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Of marks and meaning : a palaeographic, semiotic-cognitive, and comparative analysis of the identity marks from Deir el-Medina.

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PART I

PALAEOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS

THE FORMS AND ORIGIN OF THE MARKS

AGAINST THE BACKGROUND sketched in the Introduction we can now begin analyzing the marking system from Deir el-Medina: where does it stand among the variety of systems of visual communication, how does it relate to systems of linguistic writing in terms of status and development, and does the Venn-diagram of visual communication as proposed by Elkins indeed serve as a useful tool for the accommodation and comparison of the formal structure of, theoretically, all sorts of visual communication systems, including the marks from Deir el-Medina? This Part focuses first of all on the forms of the marks, their classification and their possible origin to familiarize the reader with the marking system. In chapter 1 we present the classification as well as a description of forms and style, a discussion of formal and stylistic developments, and a discussion of the problems inherent in the act of classifying the marks. We specifically address the questions of what are the actual marks (signs from script, representations of concrete objects or beings, or abstract geometric configurations?), and to what extent was the system inspired by hieroglyphic or hieratic script. In chapter 2 we provide a discussion of other ancient Egyptian marking systems in order to find out to what extent they could have served as sources of inspiration for the marks from Deir el-Medina. Potmarks, builders' marks and quarry or masons' marks will receive ample treatment. The chapter specifically addresses the question of whether the forms of the marks from Deir el-Medina were newly created or selected from older sources. Chapter 3, then, concerns the palaeographic tables. It also provides information on the composition of the tables and the creation of the facsimiles and font-types used in the tables as well as throughout the dissertation. The tables themselves are provided separately in digital form, not only because they are too elaborate to be included in the text, but also in order to be consulted more easily while reading the text. Table I3-1 contains a list of all marks with metadata, and Table I3-2 tabulates all the specimens of the marks. It is strongly advised to consult the tables especially while reading chapter 1; references are given when consultation of the tables is necessary for correct comprehension of the text.

