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The Safaitic scripts: palaeography of an ancient nomadic writing culture

Della Puppa, C.

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S T E L L I N G E N
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The Safaitic scripts: Palaeography of an ancient nomadic writing culture
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door Chiara Della Puppa

1. Within the great extent of variation in the Safaitic script, one can identify consistent inventories, i.e. different scripts, as well as certain recurring patterns of graphic variation, such as the shift from curvilinearity to angularity.
2. The Safaitic ‘fine’ script is the result of a gradual palaeographic development which involved the increasing compression and elongation of the ‘common’ script.
3. Members of the lineage of *df* produced Safaitic texts at least from the beginning of the 1st century BC to the end of the 1st century AD.
4. Square graph forms can be considered as a recurring graphic variable which is found across all Safaitic scripts, but the inscriptions that are labeled by scholars as in the so-called ‘Safaitic square script’ are mainly texts in the SoS script and, more rarely, in the ‘fine’ script.
5. The Safaitic ‘fine’ and SoS script appear to have been connected with certain social groups and cultural regions.
6. Palaeography can be defined as the study of a past writing culture through its materiality.
7. While chronology is essential to a palaeographic inquiry whose primary aim is dating texts and tracing the development of scripts through time, the lack of a precise chronology does not hinder in any way the study of the materiality of an ancient script, it only makes it more challenging.
8. We know still remarkably little about the mechanisms of graphetic variation across different scripts and writing cultures.
9. Store signs, public toilet graffiti, spray paint graffiti, tattooed texts, diaries, groceries lists, writing on glass condensation, printed books, e-books, and word documents are just some examples of modern-day uses of writing, and they are all equally important in understanding the multifaceted role and function which writing has nowadays.
10. When you have delved into a subject for a long time, sometimes the data will prompt you to change route and to explore approaches and lines of inquiry which you would have never imagined from the start.