

Markedness effects in the semiotactics of the hieratic marker of the Stone Tablets in the Christian sacrosphere

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The value of emic study is, first, that it leads to an understanding of the way in which a language or culture is constructed, not as a series of miscellaneous parts, but as working whole. Second, it helps one to appreciate not only the culture or language as an ordered whole, but helps one to understand the individual actors in such a life drama – their attitudes motives, interests, responses, conflicts, and personality development (Kenneth Lee Pike 1967/1954: 40)

Abstract

The present article inscribes itself in the realm of the investigation of visual hieratic textuality. In the article, I use semiotactics as the methodology developed on the basis of contemporary phonology (in particular, (mor)phonotactics, e. g. Dressler and Dziubalska-Kolaczyk 2006 inter alia) to examine salient asymmetries as markedness phenomena operating on a hieratic marker active both in the Judaic denomination and in Christianity – the Stone Tablets. In particular, I focus on the semiotactic reflection of the markedness effects related to the presence of the analysed marker in Catholic churches. I establish several implicational cooccurrence restrictions and arrive at establishing several primes in the nano-structure of a hieratic sign. The basis for the analysis is the digital documentation of the representation of the Stone Tablets in Christian churches which I collected in various European countries in the years 2010–2022.

Keywords: the Stone Tablets, markedness, semiotactics, Christianity, sacrum

Streszczenie

Niniejsza praca wpisuje się w obszar badań nad wizualną tekstowością hieratyczną. W projekcie wykorzystuję semiotaktykę jako metodologię wypracowaną na gruncie współczesnej fonologii (w szczególności (mor)fonotaktyki, np. Dressler, Dziubalska-Kolaczyk 2006) do badania istotnych asymetrii jako zjawisk nacechowania działających na hieratycznym znaczniku aktywnym zarówno w wyznaniu judaistycznym, jak i w chrześcijaństwie: Tablice Mojżeszowe. W szczególności skupiam się na semiotaktycznym odzwierciedleniu efektów nacechowania

związanych z obecnością analizowanego znacznika w kościołach katolickich. Ustalę implikacyjne ograniczenia współwystępowania i dochodzę do ustalenia kilku pierwszych w nanostrukturze znaku hieratycznego. Podstawą analizy jest dokumentacja cyfrowa przedstawień Tablic Mojżeszowych w kościołach chrześcijańskich, którą zgromadziłem w różnych krajach Europy w latach 2010–2022.

Słowa kluczowe: Tablice Mojżeszowe, nacechowanie, semiotaktyka, chrześcijaństwo, sacrum

1. Preliminary remarks

There is a time-worn moot issue of the nature of the epistemological directionality regarding the relationship between semiotics and linguistics.¹ It can be roughly subsumed under the following dyad: 1. Semiotics encompasses linguistics 2. Linguistics encompasses semiotics. With that, two general standpoints can be singled out: work by scholars who concomitantly developed semiotic work with their linguistic pursuits (e.g. Roman Jakobson, Yishai Tobin, Boris Uspensky, Michail Lotman, Jan Mukařovský, Algirdas Greimas) and work by scholars who in practice used linguistic methodology to provide insights into non-linguistic areas of human experience (Claude Lévi-Strauss, Yishai Tobin) or used semiotics as a meta-foundation for linguistic paradigms (e.g. Dressler 1999).²

To name but a few central highlights of the debate, Roman Jakobson in his later works claimed that (Peircean) semiotics occupies a pivotal position in the general science of communication, of which it underlies all the other branches, encompassing linguistics (Jakobson 1973: 37). Wolfgang U. Dressler made Peircean semiotics the epistemological grounding for Natural linguistics. Elżbieta Chrzanowska Kluczevska, in compliance with the tradition of Russian Scholars (Victor Shlovski, Yuri Lotman or Boris Uspenski *inter alia*) assumes that artistic text should be conceived of semiotically ([Pol.] *semiotyczna koncepcja tekstu*

¹ This paper is an upgraded and extended version of threads presented at the conferences as: “Semiotactics of contact in the case study of Moses Tablets in the sacrosphere of Judaism” (Paper presented at the International Conference *Languages in Contact*, 28-29 May 2016, Wrocław, Poland); “Efekty nacechowania w semiotaktyce hieratycznego znacznika Tablic Mojżeszowych w chrześcijańskiej sakrosferze” (Paper presented at the LXXVII Meeting of Polish Linguistic Association (*Zjazd Polskiego Towarzystwa Językoznawczego*), 13–15 September 2021 Gorzów Wielkopolski (Poland). It forms part of a larger project on the semiotactic work on hieratic signs (e.g., Haładewicz-Grzelak 2018, 2022a *inter alia*). All the translations, unless otherwise indicated, are my own, Haładewicz-Grzelak. My translations are in single quotation marks. All the photos, unless otherwise indicated, are my authorship. Due to the space limitations, only representative illustrative material is included in the body of the text. A larger selection of the database tokens is available from the journal’s website in the form of a short video, made by the author, with the musical background by a Belorussian vocal trio *Vies Bonum*.

² A more in-depth elaboration of the topic of the interrelation between linguistics and semiotic paradigms can be found in e.g., Sebeok (1994), Chrzanowska-Kluczevska (2012, 2016, 2017 *inter alia*), Wąsik (2017), Tobin (1990) and Tobin’s work with William Diver’s paradigm of Phonology as Human Behavior (1997).

artystycznego) (Chrzanowska-Kluczevska 2016: 54) and in the application of tropology to the visual arts.

The need for epistemological synergy involving linguistic science was advocated already by Kenneth Pike, who stipulated that language behavior forms part of a wider pattern of human activities and hence they can be investigated concomitantly. Amongst landmark ‘synergic’ concepts that are currently widely used in all sciences on human communication, the issue of asymmetries known as *markedness phenomena* is of paramount importance. The concept of *markedness*, originally from the Russian *priznak*, and a full German version *Merkmalthaltigkeit* – the property of including a differentiating marker – was introduced by Nikolai Trubetzkoy and initially referred only to phonology. On a very general level, these asymmetry effects relate to the order of correlation, where “one series of units is characterized by the presence of a phonological quality, and the other series by the absence of this same quality (we call the first ‘marked series’, the second ‘unmarked’” (Trubetzkoy 1969/1971 [1958/1962]): 236).

Jakobson subsequently developed the issue of markedness into a widely applied, fundamental principle of the operation of linguistic signs, where the mathematical theory of sets and groups played a crucial role (Andrews 1990: 13). The theory of markedness assumes that the marked element of the pair indicates the presence of the X feature, but the unlabelled element does not necessarily indicate the presence or absence of this feature. This unmarked situation is therefore divided into two possibilities: i) a general meaning of non-markedness (*Gesamtbedeutung*), i. e. inability to say anything related to the presence or absence of the X feature, and ii) more detailed (*Grundbedeutung*), when we notice the obligatory absence of the X feature [non-X] (Andrews 1987: 177 ff).

The particular subject matter for this paper is the semiotic projection of markedness effects with reference to a hieratic marker of the Stone Tablets, the symbol present in the sacrosphere of both Judaism and Christianity. The analysis will proceed, in compliance with the Natural Linguistics thrust, in terms of preferences, rather than categorial rules.³ The analysis will yield the establishment of several semiotactic primes, patterned after the resonance elements of contemporary phonology. The postulated perspective of semiotactic analysis is the line of inquiry modelled after *phonotactics* – a branch of phonology investigating the rules for the co-occurrence of phonemes (e.g. Dziubalska-Kołodziej 2001; Dziubalska-Kołodziej and Zydorowicz 2014).

³ For Dziubalska-Kołodziej (2001), a *preference* implies a human agent, and what follows, frequency of occurring interactions.

A caveat is in order here. The conclusions arrived at are of mainly semiotactic (linguistic projected onto semiotic) value, in compliance with the journal's profile and the topic of the paper: neither the theological, symbolic, cultural, nor devotional aspects of the Stone Tablets will be addressed here apart from the necessary pragmatic underpinnings. I am aware that the investigation of the external exponents of the sacred signage reflects the modus of the experience of the sacred by the authors of the hieratic textuality (see Haładewicz-Grzelak 2021, 2022a *inter alia*), and by no means do I mean to refute the importance of the former, yet, due to the space limitations of an academic paper, I had to abstract here from the symbolic and cultural aspects of the analyzed hieratic marker.⁴

I understand here the term 'sacrosphere' in accordance with the canonical work by Tartu scholars (e.g. Lotman 2002, 2005 [1984]; Lotman and Pjatigorskij 1969; Uspensky 1975, 1994) as that part of the semiosphere which relates to the phenomenon of religious experience of a given community.⁵ I nonetheless abstract here from the experience of the sacred and sacrosphere properties. In practice that means that I assume sacrality, in a meta compliance with the Durkheimian perspective (Durkheim 1990/2010 [1912]), to be a floating prime, that can attach/detach from a particular material exponent on a culture specific basis. In the specifics of my model, the sacred (as a privative prime) is denoted as [S] within the proposed sign tectonics. As the object of the analysis, the symbol of the Stone Tablets will be henceforth referred to as '[ST]' – 'a hieratic marker in the form of the Stone Tablets'.

The term 'hieratic marker' is used here as denoting substantial exponents of experiencing and visualizing the sacred by a given community, documented in their pragmatic context of occurrence (ethnographic data). In other words, a hieratic marker is a hieratic sign plus the context. The importance of the context of the visual texts under study implies immersion in a broader cultural signification. Adopting the concept of a hieratic marker also means distancing myself from terms such as 'visual discourse', 'religious discourse', or 'religious language' (see

⁴ An inspiring research on the iconography of the Moses' Tablets and their function in the Reformed church space is presented in Wubs (2018). On the one hand, the work inscribes into the project of Protestant church decoration, in particular, The Dutch Calvinist handling of the question of images and on the other, it engages with the visual discourse of the Ten Commandments panels, stipulating that "decorating the frame was a suitable way in which to adorn a panel within a Calvinist church. It could underline the visual nature of a panel by creating an illusion of rich materiality to heighten its beauty and prestige" (Wubs 2018: 87). Some pragmatic, inter-cultural and semiotic conclusions on the Moses Panels as a hieratic signage in Judaism and Christianity are reported in e.g., Haładewicz (2021), where it is concluded that the Stone Tablets in the Jewish institutional sacrum sphere are a fixed and primary sign, of centripetal dynamics, hence they are currently avoided in the environment of cultural contact.

⁵ See Haładewicz-Grzelak (2018, 2021, 2022a); Salazar-Garcia and Haładewicz-Grzelak (2022) for a more in-depth elaboration and discussion on theorizing sacrosphere and the sacred/profane dimension. See also Wierzbicka (2001); Krzeszowski (1997).

Wojtak 1998, 2019 for an in-depth elaboration of types of religious messages). Finally, as a novel and seminal term, without quotational antecedents, it gives me freedom to pursue semiotactic research in unexplored realms, such as, for example, elaborating and refining a ‘nano-structure’ of a hieratic sign.

This study stemmed from a wider semiotic project on the semiosphere of Judaism and semiotactics of Judaism symbols, drawing on a digital documentation of religious markers active in Judaism, that is, Judaica, collected by the author in various European countries and Morocco (Haładewicz-Grzelak 2016, 2012, 2022a.) While collecting the tokens of the hieratic markers of the Stone Tablets in the context of Judaism symbolics, I concomitantly started documenting occurrences of the representations of the Stone Tablets in Christian (Catholic)⁶ sacrosphere. The latter type of material was primarily collected in Poland, Czech Republic, and Slovakia, with isolated specimens from other countries (e.g. Germany and Croatia), yet without any contextual or substantive divergences from the primary database. This is the main corpus for the current discussion.⁷ Hence, while I do not claim that during all those years I gathered an exhaustive documentation, I could definitely say it was representative of some preferences, which might, of course be further refined in a follow-up work.⁸

2. Semiotactics as a heuristic framework for the study of signage

The perspective I have been developing for over a decade (see Haładewicz-Grzelak 2009, 2018, 2022a, 2022b) inscribes into the long tradition among linguists, which was active already amongst Neogrammarians, that is, of parallel study of culture (ethnography) and language. For example, the work by Kenneth Pike (1954) bears the dedication “to the memory of Professor Edward Sapir (1883-1939) [...] a pioneer in the stating of the relation of language to other cultural patterns of man”. This thread of a holistic communicative standpoint was memorably

⁶ Henceforth ‘Catholic’ implies solely ‘Roman Catholic’. The data I managed to collect regarding the Protestant (Lutheran) context are scarce, hence they are adduced in this paper only for illustrative purposes. As far as Orthodox Christianity is concerned, none of the Orthodox churches I was able to inspect in Poland, Lithuania, and Ukraine featured the Stone Tablets, hence, I had to omit that denomination from the analysis.

⁷ It is difficult to specify how many churches/synagogues were inspected over the years. I started documenting Judaica as hieratic markers in about 2008 and Moses Tables grew out of that primary database. While in synagogues the marker can be said to be almost obligatory, as far as the environment of Christian church interiors is concerned, the marker is quite infrequent.

⁸ For example, a more refined categorization of tokens can be performed, regarding diachronic changes as well as cultural and geographic aspects (socio-cultural conditioning) – a pragmatic parallel of language contact. However, due to the space limitations and to the canonical format of a research paper, such a study can only be foreseen as a follow-up, separate project, requiring a different analytical focus, different manner of data collection, as well as a larger database.

continued in the oeuvre of East European structuralism – the Prague Circle and the Tartu-Moscow School of semiotics being its major rotors.⁹

Hence, along the eminent example of Kenneth Pike, Nikolay S. Trubetzkoy or Claude Lévi-Strauss, I posit that cultural phenomena can to some extent be modeled using the epistemology that has been developed for linguistic analyses. I specifically embrace a possibility of investigating the postulated components of signs, as has been proposed in contemporary phonological models for phonemic constituents, which in fact places semiotactics closer to phonology than to semiology (in particular the social semiotics version). Since Roman Jakobson *et consortes* published their binary features work, and since Claude Lévi-Strauss applied them to the study of myths, about half a century elapsed, and as any science, throughout that time, phonology has burgeoned with new trailblazing methodological insights. In particular, the flat structure of binary features was superseded by auto-segmental tiers and a sound itself was delayed into the so-called primes (e.g., Kaye et al., 1985, 1990 *inter alia*). The Natural Phonology scholars proposed the study of natural processes affecting specified mental representations. A direct motivation of the model I heuristically propose thus comes from contemporary phonological models. It is precisely some aspects of the primes as proposed and upgraded by subsequent versions of Government Phonology (e.g. Kaye et al. 1990; Bendjaballah 2000) that I heuristically propose to adapt for a semiological enquiry.

The term *semiotactics*, as indicated *supra*, was also patterned after the well-established realm of phonological enquiry, particularly developed in the Natural Phonology framework in the works of Katarzyna Dziubalska-Kołodziejczyk. In brief, *phonotactics* is canonically described as a subbranch of phonology studying the permissible sound sequences in language. It can also be described as a realm of phonological and morphonological investigation tracing the conditions of well-formedness and licit phoneme combinations (known also as rules of cooccurrence restrictions).¹⁰ *Morphotactics* in turn refers to the interaction between phonotactics and *morphotactics* (Dressler and Dziubalska-Kołodziejczyk 2006) and allows a researcher to establish consonant clusters emerging through the intervention of morphology (Zydorowicz and Dziubalska-Kołodziejczyk 2017: 317). In what follows, the proposed analytical perspective of *semiotactics* aims at establishing the rules of the co-occurrences of signs in specific contexts, as

⁹ I report in more detail on that type of synergy in Haładewicz-Grzelak (2018, 2021, 2022a).

¹⁰ See also Dressler and Dziubalska-Kołodziejczyk (2006).

well as of their proposed constituents (primes): semiotic arrangements and combination preferences of signs.¹¹

For the purposes of the present discussion, apart from the aforementioned ‘markedness’, and ‘implicational scales’, of particular importance are the following concepts:

i) *Lenition*: ‘lenited’ in phonology, means ‘weakened’. That is, depending on the criteria of investigating a given sound, the entities under those specific criteria are shown to be affected by a process which changes them. The opposition lenition-fortition is a key aspect of Natural Phonology (see Dziubalska-Kołodziej 2010). Lenitive process (syntagmatic) is said to benefit the speaker, while the fortitive process – the listener (the addresser). For example, in Spanish, intervocalic voiced stops become weakened to voiced fricatives. However, a voiced fricative in Spanish or even affricate can also be a result of a fortitive process affecting a glide. Here, lenition means impoverishing the sign structure (making it less complex). For example, positing that ‘desacralization’ means delinking the feature [S] (cf. Haładewicz-Grzelak 2018) makes it a process of lenition.

2) *Allosemic*: I use that coined lexeme as patterned on ‘allophonic’ in phonology: a contextually conditioned variant or context-free variant of a phoneme, not having any distinctive meaning of its own, e.g. a realization of word final voiced stops in Polish as the voiceless ones. Here the ‘allosemic’ aspect is in fact broader, referring only to context-free occurrence, since I cannot determine any specific context. It seems to be simply left at the discretion of an artist conceptualizing a given pulpit.

3) *unary* (privative) versus *binary* features. The introduction of unary (monovalent, privative) values is usually seen as one of the breakthroughs proposed by contemporary phonology. If we however delve a bit deeper into retrospective of phonological epistemology, we will find that already Saussure saw this difference: Jakobson (1971 [1941]: 211), elaborating on Saussure’s achievements, framed it as an opposition of something to nothing. Charles Bally developed that threads as the concept of the zero sign (Jakobson 1971 [1941]: 211). Currently privative categories are used in some schools of contemporary phonology (e.g., Government Phonology) entailing the opposition *quality: zero*, and not [+quality]: [– quality] (the opposite quality). The standard privative features for Particle or Government phonology are e.g. A, denoting the openness of a sound, or I, denoting frontness. There is no [-A] or [-I].

¹¹ Due to the space limitation, a more detailed exposition cannot be adduced here. See Haładewicz-Grzelak (2018) for the exhaustive methodological underpinnings regarding the theorizing on the application of the phonological apparatus for semiotactic studies.

4) *spreading* and *delinking*: It is one of the canonical achievements of contemporary phonology. In short, an interpretation of a sound structure is no longer done in a linear way (e.g. as a bunch of binary features) but in a spatial modus, entailing several skeletal tiers, each denoting a specific level of sound representation, specific for a given phonological school. The tiers reflect relations within a phoneme, as well as occurring along phoneme clusters. For example, in Feature Geometry, relations are charted as multilevel branches from particular root nodes (Davenport and Hannahs 1998) and in CVCV phonology usually one skeletal tier position is represented under another. The interconnections are called association lines. Accordingly, processes are modeled as specific repositioning of those association lines: spreading, when a feature spreads onto a (neighboring) segmental position (for example, modeling assimilation processes) and delinking (elision), when a given feature ceases to exist.

5) *recursiveness* (repeatability): taking over the function of the new element, after the cultural/linguistic processes have eliminated the original context. It should be recalled that, for example, recursiveness was one of the main features of Noam Chomsky's transformational grammar.

6) *Back formation* in linguistics, as Nagano (2007) points out, can be understood as a type of conversion supplemented by a deletion process. By examining what system underlies BF in English, Nagano observes that in its canonical forms BF is understood as a process

based on the reanalysis of the morphological structure of a base word. For instance, *beggar_N* is originally a monomorphemic word, but is reanalyzed as having the structure [[*begg*]-*ar*], based on which BF takes place and brings about *beg_V*. Similarly, the original N-N compound structure of *baby-sitter_N* is reanalyzed as [[[*baby*][*sit*]]*er*] or as [[*babysit*]*er*], which provides the ground for BF (Nagano 2007: 34)

3. Specification of distributional preferences of [ST] in the (Roman) Catholic sacrosphere

The Stone Tablets is an active *hieratic marker* both in Judaism and in Christianity.¹² In the canon of religious iconography (both in Judaism and Christianity), the Stone Tablets are usually shown

¹² For a review of pragmatics of the Stone Tablets in Judaism, see Haładewicz-Grzelak (2021). 'Old Testament' is a term from the vantage point of the Christianity. A more epistemically neutral term is the 'Hebrew Scriptures', however, since the perspective adopted in this paper and the referential sources are that of the Christian denomination, I opted for the term canonically accepted in that research environment, that is, 'Old Testament'. Moreover, there is an issue of which particular Books –5 or 24 (Tanakh) are being considered as Hebrew Scriptures. 'Old Testament' denotes a specified canon – although slightly different for particular Christian denominations.

in the form of two round-topped rectangles.¹³ There are yet differences in the textuality of that marker between the two denominations. In Judaist context, the text on the Tablets is always in Hebrew. It can feature the text of the Ten Commandments written in full, in abbreviations or in single Hebrew graphemes (standing for numbers, see Fig. 1, Fig. 11 right). In Christian iconography, the text occurs mainly in the ‘catechistic’ form (only containing Roman Numerals of commandments), and it features a different distribution of those numbers from the distribution in the Jewish version, that is, numbers I–III are on the left-hand-side panel and IV–X on the right-hand one. There are some exceptions, but the important thing is that this distribution assumed in Christianity has a solid theological foundation. The general idea is that commandments I-III allude to the obligations that human beings have towards God, while commandments IV-X allude to obligations towards others (that is, towards other human beings). The theological aspect of the difference in subsequent numbering between the denominations will not be discussed here.¹⁴

Regarding the content, a traditional catechetical formula for Christianity is the following:¹⁵ “1. I am the LORD your God: you shall not have strange Gods before me. 2. You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain. 3. Remember to keep holy the LORD'S Day. 4. Honor your father and your mother. 5. You shall not kill. 6. You shall not commit adultery. 7. You shall not steal. 8. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor. 9. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife. 10. You shall not covet your neighbor's goods.”¹⁶ A canonical and exhaustive elaboration of the different numerations between the various denominations, according to the Opoka foundation¹⁷ stipulates that

‘a Christian should be aware that the catechistic formula of the commandments is an abbreviation of the full text from the Bible for easier remembering. The full text of the

¹³ Although, there are some exceptions. The most famous is probably the sculpture “Moses” by Michelangelo, who is depicted resting his right hand on the Stone Tablets, which are rectangular (without the circular finishing).

¹⁴ That is, the fact of eliminating from the catechetical formula the text related to the excerpt “You shall not make for yourself a graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath” (Exodus 20: 2-17). Very briefly, since from the Christian perspective, God became impersonated in Jesus the Nazarene, the prohibition of creating God’s likeness is no longer binding. See also the Acts of the Apostles (Acts 10.12-16) for dispensing with the prohibition of eating certain food. For a Reformed view on images, see e.g. Wubs (2018).

¹⁵ https://www.vatican.va/archive/ccc_css/archive/catechism/command.htm (the site juxtaposes the text of the Catechetical Formulas with Deuteronomy 5: 6-21 and Exodus 20: 2-17. (Last access: 10.09.2022).

¹⁶ See also the New Testament reflection of the Commandments in the parable of the Rich and the Kingdom of God, which Jesus told his disciples before he embarked for the final journey to Jerusalem and which is reported as St. Luke 18, 18-21): “You know the commandments: ‘You shall not commit adultery, you shall not murder, you shall not steal, you shall not give false testimony, honor your father and mother’”. <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke%2018&version=NIV>

¹⁷ http://www.opoka.org.pl/biblioteka/T/TM/zarys_wiary/boze_nakazy_dziesiec_przykazan.html. The Opoka Foundation was established by the Polish Bishops' Conference on June 5, 1998.

commandments is contained in the Bible in two places: The Book of Exodus, chapter 20 (Ex 20: 2-17) and Deuteronomy, chapter 5 (Dt 5: 6-21). The two texts differ slightly; the original is the one in The Book of Exodus. *There is no numbering of the commandments in any of these texts*, [emphasis mine, MHG] nor even the term ‘ten commandments’ – any attempts to number and divide them into specific commandments are much later than the biblical text itself. The division used by Catholics (and also Lutherans) comes from St. Augustine’ (*Opoka foundation*).



Fig.1 Exterior and interior synagogue signage. Left: The hierophanic Magen David and the Stone Tablets on the façade of the Tempel synagogue (one of the four active synagogues in Krakow). Middle: The Tablets in the towering position on the remnants of the synagogue in Drohobych (Ukraine) as of 2014. Right: the Torah (holy ark (aron ha-Kodesh) in the synagogue in Liptovsky Mikulaš (Slovakia).

To better contextualize the main discussion on the presence of [ST] in the Catholic churches, Fig. 1 shows sample tokens from my database regarding the positioning of that hieratic marker in the context of European synagogues or their remnants. In the past (till the end of the 20th century, as I managed to establish), that hieratic marker was obligatorily placed on the façade, even sometimes on the upper(most) part of the building (e.g. Fig. 1 middle). Contemporarily erected synagogues do not feature the representation of the Tablets on the façade. The obligatory hieratic marker in the exterior is Magen David. In the interior, their position has not changed, and the Tablets feature (although not obligatorily) in the specified position, in the aron ha-Kodesh (see discussion in Haładewicz-Grzelak 2021).

As far as the main research context is concerned, that is the sacrosphere of Christianity, I have not managed to document any hieratic marker of Stone Tablets on the exterior of churches, yet such markers can sporadically occur as part of their interior hieratic signage. The documentation of this sporadic occurrence constitutes the database for the analysis. Fig. 2 shows

a selection taken from my database regarding the modes of incorporating the Stone Tablets as a hieratic marker in Catholic churches and cathedrals. The specimens collected point to a specified preferred locum for a catechistic sign of the Stone Tablets to occur in a Catholic church: if it occurs at all (optional distribution), [ST] features preferably in the uppermost part of the pulpit (on the baldachin) that is, the place from where the sermon in the past was preached.¹⁸ With respect to that distribution, it can be safely posited that it is not a preference but a clear regularity. The location of [ST] at the pulpit is thus related to the traditional function of the pulpit as the place from which the priest delivers the homily (“preachment”).¹⁹ The divergent location of [ST] (in the lower part of the pulpit, below the canopy, see Fig. 2, right) was documented only once, in the R.C. church The Krijtberg in Amsterdam, and hence can be assumed to be non-preferred. It will be discussed and interpreted later on in the paper.²⁰

There is also an ‘allosemic’²¹ preference regarding the shape of [ST] in a Christian church: the particular faces of the Tablets can be represented in a position slightly inclined to the sides, or/and slightly spread apart. I also documented a token of the Tablets that went together with another added sign: crossed sabers (documented in a currently inactive and closed for the public church under the invocation of St. Michael in Verněřovice, Broumov region, Czech Republic (Fig. 3 upper middle). Hence [ST] is a sporadic and optional hieratic decoration of the Catholic church, but if it does occur, it appears preferably in the upper or middle part of the pulpit.

As far as Protestant churches are concerned, mainly due to the theologically grounded preference to avoid any representations and decorations (in particular, the figurative ones), those originally built as Protestant, hardly ever feature any interior embellishments (apart from, e. g. sporadic flowery designs). I did manage though to document three instances of [ST] in the interior of Protestant churches, but all of them were placed in a specific type of churches, definitely not the type that can be assumed to be canonical for the Protestant denomination: in

¹⁸ I use the qualification ‘preferably’ here because, if we assume that by antonomasia Tablets can signify the “Word of God”, nothing would prevent this marker from occurring also as an adornment interwoven in a larger visual concatenation in a Catholic context. Thus, although I have not managed to document such a concatenation, the analysis cannot rule out the proviso that such representations can exist. Accordingly, the fact that during my research I have not encountered them can only point to the preference, not the ban.

¹⁹ Regarding the canonical symbolisms of a Catholic pulpit, for example Rev. Lobero (1769: 12) points out that the pulpit had its origin in the Old Testament times, being put in the Temple by King Salomon, which he had erected for the Lord, in the form of a circle, made of metal from the foot of the column. As far the symbolics is concerned, Lobero points out that “The pulpit symbolized sapience and that is why it is called the Cathedra of the Holy Spirit. In the pulpit the light is symbolized because that is the place where the Evangelical light is being declared, explained” (1769: 12; our translation).

²⁰ The database did not include Netherlands. For the analysis of Moses Tablets in the Reformed churches in that area see Wubs (2018).

²¹ See Section 2. Here the ‘allosemic’ aspect is in fact broader, referring only to context-free occurrence, since I cannot determine any specific context. It seems to be a simply left at the discretion of an artist conceptualizing a given pulpit.

Poland, that type of churches is called Churches of Peace (Ger. *Friedenskirche*), although such a construction model is popular also in e.g., Slovakia.²²

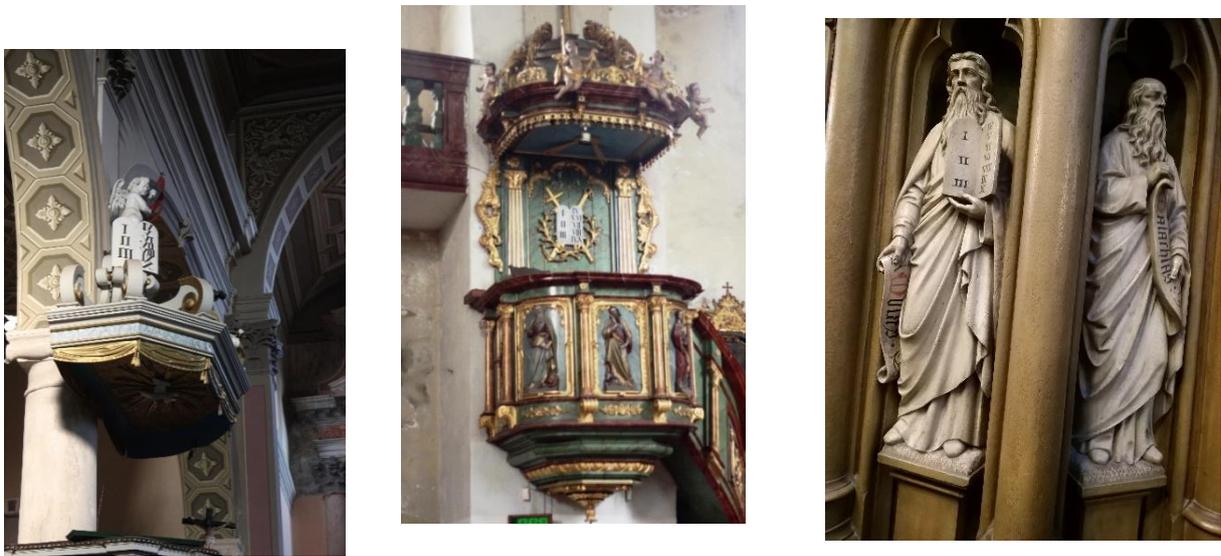


Fig 2. Examples of embedding [ST] into the sacrosphere of a Catholic church. Left: Church under the invocation of the Blessed Virgin Mary's Birth (Labin, Croatia). Middle: the Church of St. Michael in Verněřovice (Broumov region, Czech Republic). Right: an example of the Tablets as an attribute in the lower part of the pulpit (the Krijtberg, Amsterdam, the Netherlands).



Fig. 3. Examples of embedding [ST] in a Protestant church. Left: the Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession under the invocation of the Holy Trinity, Swidnica (Poland). The Tablets are held by a figure of a small angel on the left. Middle: The wooden articular church (Kostel Nejsvětější Trojice) in Kežmarok (Slovakia). The Tablets are on the left-hand side of the altar. Right: Church of Peace (Jawor, Poland). The Tablets are held by a figure of Moses.²³

²² In Poland, three churches are called Churches of Peace, see e. g. info on: <http://kosciolpokojujawor.pl/en/>; see also in Slovakia e. g. <https://www.hronsek.sk/dreveny-artikularny-kostol-unesco.phtml?id3=68987>. They are a specific type of Lutheran churches, built in the second half of the 17th century. According to the exposition on the website of the church in Jawor, the Catholic Emperor Ferdinand III Habsburg granted Silesian Lutherans the right to build three churches in his territories. However, the construction permit was subject to several restrictions, one of these being that only perishable materials (wood, straw, clay, sand) were to be used for construction (e.g., no nails were permitted to be used).

²³ The specific status of the figure of Moses in relation to depict Ten Commandments in Protestant contexts was analyzed in Wubs (2018).

All the tokens of [ST] collected in the Protestant context are shown in Fig. 3. The digital documentation was made in the Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession under the invocation of the Holy Trinity (Świdnica, Poland), the Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession (Jawor, Poland) and the Evangelical Wooden Articular church in Kežmarok (Slovakia).²⁴ None of them features [ST] in the upper part of the pulpit: in the documentation collected and adduced (Fig. 3 left), a token of [ST] is placed in its middle part, held by the figure of an angel (there is also another token of a hieratic verbal text placed at that pulpit, possibly a quote from the Gospel). In the Jawor church (Fig. 3 right), the text of The Commandments is in German, and it is held by the figure of Moses, the figure being placed somewhat near the rear of the church. Finally, in the church in Kežmarok (Fig. 3 middle) [ST] is upheld by the figure of Moses, which is located to the left of the altar (as seen from the congregation) and the faces are in a spread apart version.

Even admitting the scarcity of tokens, it can be inferred at this point that in the variety of Protestant churches which allow interior decoration, [ST] can be collocated without any restrictions on the place of occurrence within the church interior. Here we arrive at a preliminary specification of the semiotactic aspect of [ST], which will be further developed in the analysis section: i) the presence of [ST] as an isolated element (a simplex sign) – the sign of the Law of God or of the Old Testament (Hebrew Scriptures) legacy, depending on the case; ii) the hieratic marker in the form of the figure of Moses holding the [ST]. In the second case, the primary sign of the sacrosphere is the figure of Moses. It can also by *antonomasia* act as an evocation of the Law or of the Hebrew Scriptures, but in a personified way, not in an abstract way. The [ST] functions in that case only as an iconographic “distinctive feature” to identify Moses; for example, an attribute of three golden balls is used to identify Saint Nicholas, or a wheel (of tortures) to identify Saint Barbara. I choose to call this variant ‘attributive’ because [ST] as upheld by an angel is semiotactically parallel.

References to the Old Testament legacy can also take a direct form in Christian churches. Photos in Fig. 4 feature inscriptions in Hebrew. In Fig. 4 (left) the inscription is *JHWH* [tetragrammaton, transl. Wojciech Tworek], in Fig. 4 (middle and right) the inscription is: ‘God’ (in Yiddish: – *Got*, transl. Wojciech Tworek).²⁵ I also documented the inscription as in Fig. 4

²⁴ The wooden church in Hronosek (Slovakia) was also inspected, however, it did not feature [ST] in any context.

²⁵ As pointed out by Ventura Salazar-García (p.c., December 2020), in the text of the commandments, the word to refer to God is not *Adonai* (“the Lord”), but *Yahveh*, which is the “true name of God”. What happens is that, for Jews, that name can be written, but it is forbidden to pronounce it in vain. Therefore, when YHWH is written, the preferred reading is ‘Adonai’, but as a euphemism. In fact, in Masoretic literature, the vowels that were added to the word YHWH were those corresponding to the word *Adonai* (what the Jews actually pronounced). This

(left) in Catholic churches, however, there is also a specific place it can occur both in a Catholic and Protestant church: at the uppermost part of the church, on the vault over the altar, exactly as in Fig. 4 left. In contemporarily built Catholic churches, such inscriptions do not occur at all.



Fig. 4. Examples of Hebrew textuality in Christian churches. Left: Świdnica (Poland). Middle and right: pulpit in the church under the invocation of Saint Laurent ([Pol.] *Św. Wawrzyniec*) in Dobrzejewice, (Poland). Photos: courtesy of Rev. Łukasz Płuciennik.

As mentioned *supra*, in Christian churches [ST] occurs only sporadically as an interior decoration and never as an exterior one. If it does occur in the interior, it is always a cooccurrence with representations of the Evangelical New Testament Scriptures (an open Bible held by angels, saints, or the Apostles). The detailed analysis of the modes of occurrence of that latter textuality in Christian churches falls beyond the scope of this article, it might only be noted that there are several modes in which Evangelical verbal texts can be incorporated in a Catholic church or a cathedral. The most frequent iconographic strategy is when the figure of a saint or an Apostle holds open The Bible, presenting a particular excerpt to the faithful. These are usually full or abbreviated quotations from the New Testament, or Letters of the Apostles. There can also occur visual texts that only symbolically refer to the sacred verbal textuality, e.g. an attributive carving of an open Bible can feature only a pattern allegorically referring to the text of the Gospel (no legible words) or there can be no letters at all. Fig. 5 (lower panel, right) shows yet another strategy: a hieratic combination directly with the cross.

has resulted in the YEHOVA form, which is used by certain Protestant confessions, and which is simply a misreading (technically: an orthoepic error).



Fig 5. Left (upper panel): lectern in the parish church in Konarzewo (Poland); recursiveness: reinstatement of the marker of the ST in the context of the lectern. Middle: Alpha and omega letters as the preferred marker for a lectern. The church of St. Peter and Paul, Hradec nad Moravicí (Czech Republic). Right: a token of a visual hieratic textuality (the church of the Elevation of the Holy Cross, Lúčky (Slovakia).

The majority of tokens were documented in churches which were built around the Baroque period. After the Second Ecumenical Council of the Vatican²⁶, the ambone (pulpit) was permanently replaced by a lectern: a small stand in the vicinity of the altar (see Fig. 5 left and middle).²⁷ The pulpit thus ceased to be an active component of the Catholic sacrosphere, and all parts of the mass that do not belong to the Eucharist liturgy itself (e. g. delivering the Gospel readings, preaching sermons, and giving parish announcements) can be performed from the lectern. Although in their majority lecterns do not feature any visual adornment, if there is a visual addition, most commonly there are alpha and omega signs, but I managed to document also [ST] in the spread apart version in this context (Fig. 5 left).

²⁶ Also known as Vatican II, held from October 1, 1962, to December 8, 1965. Convoled to introduce changes known as (It.) *aggiornamento*, updating to the needs of faithful in the contemporary world.

²⁷ This is of course a rough approximation. Ventura Salazar-García points out that ‘there was also a lectern ([Sp.] *atril*) before the Council. In fact, there were two lecterns. What happens is that there was a functional spatial distribution: the lectern on the priest's left (to the right for the congregation) served for reading the epistles; the one on the priest's right (left for the congregation) was for reading the Gospel, and the pulpit to the right was for the homily (in addition, the psalms were sung in the choir). In Spain, it is still common to refer to each side of a church with the terms *lado de la epístola* ‘the side of the epistle’ and *lado del evangelio* ‘side of the gospel’. The Second Vatican Council has chosen to carry out these three functions in one place: the Gospel lectern, which leaves the pulpit unused. The epistle lectern, in the cases there is one, is sometimes used to read petitions that are enunciated after praying the Creed’ (Ventura Salazar-García, p.c. December 2020).



Fig. 6. Reinstallation of a hieratic marker of the Stone Tablets in the Jewish context from the vantage point of Christianity. Left: a photo of a page from the booklet *Tajemnice różańca* ('Rosary mysteries' [no indication of the publication date nor editor]), illustrating the meditation of the fifth mystery of the Joyful Mysteries – Finding the Child Jesus in the Temple [from the author's collections]. Middle and right: interior of the sanctuary of the Virgin Mary, the Queen of Families in Wambierzyce (Poland).

Fig. 6 gathers instances in which the context of Judaism is evoked from the perspective of Catholic iconography, active beyond the church sacrosphere of the religious service. As can be seen, the 're-incorporated' Tablets, even with the text in Hebrew (Fig. 6 right), feature the distribution of numbers licit for Christianity (it should be noted that in this figure the usual reading order in Semitic languages, that is, from right to left, is followed, not that of Indo-European languages).

Along these lines, photos in Fig. 7 show the manner of incorporating iconography of the Stone Tablets in Spanish books of catechesis for children (6–7 years of age),²⁸ as a representation of the Ten Commandments. In Álvarez's text we can see that on the same page (37) the Tablets of the Law appear twice. The first distributes the commandments symmetrically (five in each table), as they allude to the facts of the Sacred History: God (on the left), represented as an eye inside a triangle, in the middle of a cloud, at the top of the mountain gives the Tablets²⁹ (in the center) to Moses (right) on Mount Sinai (the mountain under the sign of God). In the second part of the page, the Tablets appear again, but this time with an asymmetric distribution: three in the first table and seven in the second. This is because now they do not refer to the story of Moses, but to the Ten Commandments, and are organized according to their

²⁸ Discussion and visual support in this paragraph: courtesy of Ventura Salazar-García.

²⁹ The fact of giving is described as a verbal text below the pictures ("En el monte Sinai Dios le entregó los 10 Mandamientos"). It can also be implied semiotically, as the preferred direction of reading a visual narration from left to right.

Catholic theological value: the first three commandments prescribe respect for the dignity of God, the commandments that go from 4 to 10 prescribe respect for the dignity of the neighbor.

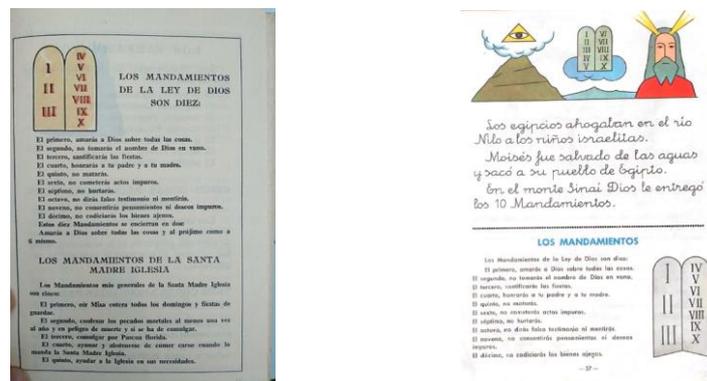


Fig. 7. Left: A page from the Catechism book by Serrano de Haro (1962: 75). Right: A page from the Catechism book by Álvarez (1965: 37). Material introduced courtesy of Ventura Salazar-García.

4. Analysis and discussion: Semiotactic directionality and signage spell-out

The data presented in the previous section allows for the singling out of processes that have linguistic parallels, some of which I will specify below.

4.1. Directionality and cooccurrence restrictions

Regarding the context of placing [ST] in a Catholic church, a certain biuniqueness tendency can be noticed. That is, if the Stone Tablets [ST] occur there (optional distribution), there are cooccurrence restrictions regarding other sacred textualities of the following sort:

- 1) [ST] as a simplex sign preferably occur in the topmost part of the pulpit (baldachin) as the primary locus.
- 2) Lower parts of the pulpit canonically feature carvings of Four Evangelists (or their allegories, e. g. in the form of particular animals)³⁰ plus evangelical textuality, e. g., citations from the New Testament or Letters of the Apostles.

Let us now focus on the token from Amsterdam (Fig. 2 right). We have seen that in that token [ST] in fact occurs in the lower part of the pulpit, which might contradict preference (1). However, it must be observed here that, first of all, in that visual text [ST] does not occur as a

³⁰ The beings associated with the Evangelists are technically known as ‘Tetramorphs’. In reality, their origin is in all probability pre-Christian; they probably originated in Babylon and were later adopted by Christianity.

simplex sign, but the Tablets are upheld by the figure of Moses, which gives them an attributive status. In other words, the figure of Moses functions as a separate hieratic marker and [ST] is an added diacritic (the name ‘diacritic’ is motivated in my other work on the sacrosphere of Judaism, Haładewicz-Grzelak 2016), a more lenited and less salient version compared to the representation when they would have occurred alone (an unisemic, simplex text). Hence, preference (1) in that token is not undermined. We could stipulate, though, a further preference in a wide version, due to the scarcity of the data:

- (3) In the attributive (diacritic) function, there are fewer restrictions (or none in the strong version) as to the occurrence of [ST].
- (4) In the Protestant institutional sacrosphere the [ST] as the sole, simplex text is not preferred, the preference is for the occurrence as an attribute of other hieratic texts (the figure of Moses) or in a lenited version (held by an angel).

Secondly, in Fig. 2, the sculpture of Moses with [ST] is incorporated into a still wider composition: to the right of Moses there is a carving of the Prophet Malachi [as below].³¹ In fact, this semiotic discourse places itself closer to the representations collected in the Protestant token sample, where [ST] occurred only in the attributive version, canonically being held by the figure of Moses. This aspect might be related to the wide issue of (semiotic) contact to be elaborated on further in the analysis. There is no restriction as to where and in what form the New Testament legacy texts can occur within the sacred spatiality of a Catholic church. They can occur in any place, also on the uppermost part of the pulpit, except that when the combination with [ST] is concerned, the illicit position can be heuristically posited as:

- (5) * An Evangelical text in the upper part of the pulpit and in the lower part, solely [ST] (not in the attributive version). (*[ST] on the bottom part of the pulpit and the Gospels in the upper)

A classical Jakobsonian markedness implicational scale for the Christian institutional sacrosphere would thus be as follows: if [ST] is placed in a Christian church, it presupposes an obligatory presence of the New Testament hieratic markers in that sacrosphere. Still, the

³¹ Malachi was one of the Minor Prophets, the author of the last prophetic book in the Hebrew Scriptures. His attribute is the scroll of the scripture. According to the information on the website regarding the pulpit, http://www.amsterdamsegrachtenhuizen.info/gracht/sge/sie5/si26446/?tx_sbtap_pi1%5Btab%5D=2, “around the stone pedestal are eight Old Testament figures: Moses (with broken horns), David, Solomon and the five prophets, all authors of the Bible book, namely Malachi, Isaiah, Daniel, Ezekiel and Jeremiah”.

presence of the New Testament hieratic markers does not say anything about the possibility of placing there references to the Old Testament. Hence, the references to the latter in a Catholic church is a marked visual textuality. Moreover, if the two cooccur ([ST] and the New Testament scriptures quotations), preferably the directionality is from top to bottom, that is, in the upper part of the ambone [ST] is collocated with the New Testament Gospel textuality in the lower part. Such patterning reflects a semiotic organization of temporality in that sacrosphere: the *earlier* is up, the *later* towards the bottom. This corresponds in turn with the preferred directionality specified in my previous work, extracted from the corpus of Catholic wayside shrines. I established there the licit directionality of hierophanic dynamics for Catholic wayside shrines as *emanating*: top down, in particular top emanating downwards to the sides. That directionality is illustrated, for example, in Fig. 8 (right), by the trajectory of the two rays emanating (↙↘) from Jesus' heart, as visible on the photo of the copy of the devotional painting of the Merciful Jesus in Lúčky (Slovakia). Hence, the current analysis inscribes into the previously obtained results on another database: the meta-directionality is top down.

A canonical form of a Catholic pulpit is shown in Fig. 8 (left). In the uppermost part, a representation of the Stone Tablets is placed (which however, as specified in the introduction, cannot be taken to be a canonical attribute of a Catholic pulpit). On the bottom part of the baldachin over the pulpit a carving of a pigeon is usually placed as an allegory of the Holy Spirit, which is to enlighten the preacher while giving the sermon to the congregation. The lower part of the pulpit canonically features the images or the allegories of the Four Evangelists.



Fig. 8. Left: A pulpit in the Jesuit church under the invocation of the Sacred Heart of Jesus in Opole. Right: the painting of the Merciful Jesus in Kostol Povýšenia sv. Kríža (Lúčky, Slovakia).

4.2. Semiotactic interpretation of the Stone Tablets with constituent elements

I will now heuristically sketch a semiotactic interpretation of [ST] in terms of unary subsegmental elements proposed for signage analysis (see Haładewicz-Grzelak 2018, 2022b). The goal is to show a uniform explanation for all the semiotactic preferences exposed heretofore. We need to first heuristically specify a ‘subsegmental’ structure of a hieratic sign (in that I follow standard versions of contemporary phonology, in particular Government (CVCV) Phonology (Scheer 2008, 2010) and its derivatives. This suggestion is shown in Fig. 9.

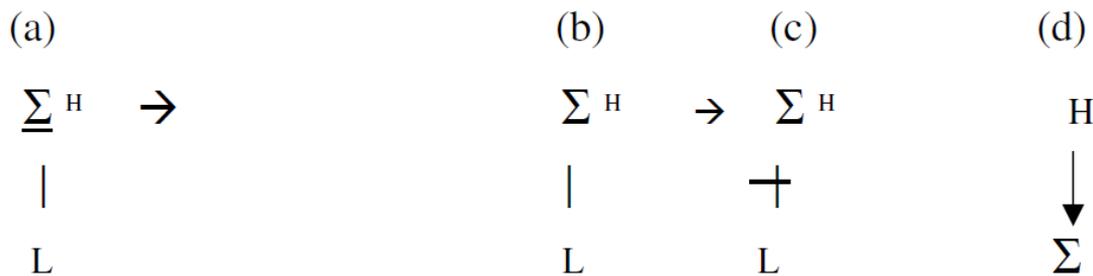


Fig. 9. A ‘subsegmental’ structure of a hieratic sign of [ST]

where: [Σ] stands for a sign root, [H] – a hieratic (sacrality) aspect, and [L] – a prime that has already been singled out in my previous work, *Locativus*. [|] is a skeletal association line and ‘→’ denotes the delinking of that association line (see Davenport, Hannahs 1998). The graphs in Fig. 9 model the following situation: [H] is always an added reference, that is, the ‘sacrality’ aspect attaches to everyday objects (see Mircea Eliade’s work on hierophanies, e.g. (1988 [1976]), 1999 [1957]). In this way, a hieratic marker is already a marked sign (see Fig. 9 (b)), since its structural make-up involves *adding* a feature – it is more complex than a hypothetical corresponding profane object.³² Of course, it also implies an option of another process, desacralization (both as an institutional act and as a societal process), which would simply mean delinking the [H] element. However, for the clarity and simplicity of exposition, I decided to leave [H] directly at the root. The full version of this aspect features as Fig. 9 (d). The directionality and active aspect of [H] is shown by changing an association line into a vector – a binding. Then, a locative prime specifies whether a marker has a fixed position within the sacrosphere or not. This subsegmental prime can also become delinked. In other words, the more

³² Additionally, the sacrosphere is culturally constructed, in Lotmanian terms, from the center towards the periphery. That means that, for example, the content of St. S. Faustina’s reliquary (Fig. 8 right) would be a devotional sacred object from the vantage point of a Catholic sacrosphere but from the Protestant denomination perspective, the chalice contains nothing but human relics, which is interpreted here as the situation where the [H] prime is delinked.

specified the position of a hieratic sign, the more marked it is (the more complex its composition is). According to these criteria, [ST] in Catholic churches is more marked than the New Testament scriptures quotations, since i) it has a more complex structure; ii) its position is restricted. As far as the presence in Protestant churches is concerned (solely on the basis of the collected tokens from Churches of Peace), we can see that the Tablets have no restriction on the occurrence, hence we could posit that their composition is more like Fig. 9 (b), with the delinked (L), hence it is less marked.

However, we need to take into account one dependent parameter here, namely, the form where the [ST] occurs as the primary sign (for example, Fig. 8 left) and the situation when it occurs in the attributive (diacritic) function (see Fig. 2 right). In other words, another aspect that should be analytically modelled is the difference between [ST] inscribed within a larger visual text, in contrast to functioning as a uniseme (the sole, independent visual text). In my visual data, it translates into the difference between texts where the ST is held by a figure of Moses/angel) versus the representation in which they function independently. To capture that difference analytically, I suggest resorting to the phonological aspect of headedness.

To recall briefly, in standard Government Phonology, resonance primes, modeling a particular phoneme, can have a headed status. A headed prime means that it is leading the representation (canonically e.g., a difference between an alignment of resonance primes between particular vowels is taken to rely on the headed status of a respective prime). In the situation modeled here, we can thus propose the interpretation as in Fig. 9 (a): $\underline{\Sigma}^H + L$ denotes a maximum markedness status for a sign, a fixed and headed sign (headedness in GP is canonically denoted by underscoring a given prime). That would be its positioning in a synagogue in the Jewish context. I proposed an implicational chain in Fig. 9 denoted by horizontal arrows (a – c), since we can assume that the decreasing markedness involves gradual loss of additional elements.

4.3. Recursiveness

We have seen that the primary context for the placing of [ST] in Catholic churches used to be the upper part of the pulpit. Trying to analytically specify this context, we could posit that its primary function was preaching the Gospel, that is, the direct relationship with the Holy Scriptures (sacred texts) and its interpretations by a preacher in a sermon. The photo in Fig. 5 (left) shows that the ‘necessity’ to connect [ST] with the context of preaching to the congregation and the Holy Scriptures has remained, although the pulpit has become inactive as a locus of delivering them. That necessity ‘hooks’ to the new context and is semiotically ‘spelled out’ as,

optional of course, marking the lectern with alpha and omega letters (the New Testament legacy) or representation of Moses' Tablets (the Old Testament legacy). That is, the pulpit in the sacrosphere can be described as an intermediary channel through which the sacred reaches the profane (the congregation). The altar, to compare, belongs in its totality to the sacred dimension.

The semiotactics of [ST] in Catholicism reveals thus a process of recursiveness (repeatability). To analytically model that process we need to consider the following aspects:

1. Only the headed version of [ST] is subject to recursiveness.
2. Clearly no delinking process regarding the [L] is operative because the lectern is a direct sacrosphere correspondent to the pulpit. Hence, the process to model is different to that described in Fig. 9 (c).

In visual semiotactic interpretation, the process can thus be schematized as follows:

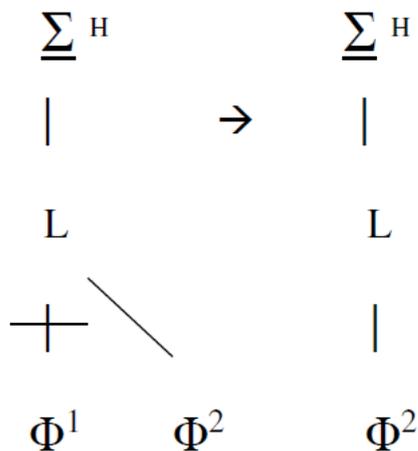


Fig. 10. The recursive status of the headed [ST].

Since the process is active only in the headed version of [ST], we need to keep a cognitive prime of [L] as the recursive necessity to anchor the $\underline{\Sigma}^H$, as we cannot delink it. Thus, we in fact need another skeletal layer to distinguish the material exponent (a spell-out) of the higher level Locativus (I suggest denoting that exponent as *phi* - Φ).

4.4. Back formation

Finally, the collected tokens can suggest a parallel of another process identified by linguistics (morphology in particular), namely, back formation (BF).

Coming back to the data documented and gathered in Fig. 6 showing some of the modes in which [ST] are represented from the point of view of Christianity, we could posit the process parallel to linguistic back formation with reanalysis, because the [ST] has been reinserted, not recalled, in the original context: there has been a sort of semiotic conversion (in Nagano's 2007 understanding of the process). Possibly, for the authors of these visual texts, the original layout of the commandments with the Hebrew letter abbreviating was not directly accessible and simply, basing on the iconography popular among Christian circles, a new quasi-Judaic text was formed (Roman numerals instead of the Hebrew alphabet letters).



Fig. 11. Left: [ST] on the exterior of Rumbach synagogue (Budapest). Middle: [ST] in the interior of the synagogue in Dubrovnik (Croatia). Right: Information board at the entrance to the Kaunas synagogue (Lithuania).

For illustrative purposes, Fig. 11 shows samples of Jewish textuality (transl. Wojciech Tworek). The text on a token of [ST] placed on the Rumbach synagogue in Budapest is the following:

‘I am HaShem’ [there is no full Tetragrammaton here] / You will not have / Don't call / remember / Honor [20, 12] / Do not kill / Don't commit adultery / Do not steal / Do not give false testimony [20, 13] / Covet not [20, 14].

The translation of the text in [ST] from the Wambierzyce (Fig. 6 right) sanctuary is the following:

The right board: JHWH [20, 2] / Do not call [20, 7] / Remember the day [20,8] *Left board:* Honor [20, 12] / Do not kill / Don't commit adultery Do not steal/ Do not give false testimony [20, 13] / Covet not [20, 14] Covet not [20, 14].

This is a direct ‘back translation’ from the Christian version which is rendered in Hebrew. The issue, of course, is multifaceted, for there can be societal variables intervening in effectuating a semiotactic concatenation, such as a canonical situation of language (culture) contact and superstrata effects but these factors cannot be fully covered in this preliminary semiotactic study and are left for a follow-up research. Another example of back formation could be posited regarding the inscription in Fig. 4 (right) (*Got*), where letters from the Hebrew alphabet are used to represent a word of Germanic origin.³³

5. Conclusions

The subject matter of this paper has been the semiotactics of signage connected with the hieratic marker of the Stone Tablets in Catholic Christianity as operative in the institutional sacrosphere (interior of churches). Since there have not been any semiotic studies of that subject matter so far, I had to heuristically explore several analytical paths. Basing on the semiotactic primes postulated in my previous work, I modelled the difference between the sacrosphere of Judaism, where, within institutional sacrosphere, Moses Tablets [ST] are a primary, fixed sign, that is, they are a crucial part of interior signage (although they cannot be said to be obligatory). Then I proceeded to elaborate the co-occurrence restrictions for [ST] in the Catholic context, focusing on canonical Jakobsonian implicational scales.

The analysis resulted in singling out a semiotactic structure of a hieratic sign, identifying the determiners of the markedness and conditions for lenition (weakening). Although the work was of linguistic thrust, that is, my data in the form of documentation of hieratic makers did not allow me to venture into finer pragmatic/theosophic grounding, it was nonetheless possible to draw some heuristic conclusions regarding the cultural status of the Stone Tablets. As far as Christian institutional sacrosphere is concerned, I established a line of five preferences, which are repeated here for convenience:

- 1) [ST] as a simplex sign preferably occur in the topmost part of the pulpit (baldachin) as the primary locus.
- 2) Lower parts of the pulpit canonically feature carvings of Four Evangelists (or their allegories, e.g. in the form of particular animals) plus evangelical textuality, e.g. citations from the New Testament or Letters of the Apostles.

³³ As Ventura Salazar-García (p.c. December 2020) observes, the phenomenon of using a Semitic script for European languages was very common in Spain during the Middle Ages, due to the intense contact that existed between Christians, Muslims, and Jews. It is a phenomenon known as (Sp.) *Aljamía*.

- 3) In the attributive (diacritic) function, there are fewer restrictions (or none in the strong version) as to the occurrence of [ST].
- 4) In the Protestant institutional sacrosphere the [ST] as the sole, simplex text is not preferred; the preference is for the occurrence as an attribute of other hieratic texts (the figure of Moses) or in a lenited version (held by an angel).
- 5) * An Evangelical text in the upper part of the pulpit and in the lower part, solely [ST] (not in the attributive version). (*[ST] on the bottom part of the pulpit and the Gospels in the upper).

The preferences point to the fact that in the Christian institutional sacrosphere [ST] function as a primary sign and can also function as a secondary sign in the attributive function. As the main sign they only occur in the Catholic sacrosphere and the preferred location is the upper or middle parts of the pulpit. It can be interpreted as being inextricably connected with the preaching context, that is, as the Word of God being bestowed on us humans from above. But it can also reflect cognitive layering: in spatiotemporal terms, *earlier* is up, since during the Eucharist first an excerpt from the Old Testament is read, and Psalms sung, then, optionally, an excerpt from Letters of Apostles/Acts of Apostles is read and finally, an excerpt from the Gospel. This confirmed the previously established (Haładewicz-Grzelak 2022a) directionality of experience of the sacrum for Catholic Christianity as emanating top down. That is, if the temporal progression is uncovered (which is not an obligatory strategy though), the earliest is up and the latest is down. That implication of course does not work in the case where [ST] functions as a secondary sign (an attribute of the figure of Moses) which can also itself refer to the Old Testament legacy. That fact that in Catholic denomination the [ST] are more marked (fixed) than in Protestant domination can ensue from the fact that in Protestant denominations there is less (if any) emphasis on the visual impact (“*solo scriptura*”). Liaising further with my prior phenomenological work on [ST] in Judaism (Haładewicz-Grzelak 2021), in that denomination the sign functions as headed, primary and of centripetal, bonding dynamics. The conclusion that can be safely drawn basing on the nature of the data I studied is that differences in placing this hieratic marker in particular denominations lie in the nanostructure of the sign – they are arranged in that particular way because they are differently ‘parsed’ in particular denominations.

The analytical part also involved modelling the constituent structure of a hieratic sign, which was in compliance with the structure obtained with my other data (Haładewicz-Grzelak 2018, 2022a,b). That is, the posited sacrality reference was referred to as a floating prime [S] which adds to the complexity of a sign, and which can be delinked or spread. Another relevant prime which adds to the complexity of a sign was identified as [L], that is, embedding a material

exponent in a specific context. If a hieratic sign can occur at any location, it is interpreted as being deprived of that prime. The analysis thus inscribed itself into my previously obtained semiotactic results regarding the sacrosphere. Finally, I interpreted and modeled a semiotactic process of recursiveness, the process has already been identified for hieratic signage or for the desacralization process: a specific pattern, as a matrix or an active semiotic process, takes place ‘availing’ itself of the substantial exponents ‘at hand’, even if the original exponents have been changed beforehand due to other system-external factors or even due to the previously occurred loop of the same process.

I hope to have shown that the analytical apparatus devised for contemporary phonology has much to offer and can help gain new analytical insights into visual and verbal textuality. Concomitantly, the study offers possibility to pursue the inquiry into other types of sacrospheres, as well as profiling the analysis onto other, social semiotic and theosophical directions.

Supplementary materials

The supplementary illustrative materials are available [here](#) in the form of a recorded presentation.

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