

WRITING AND POWER IN THE ROMAN WORLD

In this book, Hella Eckardt offers new insights into literacy in the Roman world by examining the tools that enabled writing, such as inkwells, styli, and tablets. Literacy was an important skill in the ancient world, and power could be, and often was, exercised through texts. Eckardt explores how writing equipment shaped practices such as posture and handwriting, and her contextual analysis of burial data shows interesting age, gender and status patterns, with considerable numbers of women and children interred with writing equipment. The volume offers a comprehensive review of recent approaches to literacy during Roman antiquity and adds a distinctive material turn to our understanding of this crucial skill and the embodied practices of its use. At the heart of this study lies the nature of the relationship between the material culture of writing and socio-cultural identities in the Roman period.

Hella Eckardt teaches provincial Roman archaeology and material culture studies at the University of Reading. Her research focuses on theoretical approaches to the material culture of the north-western provinces and on questions of mobility and migration. She is particularly interested in the relationship between the use of Roman objects and the expression of social and cultural identities. She has published on lighting equipment in *Illuminating Roman Britain* (2002), objects associated with grooming and personal adornment in *Styling the Body in Late Iron Age and Roman Britain: A Contextual Approach to Toilet Instruments* (2008) and material culture from Britain generally in *Objects and Identity: Roman Britain and the North-Western Provinces* (2015).

WRITING AND POWER
IN THE ROMAN WORLD
LITERACIES AND MATERIAL CULTURE

HELLA ECKARDT

University of Reading

CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

One Liberty Plaza, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10006, USA

Cambridge University Press is part of the University of Cambridge.

It furthers the University's mission by disseminating knowledge in the pursuit of education, learning, and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

www.cambridge.org

Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781108418058

DOI: 10.1017/9781108284172

© Hella Eckardt 2018

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements, no reproduction of any part may take place without the written permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published 2018

Printed in the United Kingdom by TJ International

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Eckardt, Hella, author.

Title: Writing and power in the Roman world : literacies and material culture / Hella Eckardt, University of Reading.

Description: New York: Cambridge University Press, 2018. |

Includes bibliographical references and index.

Identifiers: LCCN 2017022408 | ISBN 9781108418058 (hardcover: acid-free paper)

Subjects: LCSH: Writing materials and instruments. | Literacy – Rome. |

Latin language – Written Latin. | BISAC: HISTORY / Ancient / General.

Classification: LCC Z45.E35 2017 | DDC 302.2/2440937–dc23

LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2017022408>

ISBN 978-1-108-41805-8 Hardback

Cambridge University Press has no responsibility for the persistence or accuracy of URLs for external or third-party internet websites referred to in this publication and does not guarantee that any content on such websites is, or will remain, accurate or appropriate.

CONTENTS

<i>List of Plates</i>	page viii
<i>List of Figures</i>	ix
<i>List of Tables</i>	xiii
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	xv
PART I UNDERSTANDING LITERACIES, MATERIAL CULTURE AND PRACTICE IN THE ROMAN WORLD	I
1 INTRODUCTION: LITERACIES, POWER AND IDENTITIES	3
Approaches to Ancient Literacies	4
Literacies in the Roman World	9
Understanding Material Culture and Identities	14
Conclusion	16
2 THE PRACTICALITIES OF LITERACY: WRITING IMPLEMENTS IN THE ROMAN WORLD	21
Writing Implements Used on Wax and Lead	22
Writing in Ink: Media and Implements	27
Conclusion	40
3 LITERACY AS TECHNOLOGY AND PRACTICE	41
Who Wrote in the Roman World?	42
From Object to Practice: How and Where Were Writing Implements Used?	45
Conclusion	49
PART II A CASE STUDY	51
4 MATERIALS AND PRODUCTION	53
Inkwell Materials	54
Metal Inkwell Production	59
Makers' Names	61
Conclusion	66

5	METAL INKWELLS IN THE ROMAN EMPIRE	68
	Typological Discussion	69
	Related Forms	98
	Chronology and Conclusion	105
6	A PRACTICE TURN: THINKING ABOUT INKWELL USE	108
	Portability and Double Inkwells	108
	Volumes and Materials	109
	Conclusion	112
7	THE SPATIAL AND SOCIAL DISTRIBUTION OF INKWELLS	114
	Social Distribution: Who Used Inkwells? Site Level Analysis	118
	Social Distribution: Who Used Inkwells? Context Level Analysis	123
	Conclusion	135
	PART III WRITING EQUIPMENT IN FUNERARY CONTEXTS AND THE EXPRESSION OF IDENTITIES	137
8	LITERACY AS PERFORMANCE: SELF-PRESENTATION OF THE EDUCATED ELITE?	139
	Depicting Writing Equipment as a Badge or Symbol	140
	Depicting the Act of Writing: Provincial Elites	146
	Depicting Elites with a Scribe in Attendance	149
	Conclusion	149
9	LITERACY AND THE LIFE COURSE: GENDER	154
	Female Literacy	155
	Inkwells from Female Graves	158
	Inkwells from Male Graves	165
	Conclusion	173
10	LITERACY AND THE LIFE COURSE: AGE	176
	Children's Education from Written Sources and Iconography	177
	Inkwells from Children's Graves	182
	Inkwells from Adult Double Burials and Family Groups	187
	Conclusion	189
11	LITERACY, THE BODY AND ELITE IDENTITIES: WRITING AND STATUS	190
	Graves with Sets of Writing Equipment – Professional Scribes?	190
	Graves with Game and Accounting Equipment	200
	Professional Identities: Doctors and Other Healers	204
	Graves with Objects Associated with Grooming	208
	Conclusion	220

CONTENTS

vii

12 CONCLUSION: WRITING EMPIRE THROUGH MATERIAL CULTURE	224
Future Work	230
<i>Bibliography</i>	233
<i>Index</i>	261

PLATES

Color plates are to be found between pp. xvi and 1

- 3.1 Portrait of Ezra from the Codex Amiatinus
- 3.2 Matthew in the ninth-century Ebbo Gospel
- 4.1 Inkwell from Vaison
- 5.1 Double inkwell from Trieste
- 5.2 Complete enamelled vessel of Type Johns from Elsenham
- 5.3 Almost complete enamelled flask from London
- 6.1 Size differences in copper-alloy and Samian inkwells from Drnovo
- 7.1 Writing set from Marktoberdorf
- 8.1 Still life with writing equipment showing a hexagonal inkwell from Pompeii, Praedia of Julia Felix
- 8.2 Reconstruction of the office of a legionary commander
- 8.3 Theca depicted in the Notitia Dignitatum for the praetorian prefect of Illyricum
- 11.1 Inkwell from a doctor's grave at Mérida
- 11.2 Grave containing an inkwell of Type Boeselager and grooming objects from Cologne Friesenplatz

FIGURES

1.1 The materiality of writing: lead curse tablet from Uley with RTI (Reflectance Transformation Imaging) visualisation to show surface details and writer's ductus	page 8
2.1 Seal-box from an inkwell grave at Ergolding and stylus tablet <WT 30> from London Bloomberg	24
2.2 (a) Wax spatula types and (b) stylus types after Manning	25
2.3 Terminology employed in this book illustrated on an inkwell from Nijmegen	31
2.4 (a) Copper-alloy pen from South Shields, (b) bone pen from Carnuntum and (c) and (d) pen/ox-goad from Vindolanda	32
2.5 Inkwell, folding ruler/measure, dividers, pen knife, wax spatula, stylus and bone 'ruler' from a grave in Berlingen	34
2.6 Reconstruction of a container for scrolls and a monument from Juvanum/Torricella Peligna	36
2.7 Funerary monument of L. Cornelius Atimetus	38
2.8 (a) Copper-alloy case for styli and possibly parchments from Taraneš, (b) leather writing set from Egypt and (c) writing set depicted on the Lauricius grave monument, San Lorenzo Rome	39
3.1 Vindolanda tablet 29I.2 showing the different handwriting styles of a scribe and Claudia Severa	46
3.2 Writing set held under the left arm on a monument from Maria Saal	48
4.1 Bone 'inkwells' from Vaison and Brindisi	54
4.2 (a) Samian inkwell, (b) ceramic inkwell from Aquileia and (c) and (d) glass inkwells from Colchester and Xanten	55
4.3 (a) Silver inkwell from Aquileia, (b) lead inkwell from Mautern and (c) pewter inkwell from Bath	58
4.4 Possible Roman inkwell from the antiquities market and hexagonal lid from Xanten	60
4.5 Inscribed lid from Zurzach; stamps on inkwell bases from b = Risstissen; c = Krefeld Gellep; d = Aquileia and e = Nijmegen	62
4.6 Map of stamped inkwells	64
5.1 (a) and (b) Early inkwells from Haltern and Comachio; (c) and (d) Elegant early double inkwells from Picenum and 'Athens'	70

5.2	Inkwells of Type Biebrich from (a) Asciburgium, (b) Ljubljana and (c) the Magdalensberg	72
5.3	Distribution of inkwells of Type Biebrich. The Roman Empire's boundaries are shown at its greatest extent under Trajan, post-dating the floruit of this type	75
5.4	Grave altar of Manius Servius Primigenius from Aquileia	76
5.5	Lid designs on Type Noll inkwells from Salzburg and Nijmegen	77
5.6	Lids of a Type Noll inkwell from London and probably from Carnuntum	78
5.7	Decoration on inkwell bodies of Type Noll from (a) and (b) Nijmegen, (c) Inota, (d) Mérida and (e) Terlizzi	79
5.8	Inkwells of ?Gaulish type with punched decoration and flange around the dip hole from (a) Nijmegen, (b) Caerwent and (c) Carnuntum	81
5.9	Inkwells with decorated bodies and/or stamps from (a) Nijmegen, (b) London, (c) Günzenhausen, (d) Nida and (e) Sopron	83
5.10	Inkwells with rotating aperture cover from (a) Bonn, (b) the Saalburg and (c) inkwell of Type Boeselager from Krefeld Gellep	84
5.11	Inkwells from (a–b) Elsdorf, (c) Cologne St. Severin, (d) Vindolanda and (e) Lamersdorf	85
5.12	Inkwell with keyhole aperture and lead mask from Duklja and inkwell with keyhole opening from Drnovo	87
5.13	Highly decorated inkwells from Cologne	88
5.14	Inkwell with removable lid and chain from (a) Drnovo and inkwell with removable lid without chain from (b) Krefeld Gellep; inkwells with tapering body from (c) Krefeld Gellep and (d) Vindonissa	89
5.15	The distribution of inkwells with removable lid, with and without chain	90
5.16	Cylindrical inkwells with and without incised lines from (a) Drnovo, (b) Lank Latum and (c) Chichester and an inkwell with dished and protruding lid from Regensburg	92
5.17	Unusual inkwells from (a) Qumran, (b) Xanten, (c) Bregenz, (d) Zalaszentgrót and (e) London. Note that the London inkwell may well not be Roman.	94
5.18	Aperture covers probably of Type Biebrich inkwells from (a) the Magdalensberg and (b) Risstissen. Zoomorphic inkwell aperture covers probably of Type Biebrich inkwells: (c) bird from Zurzach and (d) bee or fly from Kempten.	96
5.19	(a) Reconstruction of lid and aperture cover, (b) aperture cover from Nijmegen with horse decoration on interior, (c) small aperture cover with flange from Colchester and (d) lid with deep flange from Usk	97

FIGURES

xi

5.20	'Other' possible inkwell aperture covers and lids from (a) Vindonissa, (b) Magdalensberg, (c) Longthorpe, (d) Augst and (e) stopper from St. Severin Cologne	97
5.21	Panels from enamelled vessels of Type Johns from Caernarfon and Augst	98
5.22	The distribution of Type Johns enamelled vessels	100
5.23	(a) Balsamarium from Nijmegen, (b) large aperture cover from Kempten, (c) silver vessel from Este and (d) silver pyxis or inkwell from Augst	103
5.24	Serrated discs from the Magdalensberg and box fitting from Nijmegen	104
5.25	Reconstruction of a lantern from Herculaneum and lantern burner from Baden	105
5.26	Metal inkwell types through time	106
5.27	Inkwell (and inkwell lids) with context dates (Total: 220)	107
6.1	Estimated volume averages for different types of metal inkwells and for Samian inkwells; note that enamelled vessels of Type Johns are hexagonal and few have published measurements	110
7.1	The distribution of inkwells of Type Noll	116
7.2	The distribution of inkwells of Type Boeselager	116
7.3	The distribution of inkwells with keyhole-shaped opening	117
7.4	The social distribution of inkwells across the settlement hierarchy (Total: 440 inkwells and inkwell lids; objects wrongly identified as inkwells in the literature are not counted here)	119
7.5	The social distribution of inkwells at context level (Total: 440)	123
7.6	Votive deposit from Marktoberdorf containing writing equipment	129
7.7	Inkwells from hoards and rivers and hoards with other writing equipment	130
7.8	The position of inkwells in inhumation graves	133
8.1	Writing set on the funerary monument of Q. Aemilius Rufus from Salona	141
8.2	Inkwell on a Pompeian wall painting	144
8.3	Theca depicted on the Rufius Probianus ivory diptych	145
8.4	A seated male with attending servant from Strasbourg	150
9.1	Woman composing text on a Pompeian wall painting	157
9.2	Burial with inkwell, crossbow brooch and belt from Krefeld-Gellep	172
9.3	Inkwells from the graves of men and women and the basis for their attribution (Total: 42)	174
10.1	Tombstone of a boy from Metz	180
10.2	A girl's grave from Rome	187
10.3	Three individuals buried with writing equipment at Skopje	188

II.1	Sets of writing equipment in graves at Aquileia and Duklja	196
II.2	Game equipment from Brindisi and Picenum	202
II.3	Inkwell from a female doctor's grave at Vindonissa	206
II.4	Strigils from Lank Latum, shears from Nijmegen and amber comb from Nijmegen	213
II.5	Grave with grooming and possible medical instruments from Salzburg	216

TABLES

4.1	Inkwell materials	<i>page</i> 58
5.1	Dating evidence for inkwells of Type Biebrich	74
7.1	Sites with more than ten recorded inkwells	115
7.2	Inkwells from Pompeii	126
9.1	Graves identified as female either by osteology and/or on the basis of grave goods	160
9.2	Graves identified as male either by osteology and/or on the basis of grave goods	166
10.1	Graves of children buried with inkwells	183
11.1	Types of writing equipment associated with inkwells in graves	192
11.2	Graves with both metal inkwells and game/accounting equipment	203
11.3	Objects associated with grooming in inkwell graves	209

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Research on this book began in 2009, and many people and institutions contributed to its completion. When compiling the catalogue, access to collections or information on specific objects was kindly provided by: Susan Walker and Anja Ulbrich (Ashmolean Museum), Martin Maischberger (Antikensammlung Staatliche Museen zu Berlin – Preußischer Kulturbesitz), Susanne Willer (Landesmuseum Bonn), Richard Hobbs and George Benson (British Museum), Mark Lewis (Caerleon Legionary Museum), Glynn Davis (Colchester and Ipswich Museum), Francisco Javier Alonso López (Biblioteca Publica del Estado), Friederike Naumann-Steckner and Marion Euskirchen (Römisch-Germanisches Museum Köln), Caroline McDonald (Museum of London) and Michael Marshall and Angela Wardle (Museum of London Archaeology), F.Germán Rodríguez Martín (Museo Arqueológico de la Comunidad de Madrid), Peter Bibinger (Römisch-Germanisches Zentralmuseum Mainz), Ellen Riemer (Landesmuseum Mainz), Ana María Bejarano Osorio (Consortio de la Ciudad Monumental de Mérida), Riccardo Berriola and Dr. Sampaolo (Naples Museum), Annelies Koster (Museum het Valkhof Nijmegen), Isabell Immel (Klingenmuseum Solingen), Giandomenico Spinola and Maurizio Sannibale (Musei Vaticani), Barbara and Andrew Birley (Vindolanda) and Richard Bewer and Evan Chapman (National Museums Wales).

Thomas Schierl very kindly provided information on unpublished inkwells from the *Corpus der Römischen Funde im Europäischen Barbaricum Deutschland* and also further references to continental finds of writing equipment, as did Klaus Frank. Other scholars provided information on related matters, and I would like to thank Michaela Aufleger, Joanna Bird, Rob Collins, Hilary Cool, Glynn Davies, Eleanor Dickey, Carol van Driel Murray, Mark Driessen, Michel Feugère, Jane Gardner, Wolfgang Gaitzsch, Alessandra Giumlia-Mair, Jenny Hall, Michael Marshall, Stuart McKie, Gwladys Monteil, John Pearce, Jennifer Price, Ellen Swift and Angela Wardle. Cherrel Avery provided fascinating information from her practice as a calligrapher.

I thank colleagues at the University of Reading for covering my administrative and teaching duties and Richard Bradley, John Creighton, Duncan Garrow, Roberta Gilchrist and Mike Fulford for thoughts and references. Roberta Gilchrist in particular took the time to make this a much better book than it

would otherwise have been, as did Mike Fulford who read an early draft. The manuscript was also much improved by Nina Crummy's thorough reading and by the comments of the two anonymous referees. At Cambridge University Press, Beatrice Rehl and Edgar Mendez smoothed the path to publication. The illustrations were produced by Jennifer Foster and Sarah Lambert-Gates.

Several of my current PhD students supported this project: Matt Fittock kindly recorded the Vindolanda inkwells and organised image permissions; Owen Humphreys commented on two draft chapters; and Victoria Keitel helped with volume calculations. This project has used publications from across the Empire, and this was only made possible by many people helping me with translations, notably Ünige Bencze, Heinrich Härke, Carolina de Lima, Elena Martelli and Susan Thomas. Elena Martelli also did a wonderful job securing image permissions from Italian museums. My father Uwe Eckardt helped with library research and the formatting of the bibliography.

The project would not have been possible without the support of a British Academy Mid-career Fellowship (2016); I am very grateful for the time to think through the material fully.

This book is for my youngest nephews Harry, Kai, Julian, Tom and Sam, who are all learning about the power of literacy at the moment, and for Emma, who does a wonderful job teaching it.