic inscriptions have been preserved on the Egyptian monuments, chiseled in stone, and often highly colored, but most of the hieratic writing has disappeared, as the papyrus has disintegrated. However, a number of papyrus documents, some of them quite long, have been preserved as a result of being buried in the dry tombs of Upper Egypt. Hieratic writing often differs strikingly in different hands and as written in different times. The reading of hieratic is largely done by a comparatively few experts who translate it into the hieroglyphic signs that the hieratic represents. Many of the hieratic manuscripts have been published in the form of transliteration into hieroglyphics and are thus available for study even by students of ancient Egyptian who have not devoted a great amount of time to the specific study of hieratic.

In the last few centuries before the time of Christ a still more simplified method of writing developed which is known as the demotic or popular writing. This was commonly used not for religious or state documents, but for accounts and business matters. It is the type of writing in the second group of signs on the Rosetta Stone.

Thus, the Egyptian writing greatly changed its form during the centuries. Yet the hieroglyphics themselves remained substantially the same to the very end of ancient Egyptian history. Eventually they had come to be used mostly as a decorative type of writing, principally on monuments. The Egyptians thought of the hieroglyphics almost as living pictures rather than merely as written symbols. Thus the picture of a serpent, which represents the sound f, is always drawn