



KING SCORPION: A PHONETIC ZOO

THE ORIGINS OF EGYPTIAN HIEROGLYPHIC WRITING



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In May 2017, the Elkab Desert Survey Project (of Yale University and the Royal Museums of Art and History, Brussels) discovered the earliest monumental hieroglyphic inscription at the site of El Khawy, just north of the ancient city of Elkab. High on a cliff face along an ancient road, this ancient “billboard” is an undeniable expression of power by an early Upper Egyptian ruler, quite possibly King Scorpion, whose tomb at Abydos (ca. 3250 BCE) contained the other earliest datable proto-hieroglyphic texts.

In combination with Predynastic rock art of the fourth millennium BCE in the Eastern and Western deserts of Egypt and Nubia (including several important tableaux also discovered by the Elkab Desert Survey Project), the El Khawy site offers an unparalleled glimpse into the “phonetic zoo” of hieroglyphic writing—the process by which the symbolic world of Predynastic animal imagery became the nascent script of pharaonic Egypt.

Thursday October 18, 2018 7:30 PM
Doris Duke Theatre, Honolulu Museum of Art
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