



# LOOKING BEYOND THE TEXT

## Scribal Practices in Ancient Egypt

### BOOK OF ABSTRACTS

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## Keynote Lectures

**Chloé Ragazzoli (Sorbonne University)**

***'Is there a text in the room?' A journey to the limits of text then a return to Egyptian scripturalty***

"Text", "writing", and "books" (whether of stone or papyrus) are constructed objects whose implicit definitions (and even existence) vary in time and space. The way in which they are connected to each other reveals different regimes of historicity: the writing and transmission of a text pose a specific, albeit implicit, relationship with the past, the present and the future. The very dissociation between the work and its handwritten support is partly shaped by our own textual regime, which dissociates the moment of elaboration of the discourse by an author and that of its mechanical, digital, identical dissemination by the machine. The conditions of scriptural (re)production in scribal societies are fundamentally different, giving each scribe's actualization of a text its authority. While traditional scholarly editing proceeds to an "immaterialization" of the written work, the archaeologist of the written document takes into account the effects of meaning induced by the form and materiality; they consider them as the traces of specific modes of production and reception of the text. This lecture will address these questions through the lens of some of the major handwritten artefacts of Ancient Egypt, such as the Papyrus Prisse or the books of miscellanies of the New Kingdom and how we should edit such works without losing entire swathes of their impact and meaning.

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**Susanne Töpfer (Museo Egizio)**

***Some 'famous' papyri revised - a look on material features and scribal practice***

Many aspects of ancient Egyptian scribal culture are still poorly understood: previous research in the field mostly focused on the content of the texts when striving to reconstruct literary compositions, to explain historical events, or to describe the administrative and judicial customs. However, to understand the use and function of texts we have quite often look beyond those texts in order to get a grasp on the scribal practices of the individual agents producing those texts, on the one hand, and how the actual text support was used, on the other.

The aim of the paper is to discuss the use and function of texts while taking into consideration not only the textual content but also the features of the writing and the material as support itself. What can tell us the choice of recto or verso about the meaning and function of a text copy? How was a reused papyrus with heterogeneous texts actually used and stored? What do we learn about the 'biography of object' by studying the scribal practice and material features? Those aspect should be discussed by presenting some well-known but little studied papyri from the Turin Papyrus Collection.

**Ursula Verhoeven – Svenja A. Gülden – Tobias Konrad (AKU Project)**  
***Looking Beyond – Digital Practices for the Study of Handwriting***

Since 2015, the Mainz Academy Project „Ancient Egyptian Cursive Scripts“ deals with the long-term indexing and digital analysis of hieratic and cursive hieroglyphic handwriting. Selected manuscripts are processed in chronological modules and existing paleographies are verified and integrated. The signs are recorded and annotated in the project database and successively made available in the online portal AKU-PAL ([aku-pal.uni-mainz.de](http://aku-pal.uni-mainz.de); open access).

An interactive hand-on session will present various aspects of digital practices: Generation and annotation of digital research data, search capabilities in both project databases, pattern recognition and computer-assisted sorting, and automatic creation of paleographical lists.

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## Conference Papers

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**Rowida Abo Bakr (Luxor University)**  
***A Rare Coptic Legal Exercise: O.TT157 Inv.478/1***

Modern sources contain a wealth of information about education in antiquity. Egypt preserved examples of many documents relating to pupils' exercises and teaching, as long as the terms "school" and "education" are not defined narrowly in modern terms. Those preserved texts can be used to study and analyse ancient Egyptian learning methods and goals. It is self-evident that there is a link between Coptic and Greek schooling systems, as well as an undeniable influence from ancient Egypt. However, evidence suggests that Coptic education did not regularly include more advanced material, as Greek rhetorical education did. Coptic education appears to have been more in touch with the practical needs of a person gaining literacy and wishing to learn how to cope with the everyday demands of literacy while also strengthening their handwriting skills. Coptic school exercises are generally modeled after Greek ones that have been thoroughly researched, and they can be classified according to the students' levels and categories, such as beginner, intermediate, and professional. Curricula can also be classified as letters and alphabets, syllabaries, word lists, epistolary formulas, Biblical and arithmetic texts, and so on. The ostrakon O.TT157 Inv.478-1 aims to shed light on a rare topic in school exercises: legal exercise. It also begs the question about the reason for the scarcity of this type of school exercise in comparison to alphabetical, Biblical, and epistolary ones.

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**Chana Algarvio (University of Toronto)**

***The Permanence of Materiality: Stone as a Book Medium in Ancient Egypt***

When scholars think about the materiality of writing in ancient Egypt, most automatically look to papyrus, even though the materiality of writing was diverse throughout Egyptian history. This traditional Egyptological thinking of equating papyrus to writing, and in turn to books, unfortunately has transposed onto the field of Book History as it primarily and predominately views ancient Egyptian books as solely being made of papyrus. Book History also discredits any non-portable medium qualifying as a book because it believes books are portable carriers of information—a notion ultimately rooted in Western bias. But what about the longstanding use of stone in Egyptian history, in which certain textual traditions only appear on this medium? Found in the form of tomb and temple walls, stelae, statues, sarcophagi, obelisks, limestone flakes (ostraca), and even mountain cliffs, stone was a fundamental medium for royal and elite literary works, as well as for daily scribal practices. Yet no Egyptological scholarship is dedicated solely to the topic of stone as a substrate, nor is there dedicated Egyptological research on the topic of ancient books as the terms “text” or “literary work” are used in its place to avoid Western-centric impressions. This paper seeks to unite the fields of Egyptology and Book History, which up to this point have seemed to be mutually exclusive disciplines, by explaining Egyptian ideologies, literature, and scribal practices, and by employing the conceptual framework of “book as idea” to account for the existence of non-portable books in modern understanding. It is through this that scholars, both Egyptologists and non-Egyptologists, can better account for and understand the diverse book culture that flourished in ancient Egypt.

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**Niv Allon (Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York)**

***Reading Unease: Scribal Practices in an Eighteenth Dynasty Letter (MMA 27.3.560)***

This paper takes an Eighteenth Dynasty letter in The Met’s collection (MMA 27.3.560) as a starting point to explore the intersection of text, orthography, and the materiality of writing in ancient Egyptian non-literary texts of the New Kingdom. Highlighting the writer’s agency, I read his writing practices as indicative of his social and interpersonal standing negotiation when delivering a sensitive message to his supervisor. This brief communication from Tit to his supervisor, Djehuty, which dates to the joint reign of Hatshepsut and Thutmose III (ca. 1479–1458 B.C.), speaks of an offense against another man and an epistolary storm that ensued. This letter has previously been discussed through grammatical, lexicographical, and historical lenses, but there is much to be gained by closely observing its writer’s engagement as he composes his text. For example, when writing the opening line, the writer regularly dips his pen with fresh ink as he uses epistolary formulas. His rhythm appears to change when he places blame on Djehuty for the offense. Locating Tit’s scribal among other letters of his time (pTurin Prov. 3581; pBM EA 10102, pBerlin 10463), this paper proposes to see the writer’s scribal practices: his use of classifiers, his rhythm of re-dipping, and possibly spacing, as possible scribal choices. These preferences are not only dictated by the material or the writer’s thought process (cf. Allen in his analysis of Hekanakhte) but



also as potentially intentional manipulation of the material in order to anchor specific readings of one's text while negotiating one's standing.

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**Kathryn Bandy (University of Chicago)**

***An early copy of the Teaching of a Man for his Son: Edfu's scribal community during the late Second Intermediate Period***

The Tell Edfu Ostraca corpus dates to the late Middle Kingdom through early 18th Dynasty and is almost exclusively administrative, consisting primarily of name-lists and payment records. Two literary ostraca were also found in a context that produced administrative records. This paper presents Tell Edfu Ostrakon 131, focusing on its fragmentary excerpt of the Teaching of a Man for his Son (Title-§1,6) to examine and highlight elements of Edfu's dynamic scribal community. Archaeologically, the ostrakon dates to the late Second Intermediate Period, making it an early copy of the text. As notable as its content, however, is TEO 131's contribution to knowledge of Edfu's writing culture. The ostrakon demonstrates the engagement of Edfu's scribes in larger literary culture, as well as extending the composition's reach into Southern Upper Egypt, attesting to its wide distribution. TEO 131's literary hand is distinct, yet shares general traits with Edfu's administrative of the time, exhibiting a well-spaced script, with general aversity to ligatures and occasional flourish. Moreover, as with the administrative texts, the writer of TEO 131 made a deliberate choice in sherd. Finally, this paper concludes with a brief comment on literary compositions in "institutional" settings. The stratigraphic level in which TEO 131 was found is one of the few to also yield more diverse administrative records, including granary and bread accounts. In addition to their added administrative and paleographic data, these institutional accounts necessitate discussion of the possible location in which TEO 131 was written.

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**Elizabeth Bettles (Leiden University)**

***Writing speed as a factor in handwriting style variability: a view through the painted hieroglyphs of Nebnefer (ix) in TT 359 at Deir el-Medina***

This paper examines the effects of variability of speed on the hieroglyphic 'hand' of Nebnefer (ix), a scribe/painter (*sš-ꜥd*) at Deir el-Medina during Dynasty XX. Together with his brother Harmin (i), he painted the decorative schema of the tomb of Chief Workman Anhurkhawy (ii) (TT 359) during the reign of Ramesses IV. I focus on a comparative analysis of data between two text-blocks located in separate rock-cut chambers in this tomb, namely the lyrics of the Harpist's Song in the burial chamber and in the antechamber, the text-block which accompanies a scene of the deceased and his wife playing Senet. A limited palaeographic characterisation of hieroglyphic signs in these text-blocks is presented as corroboration for the painter's identity in both texts being Nebnefer (ix), rather than Harmin (i). Through the use of images and statistical data, I submit a range of evidence suggesting that the monumental-type hieroglyphs in these text-blocks were written at dissimilar speeds. I evaluate observable discrepancies with regard to ink density, characteristics of morphology

and ductus, and strategies relating to the production of text-block layout. Finally I discuss potential reasons for the variability of handwriting speed in this monumental funerary context, drawing on aspects of materiality and socio-cultural considerations.

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**Sarah Braun (Heidelberg University)**

***Blank spaces as a structuring device in demotic literary texts***

In this paper, I will discuss the use of blank spaces in literary texts written in demotic. Following the work of Ursula Rössler-Köhler on the appearance of spaces in hieratic texts, I will present the contexts in which intentional spaces occur in demotic literary manuscripts. Generally speaking, they can be a result of a scribe's handling of a papyrus – e. g. spaces to avoid writing on a damaged surface, a product of a scribe's writing process – e. g. a section of text is meant to be filled in later, or a device to structure a text by segmenting it. The use of spaces as structuring elements will be the focus of this paper during which I will discuss the various textual contexts in which spaces appear in more detail. I will argue that their function is determined by patterns in the arrangement itself, by their syntactical position, as well as by their relation to the text's content. As a text's structure could be made apparent in its written form by various visual means, the use of spaces will be examined in correlation to other elements of its material arrangement. What alternative ways were used to achieve the same goal and how did this take form in different chronological and local contexts? The comparison between several manuscripts of the same text will be of particular interest here. Thereby, one can observe diverging results of the scribes' reproduction of a text and further discuss their interaction with it.

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**Gabriele Mario Conte (University of Pisa)**

***Who were the authors of the amuletic papyri? Texts between philology and materiality***

Textual or literary amulets (in papyrus or linen) are a distinct and widespread genre of ancient Egyptian amulets. Their first occurrences date to the Middle Kingdom, and the practice lasted until the end of Egyptian history. The amulets contain magical spells for healing or protecting the beneficiary, often accompanied by images. In my research, I focused on these objects to understand their use and diffusion in the Egyptian society. The main question is who the authors of the amulets were: their rank, social position, and level of literacy; the contexts, places, and moments of their activity; the diffusion and transmission of the textual means they had at disposal. This analysis addresses the amulets first as objects, and focuses on their material and archaeological aspects. Another fundamental step is the philological comparison between parallels and spells contained in magical papyri. The analysis of mistakes and variants offers interesting information on the strategy of composition of the spell and the transmission of the practice. Finally, the study addresses the cultural and social relevance of the practice through an important case study (the site of Deir el-Medina) and the comparison with other cultural contexts. The presentation aims at presenting some results of my work and addressing the problems and open questions on the matter.

**Micòl Di Teodoro (University of Turin)**

***Copying calendars of lucky and unlucky days in Ramesside Deir el-Medina***

Hemerology is a cultural practice which consists in linking the positive or ominous outcomes of actions to the propitious or adverse aspect of the day. The Egyptological community has labeled the written documents from dynastic Egypt attesting to that practice as calendars of lucky and unlucky days. The earliest preserved source comes from the Middle Kingdom town of Lahun, but most evidence was discovered in the Ramesside Deir el-Medina. Aside from excerpts written in non-literary hieratic script and in Late Egyptian on ostrakon, all other sources are in literary hieratic and Middle Egyptian language, being copies of earlier samples. The main and most complete testimonies are the manuscripts Cairo JdE 86637 and BM EA 10184 (P. Sallier IV). During my collaboration with the Museo Egizio of Turin I studied the three papyri already known with calendars of lucky and unlucky days and I identified and reconstructed new sources. This allowed for a better understanding of the genre and its transmission. In this presentation I will describe the format, scribal practices and writing features of the calendars. I will also focus on the numerous variants in grammar, syntax, spelling, vocabulary, and content attested in the papyrus fragments of the Turin collection. This new data have helped fill some gaps in the transmission of that “literary” genre over time.

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**Roberto A. Díaz Hernández (University of Jaén)**

***Middle Egyptian features in Middle Kingdom witnesses of the Pyramid Texts and Coffin Texts – A case of shift-induced interference***

Transfer of features from a source language into a recipient language is a common phenomenon in ancient multilingual societies—thus, for example, Greek features are common in Latin texts and vice versa. In a similar way, Middle Kingdom witnesses of the Pyramid Texts show features transferred by shift-induced interference from Middle Egyptian. Such features are also found in Coffin Texts witnesses written in Old Egyptian. In fact, although their study has been disregarded hitherto, they are a new category of conceptual variants that can be classified into four interference types: graphemic, lexical, morphological and syntactic features transferred from Middle Egyptian into Old Egyptian. It follows that Middle Kingdom scribes were bilingual, for they spoke Middle Egyptian while learning Old Egyptian as a classical language for the transmission of religious texts (cf. Latin in the Middle Ages). Thus, Middle Kingdom scribes, who considered Old Egyptian a sacred language, introduced in it Middle Egyptian features either by modernizing ancient texts or by an imperfect knowledge of the old language.

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**Lucía Díaz-Iglesias (Spanish National Research Council / Human and Social Sciences Center, Madrid)**

***Tracing individual copyists: methodological considerations for the identification of scribal hands in New Kingdom burial chambers***

The scope of studies in written culture in Egyptology, traditionally centred on papyri and ostraca, has recently broadened to include a variety of media. Funerary chambers that belonged to members of the Theban court who lived during the reigns of Hatshepsut and Thutmose III and that were inscribed with lengthy textual programs constitute interesting case studies for the analysis of scribal hands, writing habits and idiosyncrasies. In 2019, an interdisciplinary team started fieldwork in the burial chamber of the overseer of the double granaries Nakhtmin (TT 87). The aim of this project is to re-study an already published monument (Guksch 1995) applying digital techniques and the Material Philology perspective to understand how the decoration of this space was planned and executed and to shed new light on past human actors. The example of Nakhtmin is exceptional in the field of ancient Egyptian textual transmission, since the intermediate model (in the form of portable ostraca) and the final product (the chamber walls) have been preserved, offering us a unique chance to track the work of scribes. The examination of all written signs and non-linguistic traces left on the walls during the decoration process has allowed us to identify three scribal hands. The presentation will center on the criteria devised to distinguish between individual hands and that fall in the category of general aspects of the texts (layout), specific aspects of signs and writing habits. Each factor will be discussed, highlighting its potentials and limitations for the individualization of hands in the specific context of an underground burial chamber.

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**Amr El Hawary (American University, Cairo - University of Bonn)**

***Testing the limits of the sign. Writing strategies for advanced scribes from the educational board BM EA 194***

This contribution will start with an attempt to define the term “context” (archaeologically, socio-culturally, linguistically). Egyptologists used to reconstruct the socio-cultural background of a given text through gathering historical information from other textual sources, so there is no escape from the textuality of history. Therefore, the focus here will be on the level of linguistic context questioning the core semantic unit of the Egyptian hieroglyphs (text, sentence, word). To demonstrate how scribes were trained/examined to recognise all the possible textual contexts, the educational board for advanced scribes and priests (the Crossword Stone EA 194) will be presented. This unique stone is famous for the multiple reading of its text horizontally, vertically and even diagonally. Moreover, according to my comprehensive study of this stone, the text, even in one reading direction, has multi-layered meaning. It is possible to read every single hieroglyph in that text with different phonetical values or to identify the category of the sign itself as a phonogram, ideogram or semogram. Furthermore, it can be considered as an initiation-game for advanced disciples to learn how to deeply understand the hieroglyph signs and how to use them correctly in a proper context. This extraordinary text gives us unique insights in the ancient Egyptian



scribal practice of reading/hearing/understanding and writing/compiling texts. The key strategy of this process is to respectively outline the relevant textual context (words, combinations, genres, jargons).

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**Mohsen Eltoukhy (Luxor University)**

***Group of fragments of Papyri in five frames of Nb-m-t(w)rt***

This paper publishes “A group of five fragments of one Papyrus in five frames of *Nb-m-t(w)rt*”. The papyri were found at Abusir and are preserved now in Egyptian Cairo Museum (ECM) with the number pJE 95575 A, B, C, D, and pJE 95693. The text on these papyri is part of the Book of the Dead. The papyri fragments’ frames are preserved in five frames inscribed on recto and verso (vso: hieroglyphic; rto: Hieratic) the vso is quite clear now, that they are dated back to the New Kingdom, 18th Dynasty (Hatshepsut – Amenhotep II), the owner of these papyri is the scribe of the king *Nb-m-trt*, each frame of these five frames contains different number of fragments that have been put in the frames incorrectly. The aim of this paper is to rearrange these fragments, to be able to read the rto, then clarify if it refers to the same person, or it was reused later for different person.

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**Jackie Jay (Eastern Kentucky University)**

***The Textual History of the Demotic ‘Prebend of Amun’***

The Demotic tale of the Prebend of Amun (originally published as *Der Sagenkreis des Königs Petubastis* by Spiegelberg) is a particularly rich source to mine as we attempt to better understand the reproductive transmission of Demotic literary narrative. The earliest and best-preserved copy of the text dates to the first half of the first century B.C.E. and was likely taken to the grave by an individual buried at the site of Akhmim. More fragmentary excerpts have been identified in the mass of literary papyri kept in the Tebtunis temple library, dated to the second century C.E. This paper will consider what these different find spots tell us about the tale’s perceived cultural importance: Why were copies preserved in each of these contexts and what meaning did the tale have to those who produced and owned it? The paper will also compare differences between the versions to distinguish between meaningful changes that were made consciously by the scribe and smaller and probably unconscious changes that arose as part of the copying process, many likely as memory variants.

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**Emil Joubert (Sorbonne University)**

***Variability of scribal practices in the copy of retrograde texts during the 21st dynasty (1069-945 B.C.)***

The importance of the scribe’s individuality in the production of his manuscript is seen in the variability of practices, and therefore of personal apprehensions, observed in different

copies of the same composition. The problems posed by the 'Amduats' of the 21st dynasty (1069-945 BC) are a good example. In addition to conveying a restricted content in a then archaic language level, these compositions are most often read from left to right in retrograde script, an uncommon formal characteristic, then obsolescent in the Books of the Dead and therefore particularly unusual. The material analysis of the ink refills of these texts highlights the variety of copying techniques. Some are written left to right following the reading order, but some others right to left – which sometimes leads to the dismantling of the text structure. The tenth hour of Horemakhbit's Amduat (Berlin, P 301/c) was inscribed in a kind of boustrophedon way – the upper register from left to right following the reading order and the lower registers written reversed. The book of Khonsumes (Paris, BnF Égyptien 153–155) and the one from Nesmutâneru (London, BM EA 9982) were copied in reverse order on the same model, probably by scribes familiar with each other. However, the first shows a dismantling of the text structure, whereas the text of the latter is partly removed to avoid this problem. Thus, material philology emphasizes the flexibility of writing practices, and perhaps of the personal culture of the scribes, even in a single composition.

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**Judith Jurjens (University of Leiden)**  
***Identifying Scribes: The Case of Piay***

The colophon of the *Blinding of Truth by Falsehood* (pChester Beatty II) is very fragmentary, so much so that Gardiner remarked that it would be useless to discuss the remaining traces in detail (*LES*, p. 36a). Thus the colophon was left unstudied by later scholars who focused primarily on the text itself. However, in recent years Material Philology has shown the importance of looking beyond the text at the material object itself, stating that paratextual features like colophons provide information about the social context in which the text was produced. Despite Gardiner's reservations, a careful study of the colophon of pChester Beatty II revealed some new insights. It is argued that some of the remaining traces bear the name "Piay". This scribe is known from pTurin C (*Miscellanies*) where he is mentioned in the title as the scribe who wrote the document for his apprentice. The paper offers a partial reconstruction of the colophon, as well as an improved reading of Gardiner's transcription. As a result of this new reading, the colophon sheds light on the social context of the papyrus, showing that teaching activities took place within the mortuary temple of Ramses III.

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**Giuseppina Lenzo (University of Lausanne)**  
***Compilation and Transmission of Hieratic Texts during the 21<sup>st</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> Dynasties***

The Third Intermediate Period has provided a large number of texts, notably in hieratic. Although these texts are of different genres, most of the documentation stems from the funerary context in the Theban area. The manuscripts evince substantial differences in content: excerpts from the Book of the Dead, hymns and rituals, but also new funerary spells which so far are not attested elsewhere. As such, these texts can provide important insights concerning scribal practices during this period. The paper will focus on the particularities of

hieratic texts during the 21<sup>st</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> Dynasties, as well as the way these texts were selected, transmitted and used. Based on a comprehensive analysis of the layout of the papyri, of the handwritings, as well as of the selection and transmission of texts, the paper will argue that it is possible to identify various groups of manuscripts which arguably originate from one or more Theban workshops. Because of the contents of some of these papyri and of the titles of the owners, the role of temple archives in the production and transmission of these papyri will also be considered. Analysis of the titles of the owners as well as the contexts of usage of these papyri provide us with insights into the social positions of these owners. Finally, several owners appear to be of Libyan origin, which raises questions about the political and cultural background of these papyri, which will also be discussed. The paper will discuss these issues and provide some general conclusions.

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**Jordan Miller (University of Cambridge)**

***A bookish burial? Sources and experiences of the Amduat catalogue***

The Amduat is a cosmographic treatise that imparted knowledge of the sun-god's nightly journey through the underworld. It belongs to a corpus of celestial and underworld representations with diverse formats and thematic foci, and is first attested in the painted wall decoration of 18th Dynasty royal tombs. Focusing on the copy on the burial chamber walls of the tomb of Thutmose III (KV 34), this paper suggests that the well-known, illustrated 'long' Amduat was developed from sources in the form of lists or tables. Designers may have collated it from material of varied origins, configuring images to fit the format of a (mainly) three-register, twelve-tableau series. The tabular Amduat 'catalogue', known only from the anteroom of the burial chamber in KV 34, has received comparatively little attention by scholars. I suggest that it derived from a hypothetical, independent copy of the long Amduat, with additions referencing the KV 34 burial chamber. The catalogue thus represents the recompilation of a long Amduat into the form of a reference manuscript. I explore the practicalities and possible religious motivations for such actions, touching on implications for notions of copies, originals, and references. This recasts the catalogue as an early and elaborate example of excerpting practices known from other New Kingdom royal tombs, rather than a distinct 'version' of the Amduat.

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**Vincent Morel (Yale University)**

***Rock Inscriptions and Writing Practices: New Perspectives***

Since the days of early explorers, a vast corpus of rock inscriptions from the Eastern Desert has been published, translated and more or less commented. Yet, little has been said about them. Studied out of context, these hundreds of rock inscriptions have been analysed in the abstract for their referential data rather than interpreted as artefacts that played a meaningful role in the context of their desert location. To escape this heuristic cul-de-sac, my paper will show how an original approach that associates spatial, visual and (inter)textual dimensions can tell us more about these engravings, and how one can address complex issues such as the textual production and the intelligibility of these material, graphic and

symbolic investments. Focusing on Middle Kingdom expedition texts from Wadi Hammamat, I will highlight specific local writing practices (including the author's notion of "localized inter[icono]textuality") to ultimately discuss the inscriptions-artefacts' potential chaîne opératoire.

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**Muhammad Nasra**

***Oral tradition in Ancient Egyptian Mathematical texts***

The interaction between orality and literacy in ancient Egypt can be seen in many Ancient Egyptian texts, whether religious, biographical, or scientific. Orality has existed since the Old Kingdom, as seen in pyramid text spells, which mix both older and newer grammatical forms and regional dialectical variations in a way characteristic of oral composition. Traditional phraseologies are learned and retained by generations of performers as new forms are added. Developing techniques for "a living speech" was necessary in ancient Egypt as it is in modern times; the verb *ḏd* (to say) was a writing formula used in many texts as a form of direct oral speech. Most Ancient Egyptian mathematical texts were written in the Middle Kingdom, exhibiting several linguistic and stylistic features that clearly connect them to the oral sphere. Chanting, memorization, and copying were part of scribal education; mathematical texts were also derived from the oral tradition and recorded in writing by different scribes, which resulted in some cases of "bad" variants (graphical variants: a skipped line, misinterpreted letters, etc.). The paper will focus on examining the syntax of the mathematical text to demonstrate the orality embedded.

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**Ahmed Osman (American University, Cairo)**

***Scribal practice in Heqanakht model-letters: Analyzing the epistolary formula beyond the script***

Remarkable epistolary formulae distinguish some early Middle Kingdom model letters. Following an introductory sentence containing the sender's name and sometimes the recipient's, scribes of the model letters dedicated specific phrases for salutation in the form of invocations to gods *ḥrjšf* and *pth*, asking for help and great prosperous life for the receiver. To write such invocations, scribes used unique epigraphy and orthography in model letters Heqanakht letter III MMA 22.3.518, Meketre MMA 22.3.524, Cairo 91061, and BM 10567 as well as writing board MMA 26.3.277 while applying conventional writing elsewhere in the letter. In these examples, invocations were written using some elongated signs and writing what seems to be an extraordinary use of phonetic complements. William Hayes suggested the decorative nature of such unusual writings, comparing them to the 'ornate initials in illuminated manuscripts of the Middle Age'. However, the assumed aesthetic purpose does not explain the standard writing of the *b3k.n* introductory statement at the beginning of the letter nor the use of extra phonetic complements in the invocations. Alternatively, this contribution discusses the practical utilization of writing variations illustrating the performance of invocations. The paper introduces the hypotheses of using such unique writing to mark chanted invocations' passages for proper ritual recitation. Can

we reconsider such special writing features as encoded suprasegmental features (prosodic features of stress, rhythm, length, intonation, etc.)? Should we examine elongated signs as representations of stressed or lengthened phonemes? This paper aims to 'read' the variations of the ancient Egyptian writings beyond the text.

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**Leah Packard-Grams (University of California)**

***Leaving the Rush: The Effect of the Reed Pen on Demotic Paleography in an Archive from Tebtunis***

In 1900, an archive of over fifty documents belonging to a Ptolemaic record office was found in the cartonnage of two crocodile mummies excavated from Tebtunis, Egypt. The author of the papyri was an anonymous scribe ("Scribe X") who copied contracts and recorded his personal and professional transactions in extensive accounts. This paper investigates the materiality of the pen used by the scribe as seen through its effect on his Demotic paleography. Here, the scribe's physical reality as a writer can be seen: Paleographical analysis of the archive reveals that Scribe X used the reed pen (kalamos) to write Demotic rather than the rush, and the materiality of the pen affected the way Scribe X wrote his Demotic signs. His pen strokes were adapted to write Demotic, and his signs look different than contemporary examples due to the materiality of the pen nib itself. The use of the reed for Demotic was a practice not widely adopted until the Roman era. This makes the archive the earliest instance of Demotic written with a reed, presenting an anomaly in the scribal record almost a century before the practice became popular. Requirements for increasing Greek documentation in the Ptolemaic period help explain this scribal outlier, since switching languages from Egyptian to Greek necessitated a shift from rush to reed (see Tait 1988). Scribe X abandoned the Egyptian rush and instead used the kalamos for both languages, subsequently adapting his physical writing process.

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**Renaud Pietri (Liège University)**

***Tracking the "scribe of the Legend of Anat" in the Museo Egizio papyrus collection: a case study in Ramesside palaeography***

In 1972, Alessandro Roccati edited in the *Revue d'égyptologie* another witness of the so-called "Legend of Anat," mainly known through the version on the verso of P. Chester Beatty VII. According to Roccati, the Turin copy of the text is written in a "très belle onciale de la XIX<sup>e</sup> dynastie." The handwriting of the "scribe of the Legend of Anat" from Turin is indeed very skillfull and regular, and therefore highly recognizable. In the framework of the international project "Crossing Boundaries: Understanding Complex Scribal Practices in Ancient Egypt," it has been possible to spot many other fragments that were written a priori by the same scribe, based on the handwriting. The purpose of this paper is to discuss, through the case study of the "scribe of the Legend of Anat," how to characterize a scribe's individual handwriting. Among the fragments that are supposed to be part of a same "paleographical cluster," one can observe a range of variations that include – non exhaustively – the ductus, the general shape of the signs, their size or their inclination.



Those variations let the question open whether or not all the fragments were written by the same scribe, or could just belong to the same “paleographical tradition,” that we can try to track in the socio-cultural landscape of Deir el-Medina.

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**Juliane Unger (Heidelberg University)**  
***The Scribes and Life of a Late Period Medical Papyrus***

Papyrus Brooklyn 47.218.75 + .86 from the Late Period allows for some fascinating glimpses into various aspects of ancient Egyptian medicine. But apart from a hitherto unique theme of this papyrus' main text – namely prescriptions for afflictions of the patient's back and spine – several observations can also be made on the production and use of this manuscript. At least three scribes have left their traces on the scroll – each one in his very own way. The scribe of the main text on the recto follows a strict format scheme with only minor peculiarities every now and then. Whoever wrote the verso-text seems to have been trying out different styles for formatting medical texts in Ancient Egypt. A third scribe deemed it necessary to add at least three more recipes below the recto text. But not only the manuscript's creation has left its traces in the material. A very distinct damage pattern hints at a certain level of deterioration that affected the papyrus at a time when it was most likely still in use. The talk aims to present the aforementioned scribal characteristics, namely certain aspects of their handwritings, some of the mistakes they made, aspects of formatting and a small collection of the paratextual signs of the texts. Following the destruction pattern and recreating a crucial period in the life of this papyrus scroll will also be a central aspect.

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**Sandrine Vuilleumier (University of Basel)**  
***Resemblance or Pretence: Comparative Approaches to Four Funerary Manuscripts***

Philology, iconography, palaeography, and prosopography are inseparable from the study of written documents and their content, and the desire to contextualize them is not new. Its implementation, now facilitated by new tools that allow for the multiplication of criteria and examples, puts these disciplines back at the centre of the analyses. This contribution proposes to study a group of four Documents of Breathing with similar illustrations. Yet, on closer inspection, they are also quite different. The vignettes will be described, analysed and compared in order to list their commonalities and differences. This will allow the methodology and terminology related to their study to be considered. Several aspects of the materiality of these documents as well as prosopographical data will then be added to the equation in order to determine to what extent all these elements confirm or not the first impressions left by the iconography. This approach will allow to question the interactions between genre, iconography, layout and script. To conclude, these various aspects will highlight the intertextual and paratextual relationships that unite these four documents and shed new light on the production, formalisation and transmission of these documents.

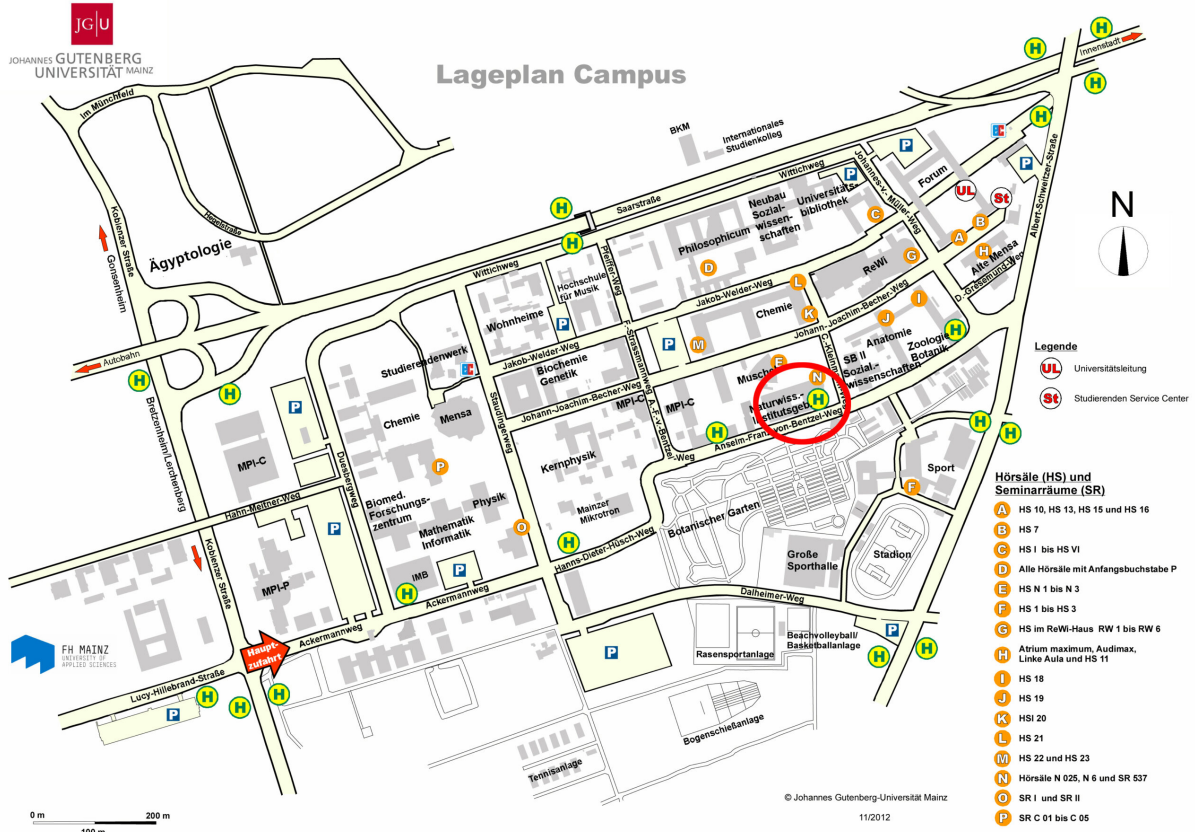


# Organizers

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## Venue

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<https://scribal-practices.uni-mainz.de>

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