

Panel Session Title (15 words or less)

**Embodied Philologies: Text, Materiality, and Scribal Practice in the New Kingdom**

**Chair: Aurore Motte**

Panel description and justification (250 words max)

What did it feel like to write in ancient Egypt, and how did material and physical realities impact the overall experience of writing a text? By addressing specific realities of writing, we may consider how writing-as-thinking and writing-as-embodied-practice might shape the process of producing and experiencing texts. This panel explores, therefore, how material features of manuscripts can provide insight into the embodied practices of writing—from the mechanics of using a brush and ink, to the material realities of writing surfaces, to the ergonomics of various writing supports—and what a consideration of these physical factors can add to studies of both the production and the interpretation of texts in ancient Egypt. Responding to recent trends in material philology, the papers reassess the current methodologies available for approaching questions about the writing process and explore new methods, both of studying the embodied practices of writing and of drawing connections between the physical and mental/emotional experiences of ancient Egyptian writers and readers. The panel's papers examine case studies centered around a distinct manuscript type, from graffiti on tomb walls, to labels on ceramic jars, to literary ostraca and papyri. By analyzing these varied case studies, the papers reveal a wide array of writing practices and explore their implications for the writers' conceptions of the texts they wrote and of themselves as writers.

Proposed Panel Schedule

Panel format: On-block panel, with respondents

120-minute block: 4 blocks of 30 minutes each (15 min speaker, 10 min respondent, 5 min buffer time)

Paper 1: Niv Allon

Respondent 1: Hana Navratilova

Paper 2: Margaret Geoga

Respondent 2: Aurore Motte

Paper 3: Aurore Motte

Respondent 3: Niv Allon

Paper 4: Hana Navratilova

Respondent 4: Margaret Geoga

Abstracts for each panelist contributor

Niv Allon

**Ink Flowing in Malqata: Analyzing Writing Practices on Jar Labels**

Brush use patterns, or dipping and ink-flow, have been associated in the field with the writer's engagement with the text. In Jim Allen's seminal work on the Heqanakht papyri, for example, ink-flow and emendations are indicative of the relationship between one's thoughts and their written

transcription. When these patterns are irregular, one comes as close as possible to the writing process, in which the scribe is “thinking on paper” (Allen 2000: 81). Further studies have highlighted the interplay between ink flow and memory or the effects of social relationships in letter writing.

Nevertheless, many questions relating to dipping practices and our methodologies to analyze them remain to be explored, with often limited evidence from the same period and context to compare. The jar labels from Malqata offer an illuminating corpus to the question of brush use and ink flow, as they provide docketts of a similar nature, and they arrive from a limited time span surrounding Amenhotep III’s Sed festivals. This paper will explore, therefore, the wide range of dipping practices apparent on these jar labels while considering the effects of the writing material itself which often invites its own set of challenges.

Margaret Geoga

### **Interrupted Readings: Assessing Immersion and Disruption in New Kingdom Literary Papyri**

This paper explores how analyzing embodied writing practices can offer insight into mental, emotional, and aesthetic experiences of reading a literary text in ancient Egypt, using two related New Kingdom papyri as a case study. Papyrus Sallier I and II have several notable similarities: both contain copies of “The Teaching of Amenemhat,” were copied by Memphite treasury scribes in the late 19th Dynasty, were dedicated to those scribes’ mentors, and were later kept in the same private library. Both papyri also preserve numerous idiosyncrasies that provide a humanizing glimpse into the lives of their well attested copyists, Pentawere and Inena. The paper examines the material and paratextual features of these papyri that allow for a partial reconstruction of Pentawere’s and Inena’s processes of writing—and therefore, in some sense, their processes of reading—with a focus on the features that suggest that the copyists’ writing and reading were interrupted. These features include ink usage, corrections, and especially excerpting practices—while Inena’s copy of “Amenemhat” includes the entire poem, Pentawere’s, like nearly all other copies of the poem, consists of only an excerpt. The paper explores the impact of these apparent interruptions on Pentawere’s and Inena’s encounters with “The Teaching of Amenemhat,” calling into question several assumptions that underlie prevailing philological methodologies—that reading should be immersive in order to produce meaningful engagement with a text, and that the physical gestures involved in writing are necessarily disruptive to that immersion—with implications for materially oriented philologies and models of textual transmission and reception in ancient Egypt.

Aurore Motte

### **Mental and Emotional Experience in Large-Sized Ostraca Writing: A Focus on the Book of Kemyt**

The “Book of Kemyt”—commonly regarded as a school text integral to the scribal curriculum of the New Kingdom—exhibits a wide range of handwriting styles, from scribes-in-training throughout their assistantship or apprenticeship to early career scribes to master scribes. This paper concentrates on the writing process evident in five large limestone ostraca: ANash.Mus.H.O.1191, O. Brussels E 3208+O. DeM 1171A-B, O. Cairo JE 56842A-B, O. MMA Field No. 35144, and O. MMA Field No. 36112. The analysis begins by examining material characteristics, including the writing support (type and size), excerpt size, dipping patterns, ink color choices, and mechanical elements of writing, including ligatures and group writings. It then investigates layout configurations and paratextual features, demonstrating how these elements, when considered alongside material aspects, shed light on the mental/emotional experiences of writing. Subsequently, the study turns to the distinctive nature of the Kemyt script, characterized by a repertoire of allographs (or “diagnostic signs”) that challenges its interpretation as

cursive (linear) hieroglyphs. The discussion argues it offers access to the scribes' mental/emotional experience, displaying a spectrum of approaches, and enlightens the *raison-d'être* of these master copies.

Hana Navratilova

### **Writing (and Reading) on the Wall: Experience and Engagement in Textual Graffiti**

This paper investigates experience of writing and reading of “graffiti” (added inscriptions). Egyptian dipinti (graffiti by pen/brush and ink), many documented in funerary environment, were written in neat text blocks, or in arguably surprising arrangements: bent round a corner, or a couple of lines running along several walls. They also show different dipping patterns. Using examples from Dahshur, Meidum, and Saqqara, and comparanda from Asyut and Thebes, the paper will explore the involvement of the ancient dipinti writers. It will defamiliarize the obvious (dips, drips, faded and trial signs) to reflect on a writing practice that contributed to experience of places of devotion and memory.

The exploration further addresses how the graffiti makers had to reckon with material circumstances of the wall: was it rough or smooth, simple stone surface or painted? The placement on the wall implies writing while standing, or sitting, even while reaching a hardly accessible spot, like a ceiling. This diversity suggests that creating the texts was an effort that required not only conceptual grasp of the location and purpose of writing, but also material knowledge and exertion. Despite bodily challenges to the writers, they often delivered well-legible calligraphy, as they were also expected to do by their readers. Subjective experience of the writer may be also linked to planning for a target audience. Eventually, the paper reflects on experience of learning to write on the wall surfaces, which was very different from administrative practice but shared with funerary arts.