Princess Ru and Papyrus: Stereotypes on ancient Egypt in graphic novels

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Summary/Abstract: The decipherment of the hieroglyphic script in 1822 marked a fundamental change in the views on ancient Egypt and due to the scientific research the knowledge on the subject substantially increased ever since. Despite the wide accessibility of the results of Egyptological studies, the image of Egypt in the popular culture often contains older conceptions, and some of them, like the myth of ancient and immense wisdom, are turned into stereotypes used in certain popular media. The paper deals with their presence in graphic novels. The origins of the stereotypes are reviewed and the reasons for their persistence analysed. I argue that the stereotypes on Egypt in graphic novels became early on a codified part of the communication within the “comic book culture” (M. Pustz), and therefore indispensable in this medium. As
representatives of different genres in the graphic novels, the series on adventures Papyrus by Lucien De Gieter, and the comic books Princess Ru by Đorđe Lobačev and Hatshepsut by Nikola Kokan Mitrović were chosen for the analysis.

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Ancient Egyptians used reed brushes and pens as writing implements. Some of the substances used for writing and painting included charcoal, iron oxide and malachite. Preservation. Hemera Technologies/AbleStock.com/Getty Images. Papyrus scrolls were often stored in wooden chests, sacred statues and jars and have been unearthed from tombs. One famous example is a version of the Book of the Dead, a 52-foot long funerary scroll containing spells and incantations found in a coffin belonging to the wealthy construction foreman Kha and his wife Merit, who were entombed around 1386-1349 B.C. The ancien...
beds, for building chairs as well as for tables, mats, baskets, sandals, utensils, rope and boats. Furthermore, the papyrus root was a source of food, medicine, and perfume. Papyrus was one of Egypt's chief exports. But it did not survive for a long time because only the dry climate of Egypt was conducive to its preservation. Papyrus with writing on it is known as papyri. The climate of Egypt preserved papyri in the ruins of ancient towns and cemeteries. Papyrus is a plant (cyperus papyrus) which once grew in abundance, primarily in the wilds of the Egyptian Delta but also elsewhere in the Nile River Valley, but is now quite rare. Papyrus buds opened from a horizontal root growing in shallow fresh water and the deeply saturated Delta mud. Stalks reached up to 16 feet tall (5 m) ending in small brown flowers which often bore fruit. Papyrus still exists in Egypt today but in greatly reduced number. The papyrus of Egypt is most closely associated with writing - in fact, the English word 'paper' comes from the word 'papyrus' - but the Egyptians found many uses for the plant other than a writing surface for documents and texts.