

The Breasted Lexicon

Upon first look, this set of three standard sized, spiral bound notebooks seems utterly mundane. The notebooks are filled with hand drawn Egyptian hieroglyphics and their English translations; at two words per page, there are twelve hundred of the most common ancient Egyptian words (arranged alphabetically by English translation), featuring the etymology of the word over time. The text is clearly from one hand; neat, precise, using standard ballpoint ink (the pen was clearly replaced several times during the transcription), and making few mistakes. No signature or name is associated with the handwriting, and there is surprisingly little in the way of marginalia, or even wear.

There are peculiarities, of course. First off, the company that supposedly made these notebooks has no record of ever making this particular style of notebook. The paper is also slightly odd; while it superficially resembles soft pulp notebook paper, it is remarkably resistant to browning, and other forms of aging. Which is important, because there's a document chain that indicates that the Breasted Lexicon is at least one hundred and thirty years old.

The Breasted Lexicon is the exact opposite of a hidden tome, in fact: it's been out in the open, mostly under the assumption that nobody would believe in it anyway. The Lexicon takes its name from Professor James Henry Breasted of the University of Chicago's Oriental Institute, who routinely referred to the Lexicon while translating Egyptian. His intellectual heirs likewise made decreasing use of the Lexicon while doing their own research, although it appears that all of the terms and words in it have been independently verified for decades.

Today, the Lexicon is a private curiosity of the Institute. As noted before, there's plenty of internal evidence that this temporal anachronism has existed for over a century; but how do you prove it? Sure, the books look weird, but it's easy enough to run off a special print run. Carbon dating wouldn't help: that method can't really pin down the age of a book this new. And there's nothing unique about the contents of the Lexicon. At this point, it is an utterly prosaic evocation of standard scholarship. The Orient Institute officially does not even recognize that the Breasted Lexicon exists, and privately treats it as an entertaining and beloved practical joke.

Well, they **did** until two months ago. The Institute has a little private ritual where they show off the Lexicon for new

post-doctorate students, coupled with a small party. When the latest one finally saw it, she almost fainted. She recognized the handwriting, you see.

It was her own.

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