

Das Graduiertenkolleg 1876  
„Frühe Konzepte von Mensch und Natur:  
Universalität, Spezifität, Tradierung“  
lädt ein zum Vortrag

## **The Invention of the Alphabet from Egyptian Hieroglyphs**

### **The Canaanite Miners that Invented the Alphabet in the Beginning of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Millennium**

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Almost four thousand years ago, a group of illiterate Canaanite miners in Sinai, working in turquoise mines in the service of the Egyptian pharaoh, invented the alphabet that we still use to this day.

It is a tale of the triumph of spirit and freedom of mind. It tells of people who lived far away from the centers of power and education. Their accomplishment owed solely to their own powers of creativity and ingenuity.

These Canaanites were born into a world in which official knowledge and power were manifested in sophisticated writing systems comprised of hundreds of signs that required complex reading rules. Only trained scribes and those educated by the elite could master the pictorial Egyptian hieroglyphs or the Mesopotamian wedge-shaped cuneiform, the scripts of the time.

By contrast, the alphabetic writing system these Canaanites invented used fewer than thirty signs and required only a few relatively simple reading rules. Those rules associated signs directly with sounds. These miners ushered in what was probably one of the most profound media revolutions in history.

Egyptian hieroglyphs, which the miners-inventors saw on rock stelae and in the Egyptian temple in their vicinity in Sinai, were their inspiration and their instrument of invention.

**Montag, den 9. Februar 2015, 18:15 Uhr  
Hegelstr. 59, Raum 00-309**

Hierzu sind alle Interessenten herzlich willkommen.

T. Pommerening

J. Althoff