

The Kemyt : Towards a contextualized view of an Ancient Egyptian literary letter

What? A letter-like composition made up of texts from different literary genres (epistolary, autobiography, narrative, and wisdom-text). The exact composition date is unknown but it was widely copied in excerpts on ostraca, and also on papyri, tablets, and walls during the New Kingdom (1552 – 1069 BC). It was part of the scribes' training to teach the conventions of classic literary genres as well as an unusual linear script, used usually only in ritual and funerary manuscripts, and written in columns. This exceptional corpus shows specific paratextual annotations such as dates, colophons, corrections, and punctuation. Some pertain to the literary genres while others, like punctuation, may relate to teaching practices.

Why? The text was first identified in 1948 and was published as a parallel text edition in 1951, but despite several studies, there is no full analysis. Previous studies touch on aspects of the text but do not provide a fully contextualized overview. Many excerpts of this text still awaits proper publication. These new witnesses are expected to help clarify the basic meaning of the text and shed light on the social context.

The first fully contextualized view of Kemyt through an original and innovative fusion of Ancient Egyptian philology, genre theory, palaeography, and paratextuality.

Goals:

- highlighting scribe's handwritings, teaching practices, and marginal annotations;
- establishing a plausible composition date by considering Kemyt's materiality, paratext, language, and intertext;
- noticing intertextual relationships with older or contemporary texts;
- stressing language variations (Middle and/or Late Egyptian features);
- defining Kemyt's generic criteria and comparing the Ancient Egyptian perception with our modern views to refine current approaches.

