Signs of Writing: The Cultural, Social, and Linguistic Contexts of the World’s First Writing Systems

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 8

9:00 a.m.  Coffee and Registration
9:45 a.m.  Welcoming Remarks

Session One
10:00-10:30 a.m.  On the Typology and Linguistics of Early Writing Systems
“Look with Thine Ears”: Why Writing is Syllable-based
Peter T. Daniels (New York)

10:30-11:00 a.m.  A Computational Model of the Discovery of Writing
Richard Sproat (Google, New York)

11:00-11:30 a.m.  Six Unresolved Questions in the Early History of Numeration
Stephen Chrisomalis (Wayne State University)

11:30 a.m.-1:00 p.m.  Lunch

Session Two
1:00-1:30 p.m.  At the Boundaries of Writing: Writing and Pre-Writing Interface
Object Manipulation and Narratives: On the Background of the Development of Cuneiform Script
Gebhard Selz (University of Vienna)

1:30-2:00 p.m.  Anatolian Hieroglyphs: From Symbols to Signs in the Context of State Formation
Mark Weeden (SOAS, University of London)

2:00-2:30 p.m.  Early Writing? Proto-writing? Not Writing? Some Notes on the U-j Inscriptions
Andréas Stauder (Paris/EPHE); read by John Baines (University of Oxford)

2:30-3:00 p.m.  Re-evaluating the Role of the Rebus Principle in Early Cuneiform
Christopher Woods (University of Chicago)

3:00-3:30 p.m.  Coffee and Cookies

Session Three
3:30-4:00 p.m.  The Media and Organization of Writing
‘Founding Genres’, Perishable Writing Media, and the Emergence of Literacy
Adam Smith (University of Pennsylvania)

4:00-4:30 p.m.  Early Writing in Egypt: A Critical Approach
Jochem Kahl (Ägyptologisches Seminar, Freie Universität Berlin)

4:30-5:00 p.m.  Spatial Grammars: Meaning in the Two-dimensional Field at the Juncture of Art and Writing
Elizabeth Hill Boone (Tulane University)

5:00-5:30 p.m.  Enduring Words: Early Maya Writing in Stone
Joel Palka (University of Illinois-Chicago)
SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 9

9:00 a.m. Coffee and Registration

Session Four

Secondary Inventions, Adaptations, and the Evolution of Writing Systems

9:30-10:00 a.m.

Sourcing Novelty: On the “Secondary Invention” of Writing
Stephen Houston (Brown University) and Felipe Rojas (Brown University)

10:00-10:30 a.m.

Metalanguage and Logography in the Japanese Adaptation of the Chinese Script
David Lurie (Columbia University)

10:30-11:00 a.m.

Why Hate Han’gūl? The Dark Side of Phonography
Amalia Gnanadesikan (University of Maryland)

11:00-11:15 a.m. Break

11:15-11:45 a.m.

Ready to Write: The Case of 2nd Millennium Hittite Anatolia
Theo van den Hout (University of Chicago)

11:45 a.m.-12:15 p.m.

Divergent and Convergent Evolution in Writing Systems
Jacob Dahl (University of Oxford)

12:15-12:45 p.m.

Approaching the Earliest Cuneiform Texts: Sign Network Analysis of Late Fourth and Early Third Millennia BC Archives
Massimo Maiocchi (University of Chicago)

12:45-2:00 p.m. Lunch

Session Five

Contexts of Writing: State and Society

2:00-2:30 p.m.

Writing and the Ancient State
Haicheng Wang (University of Washington)

2:30-3:00 p.m.

The Context of Cord Keeping in the Inka Empire: A New Khipu Archive from the South Coast of Peru
Gary Urton (Harvard University)

3:00-3:30 p.m. Coffee and Cookies

3:30-4:00 p.m.

Classic Maya Script and the Generation of History and Power
Simon Martin (University of Pennsylvania)

4:00-4:30 p.m.

The Detrimental Effects of Writing: Some Comparative Perspectives
Wolfgang Behr (University of Zurich)

4:30-5:00 p.m.

Diacrisis and the Diacritical Feast in Early Mesopotamia
J. Cale Johnson (Freie Universität Berlin)

5:00-6:00 p.m. Discussion