

## Writing names in Ancient Egypt

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Ancient Egypt illustrates the salient status of the name in the ideology. Among many manifestations of this status, stands out its importance in the birth of writing : the ideological apparatus implemented in the monumental display of the chiefdoms who ruled in the Nile Valley during the protodynastic Period gave a major impetus - may be the major impetus - to the creation of the hieroglyphic system. Indeed, a significant change shew up during this period. In its older stages, the power was expressed through a mere emblem representing a palace facade - a clear metonymy - called the *serekh* - which means significantly « make know ». In its more recent stages, a trend appeared towards actualizing the current ruler by a notation referring to him within the frame of this emblem. This notation developped from what could be a purely symbolic level, since there was only one design, the status of which remains ambiguous, towards an obviously graphic level, since it encompasses a combination involving **ideographic and phonetic signs**. We are facing now a true writing system, embryonic as it may be. Other similar attempts to write names in the same period often implemented a frame, for instance an oval stone enclosure enclosing the graphy of a toponym, or the frame of a tag used as a surface for writing out the name of some sacred stoff.

The pharaonic culture, during the pharaonic Period as well as during the greco-roman Period maintained the salient status of the names, and developped writing devices specifically devoted to it, the most famous being the « cartouche », a magic circle enclosing two from the pharaoh's five names. The sophisticated ideological apparatus pertaining to the names even involves the devices of erasing the names of people, kings, gods, etc. received as politically or religiously uncorrect !

