

1 Introduction

*Taking the artefact as the starting point,
not the text*

Friedrich (2024, 16)

During my postdoctoral research into the materiality of the Book of Kemyt¹ at the Johannes Gutenberg University Mainz in collaboration with the AKU team,² I became particularly intrigued by the distinctive features of the Kemyt script. Analyzing the materiality without considering the script seemed inadequate for my goal of (re)contextualizing this text.³ This insight led me to prepare a paleography, which I felt was essential for a deeper understanding of this letter-like composition. I proceeded to secure rights and permissions for handmade facsimiles and digital drawings, inspired by the AKU methodology (cf. chapter 3 and section 3.2.2). The extensive data generated prompted me to make these resources available in open access for further research, independent of the interpretative aspects of my initial project. Additionally, the data have been imported into the internal AKU project database and the open access platform AKU-PAL,⁴ facilitating

¹ This project was funded by the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation from 2020 to 2023 and carried out at the Department of Egyptology at the Institute for Ancient Studies, Johannes Gutenberg University Mainz. The last steps leading to the completion of this book were pursued thanks to an F.R.S.-FNRS fellowship at the University of Liège.

² For a concise presentation of the project “Altägyptische Kursivschriften” (AKU) led by Ursula Verhoeven-van Elsbergen, cf. the project website, <https://aku.uni-mainz.de> (accessed on 19.09.2023). Cf. also Gülden (2016), Gülden, Krause, and Verhoeven (2017), Gülden and Verhoeven (2017), Gülden (2018), Gülden, Krause, and Verhoeven (2020), Moezel (2022, 7), and Gülden (2023), about goals and needs of a digital hieratic paleography.

³ At first, I was focusing on a selection of “diagnostic signs,” like the Gardiner sign A1 , to mention one of the most obvious cases (cf. also Motte (2022) and Motte and Navratilova (2022)). A diagnostic sign is a grapheme the hieratograms of which may be used to date the written text based on its paleography. In this view, the Gardiner signs D21  or X1 , for instance, are less telling. Even if their frequency is almost as high as the A1  in the Book of Kemyt, they are of no help to narrow down a date whenever one lacks other means to secure its dating. The Gardiner sign A1 , on the other hand, has a changing ductus over time despite the archaizing script used for the Book of Kemyt and, as such, is a conclusive candidate for the category of “diagnostic sign.”

⁴ The online version is AKU-PAL: <https://aku-pal.uni-mainz.de>.

comparisons with other hieratograms and graphemes, and contributing to the creation of a digital paleography of ancient Egyptian cursive scripts.

While the Book of Kemyt has already been the subject of two major synoptic editions⁵ and several studies⁶ (including publications of new sources), it has yet to be fully recontextualized through the lens of materiality. Another monograph (in preparation) will take this interpretative approach, relying partly on the data from this manuscript. Additionally, it will incorporate most of the unpublished sources, which are not part of this paleography.

⁵ Posener (1951, pl. 1–21) and Petersmarck (2012).

⁶ See e.g. Motte and Navratilova (2022), Motte (2022), Posch (2022), and Motte and Ritter (2023) for the most recent papers on this topic, with previous references.