



**Universiteit
Leiden**
The Netherlands

Review of Kahl, J.; Shafik, S. (2021) Gottesworte in Assiut. Eine Paläographie der relifierten Monumentalhieroglyphen der Ersten Zwischenzeit und der 12. Dynastie

Haring, B.J.J.

Citation

Haring, B. J. J. (2023). Review of Kahl, J.; Shafik, S. (2021) Gottesworte in Assiut. Eine Paläographie der relifierten Monumentalhieroglyphen der Ersten Zwischenzeit und der 12. Dynastie. *Bibliotheca Orientalis*, 79(5-6), 537-541. Retrieved from <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/3655448>

Version: Publisher's Version
License: [Leiden University Non-exclusive license](#)
Downloaded from: <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/3655448>

Note: To cite this publication please use the final published version (if applicable).

BOEKBESPREKINGEN

FARAONISCH EGYPTE

KAHL, J. und S. SHAFIK — Gottesworte in Assiut. Eine Paläographie der reliefierten Monumentalhieroglyphen der Ersten Zwischenzeit und der 12. Dynastie. (The Asyut Project, 16). Verlag Otto Harrassowitz, Wiesbaden, 2021. (30 cm, VIII, 298, 12 Taf.). ISBN 978-3-447-11733-3. ISSN 1865-6250. € 78,—.

This sixteenth volume in the good-looking blue-white series 'The Asyut Project' is a collection of epigraphic drawings of monumental hieroglyphs carved in sunk relief in the tombs of the nomarchs of Asyut of the First Intermediate Period and the early Middle Kingdom. The tombs selected for this compilation are, in historical order: tomb V of Kheti I, tomb III of Iti-ibi, tomb IV of Kheti II, and tomb I of Djefaihapi I. Whereas tombs V-III-IV date to the First Intermediate Period, with Kheti II still officiating under the Heracleopolitan King Merikare, tomb I of Djefaihapi was constructed during the reign of Senusert I of the well-established Twelfth Dynasty. The book thus presents material that not only makes the user familiar with the shapes of locally produced hieroglyphs, but also illustrates their development during a period of one and a half, perhaps two centuries.

The compilers – in view of the minimal amount of text this seems to be a more appropriate word than 'authors' – wished to present their material as a chronologically secured basis for the comparative palaeographic research of hieroglyphs, a specialism that is still so rare in Egyptology (p. 1-2). The latter observation is certainly and sadly true, and the intention of Kahl and Shafik can therefore only be applauded. The reader of the introductory pages (chapter 1. Zielsetzung, p. 1-3) would expect, then, that the little palaeographic work done so far, or at least the research of the material that is most relevant to the Asyut hieroglyphs, is duly addressed. The only extensive palaeographies mentioned there, however, are the work on hieroglyphs of Asyut coffins by Rainer Hannig – highly relevant, but of poor graphic quality as pointed out by Kahl (p. 3, note 8), and the palaeography of Nineteenth Dynasty private stelae by Jan Moje – an excellent example of palaeographic research, but of material far removed from that considered in *Gottesworte*. This reviewer was astonished not to find a single reference to the Ifao series 'Paléographie hiéroglyphique' initiated and coordinated by Dimitri Meeks, or at the very least to the most relevant volumes of that series.¹⁾ Nor is reference made to the highly relevant volumes and studies by Henry George Fischer, who published so much important work on hieroglyphic epigraphy and palaeography, especially of the Old Kingdom, First Intermediate Period and Middle Kingdom.²⁾

¹⁾ P. Collombert, *Le tombeau de Mérérouka. Paléographie* (PalHiero 4; Cairo, 2010); V. Callender, *El-Hawawish. Tombs, Sarcophagi, Stelae. Paleography* (PalHiero 8; Cairo, 2019). The latter volume, dealing with inscriptions temporally and geographically close to the Asyut ones, was perhaps not yet available when the manuscript of *Gottesworte* went to the press.

²⁾ Notably H.G. Fischer, *Inscriptions from the Coptite Nome. Dynasties VI-XI* (AnOr 40; Rome, 1964); idem, *Dendera in the Third Millennium B.C. Down to the Theban Domination of Upper Egypt* (New York, 1968); idem, *Egyptian Studies I-III* (New York, 1979-1996). The single volume of

After setting out the aim of the book, chapter 1 continues with the dating of the Asyut tombs, noting that the differences between graphic forms of the signs presented are due to the fact that the tombs were decorated in different periods, and by different craftsmen (p. 2-3). The hieroglyphs in Djefaihapi's tomb, in particular, show many differences in shapes, which can be explained by the long process of decoration of this huge monument, so that different parts of the tomb represent separate stages in the graphic development of hieroglyphs (p. 3 with note 8). The reader studying the different graphic shapes of the same signs in tomb I is indeed struck by their diversity and, after reading p. 2-3, suspects that they come from different parts of the tomb and represent the work of different periods or craftsmen. A key to the division of column numbers over these different parts would have been helpful in seeking confirmation or falsification of this idea. Chapter 2 (p. 5-12) is a useful description, illustrated by colour plates at the end of the book, of the quality of the rock in which the tombs have been made, and of the methods used by the Ancient Egyptian craftsmen in the construction of the tombs and the carving of their hieroglyphic inscriptions, such as preliminary drawings, colouring, corrections and later modifications.

To come to the core of the book ('Paläographie', p. 13-294) and of this review: the book is not what it purports to be, a palaeography, but a barely annotated compilation of graphs, arranged and numbered according to the Gardiner sign list, with additional numbers from the Extended Library, and *ad hoc* numbering ('A Asyut 1' etc.) if no satisfactory equivalents can be found in these two lists. This reviewer knows, by experience, that the selection of palaeographically representative samples from a substantial amount of hieroglyphic text is much work, as is their presentation in the form of carefully produced and organised facsimiles. The compilers are certainly to be thanked for having undertaken this laborious task for the Asyut tombs. A compilation of palaeographic samples is, however, not complete without a commentary that (1) draws the reader's attention to their graphic peculiarities, and (2) accounts for the clustering of graphs as examples of the *signs* they are supposed to represent.

The second point requires, at the very least, some information on the uses of the graphs: in what contexts do we find them, and what do they mean? Arranging samples according to the Gardiner sign list is not sufficient by way of explanation.³⁾ That sign list is merely a modern point of reference, a tool for Egyptologists, not a hieroglyphic repertoire in actual use at any time and place in Egyptian history. The aims of a palaeography are to show what *was* the actual graphic repertoire, and how it was put to use, in a given period and

Fischer mentioned in *Gottesworte* is *Ancient Egyptian Calligraphy. A Beginner's Guide to Writing Hieroglyphs* (2nd ed.; New York, 1983).

³⁾ A.H. Gardiner, *Egyptian Grammar. Being an Introduction to the Study of Hieroglyphs* (3rd ed.; Oxford, 1957), 438-548. Reference to numbers of the Extended Library is even less helpful. Whereas Gardiner's list is (mainly) a list of *signs*, including information about their use, the Extended Library merely lists *graphs*. The user of *Gottesworte* is thus left without any indication of the meaning of a sign thus numbered. The same goes for the *ad hoc* Asyut numbering, for instance W Asyut 1 (p. 277), apparently a jar on a stand. The endnote supplied on p. 296, pointing to graphic similarity with W22 (Gardiner) and W64 (Extended Library), does not help the reader to classify the sign. Only checking the references of all five samples confirms that W Asyut 1 serves as a determinative of *ḥnq.t* 'beer' ('I, 43' should probably be 'I, 44'; in I, 107 it is not quite clear if the reference is to the determinative of *ḥnq.t* or of the preceding *f3.t*).

context. Whereas the first objective would appear to be well-served by the compilation of graphs in *Gottesworte*, the second is largely absent. Browsing through this visual treasury, one sometimes wonders if the specimens collected under one Gardiner number, some with notable graphic differences, really represent the same sign. Checking this is possible in most cases by means of the tomb and column numbers supplied by the compilers, using the sketchy, over 130 years old edition of the inscriptions by Francis Llewellyn Griffith.⁴ It turns out, then, that in several places the groupings of graphs ought perhaps to be revised:

𐎗 A30 (p. 26): two specimens, one depicting a standing man with arms hanging down in front of him (tomb III, col. 10), the other showing a standing man with lower arms raised (tomb I, col. 226). Only the latter actually resembles Gardiner's A30, and is used as a determinative of *twr* 'to honour' (Griffith, *Inscriptions of Siût*, pl. 4) – a use not noted by Gardiner. The former (the man with arms hanging) has no precise equivalent in Gardiner's list, but is used in tomb III as determinative of *ḥw* 'praise' (*ibid.*, pl. 11) – one of the uses of A30 according to Gardiner. In one of the rare notes supplied in the palaeographical tables, and collected on two pages at the end of the book, the compilers refer to hieroglyph A85 of the Extended Library. In fact, the closest graphic equivalent in Gardiner's list is 𐎗 A16, man bowing with arms hanging, there for *ksi*, 'to bow'. These few observations already show that the actual shapes and uses of hieroglyphs may deviate considerably from those suggested by the Gardiner list. More importantly, and regardless of modern sign lists, seeing that the two graphs collected in *Gottesworte* under A30 look different, and are used for different words, the compilers ought to assume *a priori* that they are different signs.

𐎗𐎗 A47/A48 (p. 29): here again a rare endnote is provided, which merely refers to Fischer, *Ancient Egyptian Calligraphy*, p. 16, without further comment. Fischer's observation there is that no distinction exists between 𐎗 A47 and 𐎗 A48 – the latter being a specific sign for *ir.y* according to Gardiner, whereas A47 is for *mn.w*, *sḥw*, and *ir.y*. Whoever takes the trouble of looking up the contexts of the two specimens presented in *Gottesworte*, both from tomb I and resembling Gardiner's A47, finds that one is the determinative of *sḥw* 'guard' (Griffith, *Siût*, pl. 4, col. 214), the other of *ir.t* '(female) companion' (*ibid.*, pl. 6, col. 263). While not necessarily contradicting Gardiner or Fischer, the observation seems quite relevant for the discussion of signs A47 and A48 in Egyptological literature. And what about the *beard* added in I, 214 for masculine *sḥw*, but not in I, 263 for feminine *ir.t*? Would that distinction (graphic and semantic) not mean that they are actually different signs?

𐎗 A50 (p. 30-32): the presence and absence of beards in the nine specimens here also merit discussion. Is it significant that in tomb III the beard features in *it.w* 'ancestors' (col. 8) but not in *it=f* 'his father' (col. 15)? And what about the use

of chairs (in tombs V, III and once in I) versus block thrones (in IV and twice in I)? Only a careful analysis of all uses of these graphs would teach us how many signs are involved here.

𐎗 R1 (p. 200): the five graphs, all from tomb I, have different shapes – there are tables with and without offerings, and one of the graphs (I, 102) is not even a table but a mere rectangular tray with offerings. Their uses, also, vary greatly; only one of the five instances given (I, 240) has the sign preceded by *ḥḥw.t* 'offering table' spelled out phonetically; the sign in I, 302 is the determinative of *ḥ* 'brazier'. The other instances are logograms without phonetic complements, and may represent different words.

𐎗 X8 (p. 280): the samples presented under this number are clearly those of two different signs: 𐎗 X8 and 𐎗 M44. The compilers provide and endnote (p. 296) saying that without inner detail the sign is only used in *t-ḥd* (I, 225, 275 and list). Reference should have been made to Gardiner's M44 for this specific use.⁵ As far as can be made out on the basis of the samples given, the sign with inner detail (X8: I, 132, 213 and 272) is consistently used for the verb *rdi*.

In some cases, maintaining the Gardiner classification results in the separation of graphic variants of the same sign, e.g. 𐎗 U6 and 𐎗 U7 (p. 235-236), between which there is no distinction except that the horizontal variant U7 is preferred when written over 𐎗 or 𐎗 – as is the case with specimen I, 218, now ranged under U6. Likewise, 𐎗 T3 and 𐎗 T4 (p. 221) are presented separately although their uses are identical: phonetic *ḥd*.

Elsewhere, the compilers group together specimens resembling Gardiner's 𐎗 M4 and 𐎗 M5 (p. 141), and justly so, since they are all logograms for *rn.p.t* 'year'. The detail at the base of the sign in two cases (IV, 27 – a mere stroke; I, 274 – with the shape of 𐎗) does not seem to signal a difference in meaning.

The curious sign 𐎗 associated with 𐎗 V19 by the compilers (p. 254) is the determinative of *tmḥ* 'mat' in IV, 32. The two signs do not seem to be connected graphically, and in view of its use in *tmḥ*, the sign as rendered here might as well be connected with 𐎗 Aa6. Whatever is the explanation of its shape in IV, 32, it seems best not to classify the sign by a Gardiner number.

It may have become clear from these selected cases that a classification of specimens, that is, grouping them as representatives of the same signs, is only possible after establishing their meaning. In the absence of a palaeographic commentary, it is for the reader to find out to what extent the classification given is correct. Semiotic classification aside, many curious graphic shapes and their uses call for elucidation, with references to similar signs outside the Asyut corpus, if available. In some cases the graphic variety is intriguing, and invites comparison with other sources from the same and older periods. 𐎗 D35 (p. 57), for instance, is represented in the Asyut tombs mainly with forms in which the lower arms are not rendered horizontally, but raised or hanging down. The reader who wishes to know how special these forms are, will find it difficult to search for comparable

⁴ F.L. Griffith, *Inscriptions of Siût and Dêr Rîfeh* (London, 1889). Many columns and lines in that publication have remained partly empty, and sometimes whole sections are missing; the specimens referred to can therefore not always be found, e.g. B2/3 in I, 400 and 405. Also, if a graph occurs twice in the same column, it is not always clear which one is the specimen selected by the compilers, e.g. A84 (p. 32) in I, 1, or W Asyut I (p. 277) in I, 107.

⁵ Separately noted between Z8 and Z9 in Gardiner, *Grammar*³, 538.

examples elsewhere.⁶⁾ Variants of  W12 (p. 267) include curious shapes (e.g. ) in tombs III and IV, which apparently had wider use in the First Intermediate Period.⁷⁾ What could they represent? A wood or metal jar stand, instead of the ceramic one shown by W12, in side view?

The samples collected in *Gottesworte* constitute a graphic treasury, and together with other relevant publications they provide a basis for palaeographic research, in agreement with the intentions of the compilers. The user would have been greatly helped by a commentary indicating the uses of the signs; in this sense, the book represents a missed opportunity. The drawings, all of the same scale (1:2, p. 13), make the impression of being accurate,⁸⁾ but in the end, only a full publication of the Asyut tombs selected would make it possible to check this, Griffith's *Inscriptions of Siût* being hopelessly insufficient for this purpose. The selection of beautiful colour photographs at the end of the book (plates VI-XII in particular) is a teaser in this respect. It is to be hoped that an epigraphic edition with full photographic coverage will soon see the light as a new volume of 'The Asyut Project'.

Leiden University,
October 2022

Ben HARING

⁶⁾ No such forms are to be found in Callender, *El-Hawawish*; Collombert, *Le tombeau de Mérérouka*; Fischer, *Inscriptions from the Coptite Nome*; *Dendera in the Third Millennium B.C.*; *Egyptian Studies* I-III; *Ancient Egyptian Calligraphy*.

⁷⁾ Fischer, *Inscriptions from the Coptite Nome*, 63.

⁸⁾ It is stated on p. 13 that only (almost) fully preserved signs have been included, but some samples are so incomplete that possibly distinctive details are lacking (e.g. A13 and A14, p. 18-19: did these figures originally have a stream of blood projecting from their heads?). Many drawings, in fact, show interrupted contours, presumably indicating damaged parts, but without clear rendering of the damaged spots, for instance by shading.