

Showcasing Studies of Ancient Egyptian Mortuary Texts

organized by Jorke Grotenhuis & Dina Serova

28.11.2025

For more than a century, ancient Egyptian mortuary texts such as the *Pyramid Texts*, *Coffin Texts*, the *Book of the Dead*, and related corpora have been central to the study of mortuary religion and conceptions of the afterlife (for critical reviews, see Nyord 2020, 2021). Yet despite sustained scholarly attention, these text corpora remain in many respects poorly understood and understudied, as their genre, composition, linguistic forms and contents often resist modern understanding, being deeply embedded in cultural and temporal frameworks far removed from our own. The transmission of these texts is further complicated by their recontextualization: as they were copied and inscribed on coffins, tomb walls, papyri, and other media, their form, function, and socio-religious significance underwent constant transformation and actualization. Due to these complexities of interpretation and translation, mortuary texts often play only a marginal role in Egyptological education and appear to be “out of fashion” in much of contemporary research.

While a considerable number of monographic studies address these corpora as a whole (e.g., Carrier 2004), specific research questions or sections of the material (e.g., Nyord 2009), or focus on translations of individual objects (e.g., Backes 2020), there remains a pressing need for new studies that harness the technological possibilities of the 21st century (e.g., Gracia Zamacona & Ortiz-García 2021).

This workshop seeks to showcase recent research on ancient Egyptian mortuary texts that integrates philology, translation studies, and linguistics with innovative theoretical and methodological perspectives (e.g., computational workflows). By highlighting both the long history of scholarship and the enduring gaps in our understanding, the workshop aims to reposition mortuary texts as dynamic sources, not only for investigating ancient Egyptian conceptions of the life and afterlife, but also for exploring broader questions of textuality, tradition, and cultural change.

References

- Backes, B. 2020. *Sarg und Sarkophag der Aaschyt (Kairo JE 47355 und 47267)*, 2 vols., Studien zu altägyptischen Totentexten 21. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz.
- Carrier, C. 2004. *Textes des sarcophages du moyen empire égyptien*, 3 vols., Monaco: Éditions du Rocher.
- Gracia Zamacona, C. & J. Ortiz-García (eds.) 2021. *Handbook of digital Egyptology: texts*, Monografías de Oriente Antiguo 1. Alcalá de Henares: Universidad de Alcalá.
- Nyord, R. 2009. *Breathing flesh: conceptions of the body in the ancient Egyptian Coffin Texts*, CNI Publications 37. Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanum Press.
- Nyord, R. 2020. On interpreting ancient Egyptian funerary texts, *Clarusculo* 19, 1-23.
- Nyord, R. 2021. Ancient Egyptian texts for the Afterlife? *The Ancient Near East Today* 9.