



RAI 68

Abstracts

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All sessions, except those in the RMO, Lipsius 123 and the poster hall, will be livestreamed for registered online participants, unless otherwise noted.

Keynote lectures

Zainab Bahrani

The votive mace of the worker, Barakisimun: the power of naming and exclusionary histories of antiquity.



Monday 17 July, 09:30–10:00



Lipsius 019

The archaeological and historical record of antiquity is usually the record of the elite, of royal commissions of works, and of temple patronage. The voices of the people, workers, or non-royal individuals are always more difficult to trace, whether in ancient Mesopotamia or elsewhere in history. However, even when records exist for such individuals, scholarship has often erased them or excluded them from historical accounts. As a result of preconceptions about cultural and social hierarchies, and philological norms of categorisation, evidence can be overlooked. One such example is the case of the Sumerian limestone object carved in relief, known in the scholarship as “The Mace-head of Enannatum”. In this paper, I reattribute this work of early sculpture to its rightful patron, not the ruler of Lagash, but a workman in his employ. At the same time, I will speak about forms of knowledge that are not recorded in texts, and therefore become marginalized areas of research and expertise. I will also address the ways in which inherited scholarly and institutional structures and practices of citation can perpetuate exclusionary methods in Ancient Near Eastern studies. The paper thus outlines several areas of inequality: the first is records of workers, the second is non-written knowledge or expertise, and the third is the exclusionary politics of citation in the academic field.

Michael Jursa

Socio-economic inequality in Ancient Mesopotamia: approaches and implications



Monday 17 July, 10:00–10:30



Lipsius 019

The paper investigates several pathways – diachronic, synchronic, diatopic and across different strata of society – for investigating socio-economic inequality in Ancient Mesopotamia. In a methodological vein, it addresses the implications of the frequent need to rely on anecdotal data and explores some possibilities for quantitative modelling. The overall argument is that inequality can be an important vector along which to address macroscopic questions of socio-economic structures and economic performance, and that in emic terms it is an important issue in society-internal discourses on values and on what constitutes the ‘good life.’ The paper also argues that a focus on inequality – and, a fortiori, on economic performance in general – is helpful for revealing fundamental differences between phases of Mesopotamian history, thereby counteracting a narrative implicitly or explicitly emphasizing continuity through a focus on media and other surface structures.

Laith Hussein

Protecting Sites and Antiquities: From the Daily Work of the Iraqi SBAH



Monday 17 July, 10:30–11:00



Lipsius 019

The presentation will describe some of the many duties and responsibilities shouldered by the State Board of Antiquities and Heritage. This includes not only our mission as guardians of Iraq's ancient cultural heritage, but also our current work and our future challenges. Our main goal is to protect archaeological sites from encroachment, to encourage and increase the number of foreign missions, and to conduct and promote excavation in many archaeological sites.

The fight against illicit excavation, theft, artifacts trafficking, illegal construction, and encroachment remains one of the biggest challenges facing the safeguarding of archaeological and heritage sites in Iraq today. Despite these challenges, the SBAH is most proud in recent years to have re-opened the Iraq Museum to visitors after a three-year closure due to the Covid-19 pandemic and political unrest. Iraq has recovered more than 18,000 artefacts in the past years, the vast majority of them from the United States.

Our aim as custodians of Iraq's cultural heritage is to establish long-term future partnerships that serve the archaeological sector through excavation, maintenance, preservation, and documentation. We are working on the training of specialist teams, the insurance of archaeological sites by removing encroachments, and the improvement of museum storage.

Saana Svärd

Gender equality in the Ancient Near East



Monday 17 July, 11:30–12:00



Lipsius 019

This talk addresses two main questions related to the topic. First, how well do we understand gender equality in the ancient Near East? Gender equality has been a topic of great interest in the humanities and social sciences for decades. Part of that discussion has been research on and speculation over the role of gender equality in ancient Near Eastern societies. However, most of this research relates to the now somewhat outdated question of the “origins” of gender equality, and some of it has been carried out outside the fields of Assyriology or Archaeology. The first part of my talk will outline the history of research relating to gender equality in the ancient Near East, with a focus on the studies of textual sources from Mesopotamia. An illuminating case study related to gender equality will be presented, based on texts from the Neo-Assyrian Empire.

The second major question for the talk will discuss the significance of the topic itself: Why do we care about inequality in societies that flourished millennia ago? The concept of gender inequality is very modern, and there is little evidence that the people who lived in ancient Mesopotamia would have considered gender equality or the uneven distribution of power problematic. Instead, the question is significant for research because it is relevant to us living today. I see this relevance from two distinct and interrelated perspectives. First, research that we publish has implications for the modern world. Questions related to gender and inequality are themes that are now extremely important in many contemporary societies. Hence, any research carried out on these topics has great potential for making a societal impact. Naturally, once research is published, anyone can use it as an argument to support an agenda. This process has little to do with the validity of research: results of a perfectly valid research on a topic of ancient inequality can be used, and have been used, to support various causes: for example, extreme nationalism, racism, or biological determinism. Second, the topic of gender inequality is significant as it also has ethical implication for academic communities. In many ways, the foundational principle in modern academia is the ideal that only one’s academic merits should play a role in one’s chances of professional advancement. However, as many ideals, this is far from being a reality in academic life. Therefore, the second part of my talk reflects not only ethical implications of equality research for society, but also its ethical implications for scholarly communities.

Eva von Dassow

Social (in)equality in ancient Western Asia



Monday 17 July, 12:00–12:30



Lipsius 019

What do we have in mind when we think of inequality in ancient Western Asia? Perhaps we visualize societies structured in rigid hierarchies, featuring great disparities in access to resources, exorbitant power for the elite and abject subjection for the many, the opposite of modern society's professed ideals. But in conjuring such an image, is it not our own societies that we project onto antiquity? We purport to value equality, yet we actually value people differentially, while we each strive to improve our own position on the scales of differentiation, and we allocate resources and prerogatives accordingly. In modeling ancient society, then, we tend to outsource today's problems to the past, as if by locating the discontents of Western modernity in the ancient Orient we were addressing our present concerns.

If we view the textual and archaeological record through this lens, we are bound to interpret it in accord with the template we apply. Modern concerns include gross disparities in wealth, inequitable treatment under law, discrimination based on gender, race, and perceived merit, and effective class stratification. Similar kinds of inequality may have had different valence in societies of ancient Western Asia. Regarding class, it is generally assumed that social stratification was present at the birth of the state, yet the evidence adduced to substantiate this assumption usually consists in the differentiation of occupations or offices, not classes, accompanied by the observation that enslavement existed and so did rulership. One mistake is to impose criteria that are salient for our time, rather than for the societies we study; another is to look for static categories rather than dynamic relations of status. Further, as Graeber and Wengrow have observed, "hierarchy and equality tend to emerge together, as complements to one another." If the people of Sumer, Akkad, and Assyria constituted hierarchies, did they also experience equality? What axes of (in)equality were salient to them?

Raphael Greenberg

Inequality and its Mitigation: Interpreting the Levantine Bronze Age as a Theater of Social and Political Experimentation



Monday 17 July, 12:30–13:00



Lipsius 019

Inequality in antiquity is accessible to archaeologists through direct observation of disparities in wealth or social power (e.g., in tombs, palaces, caches, or iconography), or in the allocation of relative access to goods and materials within and between communities (e.g., centralized storage, distribution of food products, control of raw materials). Inequality is often coupled to gradations in social hierarchy and “complexity” and placed within social-evolutionary schemes that have, despite repeated criticism, acquired the status of archaeological doxa, as implied by commonly invoked stages of development such as “urbanization” and “state formation”. Sociobiology and organizational studies have also been cited by archaeologists to underscore the inevitability of dominance behavior and institutionalized hierarchies. Less prominent in archaeology have been studies of mitigation tactics – some with only ephemeral archaeological imprint – used to dissipate the effects of inequality: the intentional destruction of wealth, social levelling mechanisms, collective action, and more. These deserve close attention, as they often signal the possibility of political formations not accommodated by the evolutionary model.

Conspicuous oscillations in material wealth and settlement distribution and construction from the Levantine Chalcolithic to the end of the Bronze Age (5th – 2nd millennia BCE), at first attributed to a sequence of foreign conquests that disrupted any autonomous development, have, since the advent of anthropological (“social”) archaeology in Western Asia, been normalized within a framework of the linear sociopolitical trajectory – punctuated by occasional setbacks – from “egalitarian” to “stratified”, or from village communities to city and to state. In recent decades, however, Levantine – and much of West Asian – archaeology has disengaged with social theory, focusing instead on archaeological sciences, big data, and occasional forays into phenomenology and the analysis of specific political practices (such as feasting or craft production).

In my talk, I will offer an updated, long-view assessment of the archaeological evidence from the proto-historic and early historic Levant, showing that it is resistant to evolutionary schemes, with clashing and alternating strategies of accumulation and dissipation of power and wealth exposed in a variety of contexts (ritual, monumental, and mortuary). Building on Graeber and Wengrow’s conceptual framework for the interpretation of social and political change – a framework that focuses on the degrees of freedom and modes of social power evident in a given society – I will suggest that the Levant is a theater of political creativity, of the reimagining of concepts from neighboring regions, and of periodic resistance to unified authority by “societies against the state”. And although centralized control of violence and knowledge increases over time, accompanied by extreme wealth disparities, the possibility of “opting out” was never lost, as witness the transformations of the late 2nd millennium.

Workshops

Workshops
Workshops

1. The Impact of Victorian Evolutionism on Ancient Near Eastern Studies (late 19th–early 20th centuries)



Monday 17 July, 14:30–18:00



Lipsius 005

Organisers

Emanuel Pfoh and Lorenzo Verderame

Speakers

Cristina Barcina Pérez; Agnès Garcia–Ventura; Jessie DeGrado; Lorenzo Verderame; Emanuel Pfoh; Søren Lorenzen

Abstract

Within critical studies of the Ancient Near East—encompassing Assyriology, Egyptology and Biblical studies—the focus has usually been set on how this historiography reflected particular expressions of orientalism, colonialism or imperialism during the late 19th to early 20th centuries. One clear example of the aforementioned Western tendencies for understanding the ancient Near East is Victorian evolutionism, first attested in biological studies stemming from Great Britain but rapidly incorporated into anthropological and sociological insights of the wider scientific and intellectual circles of Europe and America, which undoubtedly had an impact on the epistemological matrix of Oriental studies. This workshop aims at setting a clear epistemological framework for discussing Victorian evolutionism in ancient Near Eastern historiography, as well as analysing different cases and examples of it in Assyriology, Egyptology and Biblical studies, including naturally biblical archaeology, involving themes like culture and civilization, race and progress, imperialism and historiography.

2. Beyond Slavery and Freedom in the Ancient Near East



Monday 17 July, 14:30–18:00



Lipsius 003

Organiser

Vitali Bartash

Speakers

Vitali Bartash; Cornelia Wunsch; Andrew Pottorf; Annunziata Rositani; Nicholas Reid; Jules Jallet–Martini

Abstract

The workshop addresses the social groups in the ancient Near East who were not slaves but whose freedom was strongly restricted by law, economic conditions, patronage, religious institutions and other factors. The contributions of the workshop highlight the differences between these groups of “in-betweeners” from citizens with full rights (dumu-gi7, mār banê), on the one hand, and from slaves, on the other. The speakers will inquire into the nature of the dependencies that defined these social groups: Why, how and on whom were these “in-betweeners” strongly dependent? Finally, the papers find out if there were ways out of these dependent statuses.

3. New Research on the City of Babylon



Monday 17 July, 14:30–18:00, Tuesday 18 July, 09:00–11:00



Lipsius 028

Organisers

Kristin Kleber and Odette Boivin

Speakers

Kristin Kleber; Olof Pedersén; Greta Van Buylaere and Jacob Jan de Ridder; Georg Neumann; Helen Gries; Paul-Alain Beaulieu; Nils Heeßel; Odette Boivin; Susanne Paulus; Rhyne King

Abstract

A number of current—including new—research initiatives focus on the city of Babylon in the late second and first millennia. This workshop aims at bringing together such initiatives in order to a) inform on the scope and aims of new research projects, b) share new insights and results, c) discuss preliminary results and problems with colleagues within and beyond this group of researchers. The workshop includes papers on the textual and the archaeological record, as we believe that both must be studied together. The problems and limitations that we face when processing old excavation documentation is one of the topics, in addition to papers on particular archives or textual groups. A majority of papers stem from projects dealing with hitherto mostly unpublished material from the Koldewey excavations currently housed in Berlin and Istanbul. The workshop also aims at fostering cooperation between these initiatives and at establishing a platform for discussion with interested colleagues.

4. Who Is It (Good) For? Ritual Texts and Ritual Performances



Monday 17 July, 14:30–18:00



Lipsius 123

Organisers

Beatrice Baragli; Jonathan Beltz; Céline Debourse; Spencer Elliott; Elizabeth Knott; Evelyne Koubková; Yael Leokumovich; Selena Wisnom

Speakers

Evelyne Koubková; Céline Debourse; Jonathan Beltz; Elizabeth Knott and Spencer Elliott; Beatrice Baragli

Abstract

Ritual performances have the capacity to reshape, leverage, or affirm structures and norms of established socio-political hierarchies. But whether written instructions for them reflect their actual performances remains open to debate. Without the opportunity to observe ancient Mesopotamian rituals, what can we say about their social dynamics on the basis of textual evidence alone?

This workshop pauses to reflect on decisions that led to the writing down of ritual texts. Who wrote them and for whom? Who was present in or absent from such texts? How did they represent performance and what kind of biases might they have introduced? Who benefited from written representation of performance? What other discourses might these texts have carried? In other words, who are the texts (good) for?

Because Sumerian and Akkadian written tradition did not define ritual texts or their purpose, only a general sense of their form and function is current in modern scholarship. Most often the genre of “ritual texts” is defined as those that describe, or prescribe, a sequence of ritual actions, often in a durative verb construction in the second person. Although ritual texts give the impression of providing instructions for ritual performance, most do not include enough information to carry them out. Moreover, these texts could be copied and recopied over an extended period of time, so the preservation of a written tradition may or may not have corresponded to a continuity in ritual practice across time and space.

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Instead of viewing ritual texts as imperfect representations of ritual performance, this workshop considers other possible functions for them in ancient societies. In many cases, ritual texts were a product of elite scholarship and advanced literacy, mediating access to a very specific representation of ritual practice by and for the select few. The mere existence of these technical texts thereby contributed to this elite group's cultural capital. A variety of experiences with and relationships to ritual texts can be approached through close examination of discourses used to record instructions for ritual performance (dromena) and ritual speech (legomena). Related textual production in other media as well, such as inscribed amuletic objects worn by both literate and illiterate users, may also be considered, for there the importance of writing itself encapsulated the symbolic value assigned to this advanced technical literacy.

From the prominent position of priests and scholars in the crafting and transmission of ritual texts, to the diversity of use and reception in their various forms among a wider population of users, this workshop examines the specifically textual nature of our evidence for Mesopotamian rituals and the place of these texts in ancient society.

5. Assyrian Royal Inscriptions in Honor of A.K. Grayson



Tuesday 18 July, 09:00–13:00



Lipsius 011

Organiser

Grant Frame

Speakers

Grant Frame; Joshua Jeffers; Jamie Novotny; Karen Radner; Daisuke Shibata; Martin Worthington; Shigeo Yamada

Abstract

The aim of this workshop is (1) to discuss past and current work on Assyrian royal inscriptions; (2) to honor A.K. Grayson, former director of the Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia project (RIM); (3) to celebrate the completion of work on the publication of collected editions of all Assyrian royal inscriptions (RIMA 1–3 and RINAP 1–5 [RINAP 5/3, which completes the RINAP series has just been submitted to the publisher, although a volume of combined indices remains to be finished]).

6. Third Millennium Studies



Tuesday 18 July, 09:00–17:30



Lipsius 005

Organiser

Nicholas Kraus

Speakers

Nicholas Kraus; François Desset; Fiammetta Gori; Emmanuelle Salgues; Ingo Schrakamp and Gábor Zólyomi; Gösta Gabriel; Emily Zeran; Klaus Wagensonner; Armando Bramanti and Sergio Alivernini; Rudi Mayr; Vera Gonçalves; Géraldine Mastelli

Abstract

The workshop “Third Millennium Studies” aims to create a forum for scholars working on research related to the third millennium (c. 3000–2000 BCE) in the ancient Near East, to present novel research, recent discoveries, and give updates on new and ongoing projects. It will bring together scholars, students, and members of the public to engage with research centred around this rich and diverse period of Mesopotamian history and be an open space for discussion and discovery. The workshop is open to papers of any topic (e.g. linguistics, palaeography, history, art, archaeology) and source materials (i.e. cuneiform texts, seals, archaeological remains, etc.), so long as the presentations are concerned with the ancient Near East in the third millennium.

7. Trees and Shrubs in the Ancient Near East. Investigating the Plurality of Practices and Meanings in the Human–Arboreal Relationship



Tuesday 18 July, 11:30–18:00



Lipsius 028

Organisers

Silvana Di Paolo and Gioele Zisa


Speakers

Anastasia Tchaplyghine (formerly Amrhein); Laura Battini; Thomas Staubli; Catherine Bishop; Marta Iomelli; DLshad Marf; Jason Walton; Sara Hajinezhad; Davide d'Amico

Abstract

Trees and shrubs have not been extensively studied by ancient Near Eastern scholars since it is only recently that attention in the Humanities has been directed towards plants. As for the cuneiform evidence, few works relating to the gathering of tree resources has been combined with the available paleobotanical and paleoclimatic data. Regarding literary–religious aspects, there are few comprehensive studies on the symbolic–ritual function of trees. In the field of archaeological sciences, research has focused on two lines of inquiry: the analysis of the botanical remains preserved in the archaeological record (seeds, charcoal, pollen and phytoliths), and the study of the tree imagery (intended as both real or symbolic) in the Ancient Near Eastern art, with particular reference to the Neo–Assyrian period. We think that for a critical study of the human–tree relationship in the ancient Near East, useful theoretical–methodological paradigms are provided, within the “ecological turn” and “plant turn,” by the so-called “Critical Plant Studies,” very recent anti–anthropocentric studies developed within the Environmental Humanities and situated between plant sciences (such as botany and plant physiology), arts, cultural anthropology, philosophy, and history. They contribute to a more critical human understanding of plants and trees in the Humanities, in close dialogue with the natural sciences. These studies aim not only to study human representations of plants and trees, their utility and function in relation to human needs, but also to consider plants as living organisms with their own forms of agency capable of influencing the choices of human communities.

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The study of economic texts is also particularly significant because such sources provide relevant information about planting, watering, and cutting, places and conditions of growth (wild or cultivated species), and uses of derived products (leaves, fruits, wood, etc.) in context (crafts, trade, etc.), which should be supplemented with both archaeological (material culture) and archaeobotanical data. We also invite scholars to provide specific studies on the sympoietic interaction of trees, shrubs, and humans in the ancient Near East. Themes that can be developed range from the mythological and ritual function of certain tree and shrub species, their human representations (e.g., tenzones, imagery), ethnobotanical taxonomies (lexical lists), and pharmacological uses.

This workshop aims to investigate the human–tree relationship in the ancient Near East, encouraging, as much as possible, a multidisciplinary approach integrating the most up–to–date data and knowledge provided by botany, plant physiology, archaeobotany, and paleoecology with that of historical, philological, and archaeological disciplines. In methodological and theoretical terms, it is thus not only an inclusive approach that insists on the importance of tree life for the life of human societies, but also a value–in–nature approach that studies tree and shrub species for what they are, do, and live, and how their ontology affects the choices of the communities which they interact with. A fundamental issue to be developed deals with the phenomenon of the unequal or scaled access and redistribution of wood resources among members of a given society: the political control and efforts to maintain access to wood; the pressure on this material due to the technological advances; the cut and transport; the exploitation and use of this resource for shipbuilding (for coastal and fluvial inter– and intra–regional trade), war machines, construction of large, public buildings, crafts consuming both raw wood and charcoal fuel required by the technological processes (ceramics, glass making, metallurgy, and so on); furniture and tools; possible forms of depletion of the wood resources, capable of causing real ecological traps with long–term effects.

8. Intertextuality in Cuneiform Literature: Latest Research and the Issues of Methodology



Tuesday 18 July, 14:30–18:00, Wednesday 19 July, 09:00–13:00



Lipsius 003

Organisers

Nikita Artemov; Johannes Bach; Selena Wisnom

Speakers

Johannes Bach; Marc Flores; Luděk Vacín; Sophus Helle; Selena Wisnom; Julia Tulaikov; Henry Lewis; Nikita Artemov; Eli Tadmor; James Burgin; Clemens Steinberger; Jason Moser

Abstract

Intertextuality in cuneiform literature has been receiving increasing attention among Assyriologists over the last decade. Two recent monographs (Wisnom, CHANE 106, and Bach, SAAS 30) and a number of articles address the issue of intertextual relations between particular texts (or text groups) and the role of intertextual references within a particular literary genre, e.g., in Neo-Assyrian royal inscriptions (cf. Frahm, SAAS 29, 152–155). As the number of intertextual studies grows not only in Assyriology, but also in related disciplines, the need to reflect on pertaining methodological issues becomes more urgent.

The main question to be addressed by this workshop is what is meant by using the term “intertextuality”. Philologists tend to equate “intertextuality” with quotations of and allusions to earlier texts, i. e. with specific, consciously selected text-text-references. Yet, some recent publications (e.g., Mark Weeden’s observations on intertextual connections between Gilgamesh Epic and lexical lists or Selena Wisnom’s study on the interdependencies of myths and the generic language of city laments) illustrate that a more open, broad, and reader-oriented understanding of the phenomenon “intertextuality” (which is more in line with the original connotations of the term) might be more appropriate in certain research contexts. Exploring the full range of what intertextuality is calls for a discussion on intertextual typologies, their theoretical implications, and limitations.

The aim of this workshop is both to present new research results and, bringing together interested scholars working in the field, to start theoretical and methodological discussions on a variety of topics concerning intertextuality in cuneiform literature, e.g., its various types, its literary and cultural functions, and the relations between intertextuality and genre. Of further interest is the nexus between intertextuality, scribal education, and literary production. An attempt at an interdisciplinarily applicable definition of “intertextuality” could be a final step.

9. Religion, Ritual, and Inequality in the Ancient Near East



Wednesday 19 July, 09:00–13:00



Lipsius 011

Organiser

Trey Nation

Speakers

George Heath–Whyte; Netanel Anor; Bruce Wells; Adam Howe; Samantha Rainford; Trey Nation; Eric Aupperle

Abstract

The institutions, practices, and thought-worlds of ancient religion were, like everything else in society, potential tools for both furthering and ameliorating human inequality. Participation in ritual and cult, and the benefits and costs associated with that participation, were often unequally distributed. Access to the gods happened both within and without rigid institutional hierarchies of temples and priests.

This workshop will present papers on a variety of topics touching on religion and ritual in the ancient Near East. Preference, however, will be given to those papers which address the theme of inequality, and seek to flesh out the ways that individuals could live very different religious lives within the same religious world as their peers.

10. Tracking and Managing Texts, Things and People in Cuneiform Cultures



Wednesday 19 July, 09:00–16:00 – Thursday 20 July, 09:30–13:00



Lipsius 005

Organisers

Michael Kozuh and Thibaud Nicolas

Speakers


Michael Kozuh; Andrew Pottorf; Steven Garfinkle; Keith Hoskin and Ann-Christine Frandsen; Michael Jursa; John Nielsen; Louise Quillien; Rhyne King; Saeed Baghizadeh, Rouhollah Yousefi Zoshk and Donya Etemadi; Rienke Sonneveld; Katrien De Graef; Grégory Chambon; Lionel Marti; Thibaud Nicolas, Melanie Groß

Abstract

This workshop brings together scholars of diverse interests to present and discuss new work on accounting and bookkeeping systems in cuneiform cultures. Following the insights of the “new accounting theory” (for example, Fear, Giraudeau, and Urton), it will consider new approaches to understanding the way that scribes kept their accounts, the social practices and uses of accounting, and why there are regular and pronounced lacunae in accounting information. Specifically, it aims to address the following research questions:

- Where and when in the process of operations did accounting actually capture information? Why there? What was then left out or underemphasized?
- How was accounting information presented to non-experts like political or religious authorities? Did the need to present in that way affect accounting operations in general? Was the information accurate? Did accuracy even matter in that context?
- How to explain mismatches between scribal training in accountancy and actual accounting practice?
- Are there notable characteristics to accounting texts other than just the conveyance of data, such as symmetry, beauty, portability, or ornamentality?
- What functions did accounting techniques like exactness or rounding or modeling serve? Along these lines, how should we understand the practical effects of the ubiquitous scribal errors in cuneiform accounting?

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- How well did cuneiform accounting conventions serve the needs of segments of society oriented toward the market? Conversely, how well did they serve the bureaucratic needs of a large institution, like a palace or temple? Did accounting determine practice, or reflect it?
- How did accountants employ non-written accounting technologies like abacuses, tokens, and tallies?
- How was accounting information used for non-accounting purposes (say, in service of ideology or religion). For example, how did accounting information lead to political, religious, legal, or social action? Conversely, how did political, religious, legal, or social action lead to accounting?
- Did changes in accounting regimes and practices reflect larger social or political changes?

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Fear, Jeffrey R. 2005. *Organizing Control: August Thyssen and the Construction of German Corporate Management*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Giraudeau, Martin. 2017. "The Farm as an Accounting Laboratory: An Essay on the History of Accounting and Agriculture." *Accounting History Review* 27:201–215.

Urton, Gary. 2017. *Inka History in Knots: Reading Khipus as Primary Sources*. Austin: University of Texas Press.

11. Akkadian Linguistics



Wednesday 19 July, 09:00–16:00



Lipsius 123

Organisers

Øyvind Bjøru; Jacob Jan de Ridder; Na'ama Pat-El

Speakers

Sergey Koval and Sergey Loesov (online); Iris Kamil; Eran Cohen; Jacob Jan de Ridder; Ambjörn Sjörs; Rodrigo Hernáiz; Na'ama Pat-El and Øyvind Bjøru; Leonid Kogan and Ilya Arkhipov; Laurent Colonna d'Istria; Olga Şek

Abstract

In recent years there has been a surge of activity in Akkadian grammatical studies, with the publication of several descriptive grammars and linguistic analyses, as well as a number of ongoing projects devoted to Akkadian lexicon and morphology. Given the growing interest in the linguistics analysis of Akkadian, this session hopes to facilitate a conversation between scholars with a variety of linguistically minded interested.

12. Connecting Babylon and Ešnunna: Textual and Archaeological Evidence of the First Half of the Second Millennium BCE



Wednesday 19 July, 11:30–16:00



Lipsius 028

Organisers

Annunziata Rositani and Nicola Laneri

Speakers

Laith Hussein and Eleanor Robson; Seth Richardson; Annunziata Rositani; Nicola Laneri and Rachele Mammana; Sergio Giuseppe Russo and Alice Mendola; Dominique Charpin

Abstract

In Mesopotamia, the first half of the second millennium BC was a time of political and religious transformations that saw the emergence of many new dynasties, which will assume a central role in the geopolitical context of the Near East. Within such a complex political scenario, the most important centres that emerge are Isin, Larsa, Uruk in the south, Babylon and Sippar in the centre, Mari in the north-west and Ešnunna in the north-east along the course of the Diyala River towards the Elam region. Textual and archaeological evidence from sites like Tell Harmal/Šaduppum, Tel Muḥammad, Sippar, Tell Asmar/Ešnunna and many others have clearly demonstrated the importance of the (sometimes conflicting) relationship between the two main players of the sociopolitical scenario of this period, Babylon and Ešnunna, which continued, at least, throughout the first quarter of the second millennium BCE. This workshop looks at the geopolitical dynamics between those last two kingdoms towards the first half of the second millennium and beyond, with a particular interest in the important site of Tel Muḥammad whose archaeological work has been recently restarted. This excavation project has reopened complex questions that revolve around this critical place, such as interaction between Babylon/Ešnunna and various Kassite groups, the sequence and chronology of the sites' occupation, and its role in the political transformations we see in the first millennium BCE. The workshop aims at bringing together scholars working on related topics to open up an interdisciplinary discussion on a variety of subjects concerning the cuneiform texts themselves; the relations with other cuneiform texts (e.g., formulas, month names, typologies of economic activities, prosopographic and topographic data); the year-names; the historiographic elements; and, last but not least, the archaeological and iconographical data. In particular, of great interest will be the investigation of the nexus between the leaders of the First Dynasty of Babylon and the counterparts in the Diyala region and, also, the emergence of the Kassite tribes in the region that will bring about the political transformation that occurs in the area with the Fall of Babylon in 1595 BC.

13. Hygiene in the Ancient Near East: Power, Privilege, Inequality



Thursday 20 July, 09:00–13:00



Lipsius 003

Organiser

Ludovico Portuese

Speakers

Yitzhaq Feder; Aino Häтинен; Saki Kikuchi; Evelyne Koubková; Ana Arroyo; Svende Bielefeld; Ludovico Portuese

Abstract

Modern public health agencies specify that some hygienic practices, such as frequent handwashing, facial cleanliness, bathing with soap and water, covering your cough and sneezes, can improve cleanliness and lead to good health, and can prevent many diseases. Nevertheless, access to hygiene services and especially water remains one of the most urgent challenges facing countries, especially low-income ones. Among those who are disadvantaged in their access to water and hygiene, there are many who are discriminated against – because of the place where they live, because of a disability, or because of their gender.

The ancient Near East was probably not exempt from similar issues. Archaeologically, the desire for hygiene could be reflected in the “bathrooms” or “toilets” found in some buildings, and these could suggest that cleanliness was an important feature in the ancient Near East. This cleanliness may have been physical but also cultic as often mentioned in texts and shown in images. However, access to clean water or to public latrines were never recorded as significant events of kings’ reigns, nor are similar projects present in the archaeological record. This suggests that acquiring clean water and accessing hygiene were not uniformly or widely available and social differences may have existed. If that was true, then it might be surmised that hygiene was an indicator of membership and may have played a role in assigning order and integrity to a specific group of individuals. Concepts of hygiene and inequality are therefore intertwined and the two can create or depend on a power imbalance, turning access to hygiene into a privilege which emphasises inequality between groups, classes, and/or genders.

The focus of this workshop is on Near Eastern archaeological, visual, and textual evidence from the fourth to the first millennium BCE that offers hints on hygiene and hygiene practices. In particular, the workshop will foster analyses that examine the consequences of access to hygiene. To what extent was hygiene a marker of group membership? Was the success of a group correlated to its access to hygiene? How was hygiene represented in art and literature to highlight the high level of hygiene and cultic purity? What were the terms and expressions used in texts to distinguish purified and cleansed individuals from other people?

14. Equality of access to Mesopotamia: public outreach and pedagogy



Thursday 20 July, 09:00–16:00



Lipsius 028

Organisers

Pavla Rosenstein; Cécile Michel

Speakers

Jonathan Taylor; Sonia Mzali and Morgane Pique; Amanda Podany; Walther Sallaberger and Laurent Collona d'Istria; Shai Gordin and Luis Sáenz; Genevieve Le Ban; Neil Erskine; Sebastian Borkowski and Cynthia Marti; Cécile Michel and Pavla Rosenstein

Abstract

While the study of earliest historical societies of Mesopotamia greatly enhances our understanding of humanity, the niche fields of Assyriology and related disciplines remain relatively inaccessible to a broad range of school and college students, as well as the general public. Highly skilled pedagogical efforts and public scholarship are crucial in broadening public outreach through schools, universities, museums and in traditional as well as digital media. This workshop aims to bring together scholars working on pedagogical and public outreach projects that encourage greater equality of access to Assyriology and related fields for both future scholars and the wider public across geographical and language boundaries.

15. The Construction of Meaning in Ancient Mesopotamian Literature and Scholarship



Thursday 20 July, 09:00–13:00



Lipsius 123

Organiser

Nicla De Zorzi

Speakers

Nicla De Zorzi; Lucrezia Menicatti; Michela Piccin; Maya Rinderer; Francis Simons; Szilvia Sövegjarto; Elyze Zomer

Abstract

The workshop is organized within the framework of the ERC funded project REPAC, “Repetition, parallelism and creativity: an inquiry into the construction of meaning in Ancient Mesopotamian literature and erudition,” which is led by Nicla De Zorzi at the University of Vienna. It is the third event of this kind organized by the project’s team. The proceedings of the first workshop (Vienna 2017) have been published in KASKAL 17 (2019); the proceedings of the second REPAC workshop, organized at the RAI in Turin (2021), have been recently published in WZKM (2022).

REPAC investigates repetition and parallelism as structuring and meaning-making devices in Akkadian literature and scholarly writing, divinatory and magical texts in particular, aiming to demonstrate their grounding in a culture-specific ‘analogical hermeneutics’ which pervades the core texts of Ancient Mesopotamian culture.

In the context of this third workshop, some of the results achieved by the project and related research studies will be presented. In particular, the papers will discuss text-internal mechanisms of compilation and expansion in compendia and other types of technical compilations of erudite material in the various fields of Ancient Near Eastern scholarship, i.e. lexical lists, omen texts, ritual and liturgical compositions, and literary compositions. Particular attention will be paid to the interrelation between a given text’s form and its function or intention, to the role played by processes of analogical thinking in the development of scholarly-literary creativity in Ancient Mesopotamia, and to the intertextual relations between representatives of different textual genres of scholarly literature.

Papers

PAPERS

Adelhofer, Matthias

Rhetoric between superior and inferior among the Old Assyrian traders



Monday 17 July, 14:30–15:00



Lipsius 011

The Old Assyrian traders have produced an overwhelming wealth of letters in the course of their long-distance ventures between Anatolia and Assur. In the letter address, the Assyrians always delineate a relative hierarchy between letter author and addressee. This reveals the Assyrians' appraisals of their own social standing vis-à-vis their peers, which has already been fruitfully used to disambiguate individuals and fine-tune their social networks in Anderson 2017. Furthermore, for us this poses a unique starting point to investigate differences and similarities in the choice of rhetorical strategies that may depend on the social hierarchical set-up of the involved parties. The point of comparison will be a set of the most frequently used stock phrases in the letters. I will not only look at their relative distribution in respect to the hierarchy of the letter protagonists but also at their combination in the same textual context. After the necessary data wrangling, network analysis and visualisation play a key role in accessing the relations between the choice of stock phrases and social hierarchy. Better understanding certain rhetoric as appropriate in a certain social set-up can, in turn, reveal finer degrees of the social relations than the letter address would on its own.

Bibliography

A. Anderson. *The Old Assyrian Social Network: An Analysis of the Texts from Kültepe-Kanesh (1950–1750 B.C.E)*. Ph.D. Diss., Harvard University, 2017.

Session

Inequality & digital methods: social network analysis, prosopography, onomastics

Keywords

letters; rhetoric; network analysis; Old Assyrian

Alstola, Tero; Aleksi Sahala; Jonathan Valk

Workflow and methods for creating a lemmatized Neo-Babylonian text corpus



Tuesday 18 July, 12:30–13:00



Lipsius 003

A sizeable corpus of digitized and linguistically annotated texts is a prerequisite for many computational approaches to ancient languages. In the field of cuneiform studies, the availability of such corpora is very uneven across different periods and geographical locations. While Oracc provides several rich corpora from the Neo-Assyrian period, the number of annotated Neo-Babylonian texts is small. To improve the availability of annotated Babylonian texts, we are in the process of creating a corpus of 5,000 texts from the sixth and fifth centuries BCE, including 2,800 texts from Achemenet. As manual annotation of cuneiform texts is very time-consuming work, we have developed methods and workflow for automatically lemmatizing and part-of-speech (POS) tagging Akkadian texts from transliteration. The workflow consists of three steps. First, transliterations are semi-automatically converted to the Oracc ATF format, which ensures that certain conventions are being followed and that the transliterations are similar to those published in Oracc. In the second step, the transliterations are lemmatized and POS tagged using Aleksi Sahala's BabyLemmatizer. This hybrid lemmatizer and POS tagger for the Akkadian language was trained using first-millennium Babylonian texts from Oracc and a glossary of personal names from Prosobab. Third, as new texts contain words that the lemmatizer has never or rarely encountered in the training data, some manual input is required to supply correct lemmas and POS tags for these words. This is aided by the lemmatizer's ability to evaluate its output and indicate which lemmatizations are based on insufficient training data. These three steps are applied to a limited number of texts at once, so that the lemmatizer learns along the way and can lemmatize each new text group with fewer mistakes. This workflow currently results in accuracy of almost 95% for lemmas and POS tags, which is sufficient for statistical analysis of the corpus. The lemmatization of further text groups is likely to improve the accuracy.

Session

Digital methods in Ancient Near Eastern Studies

Keywords

Akkadian; Neo-Babylonian text corpus; lemmatization;
digital humanities

Al-Hussainy, Abbas

The preliminary results of MI.Enlil–Arakhtum. Season 2022 west of Diwaniyah (Southern Iraq)



Wednesday 19 July, 09:00–09:30



Lipsius 028

This area is a part of Mi-Enlil-Arahtum survey, called by this name because these are the ancient names of two branches of the Euphrates River which are attested in cuneiform sources. In 2022, we surveyed the archaeological sites in the district of Ghamas and Shinafiyah, which is located about 40km to the west of the city of Diwaniyah. The survey started from Tulul as-Safindiyat, then the area around it including Hamdan, Tell Hasnah, AL-Nauam, Radhi1, Radhi2, Ishan Awiysheq, Tell al-Hus and other sites in this area, which dated back to periods from the fourth millennium until the late Islamic time. The aim of the survey is to reveal the total number of the sites which are lying along the ancient river courses. I have to add here that the area has never been surveyed before. The area of the archaeological survey is occupied with many villages and the surfaces devoid of elevations. This surface is easily characterized by its symmetrical structure, level and gradual slope from the northeast to the southwest. Different types of archaeological finds were collected from the surface of the sites including pottery, glass, shells and metal.

Session
Keywords

Fieldwork
Diwaniyah; MI.Enlil; Arakhtum; Ghamas; Shanafiyah; survey

Anderson, Talah

Ištar is queen: reconsidering the gendering of rulership in Sargonid Assyria



Wednesday 19 July, 09:00–09:30



Lipsius 019

The prevailing influence of colonial ideas about gender on nineteenth and early twentieth century European and North American Assyriological and art historical scholarship has had a reductive impact on the interpretation of the gendered dynamics of ancient Mesopotamian rulership, particularly in the context of the Neo-Assyrian Empire. While, on the one hand, kings like Esarhaddon (r. 680–669 BC) and Ashurbanipal (r. 669–631 BC) have been understood as deplorable examples of hyper-masculinity, excessive violence, and oppressive patriarchy, they have, on the other hand, equally been received as archetypes of Oriental decadence, passivity, and effeminacy. The picture that arises from the archaeological and textual record does not fit neatly into either polarity, however. Therefore, through an analysis of selected public monuments, palace reliefs and royal inscriptions that portray the king's ideologically significant relationship with the goddess Ištar, who was held to contain both above-mentioned polarities within her divine persona in antiquity, this paper intends to establish that the expression of rulership in Sargonid Assyria included multiple layers of gendered complexity.

Session
Keywords

Inequality: Neo-Assyrian king and court
Ištar; Assyria; imperialism; Orientalism; gender

Anor, Netanel

On the social hierarchy of oracle-inquirers



Wednesday 19 July, 09:30–10:00



Lipsius 011

Cuneiform sources related to the oracle lore often refer to the king, the court, and the royal family as clients in the oracle procedure. Military affairs, issues concerning the royal dynasty and appointment of officials, are all matters extensively discussed in the apodoses of extispicy-omens. That most of these apodoses relate to state matters usually gives the impression that rituals aiming at answering the oracle questions were a privilege of kings. However, the Assyrian Dream Book famously states that: “The seer: he brings you (the sun-god) cedar, the widow: she brings you flour, the poor woman: she brings you oil, while the rich man, from among his wealth, he brings you a lamb”. This passage, hence, clearly brings evidence to the fact that members of lower strata of society were thought of being allowed to hire an oracle expert for the purpose of oracle inquiry and that this type of consultancy was not thought of as being a prerogative of Mesopotamian kings only. This paper will examine this issue by tackling the following questions: What evidence is there to support the idea that rituals, aiming at appealing the gods with an oracle question, were performed on behalf of individuals outside the circle of the king and his family? Were there indeed different materials used for these purposes when performed for commoners? And finally, were there accordingly a set of different rituals, designed to serve the needs of each of the above-mentioned social statuses?

Session

Workshop 9: Religion, Ritual, and Inequality in the Ancient Near East

Keywords

ritual; extispicy; social hierarchy; offering materials; oracle

Arroyo, Ana

Hittite cultural conventions on hygiene



Thursday 20 July, 11:30–12:00



Lipsius 003

As in many other cultures, among the Hittites water was the main element used for hygiene. The Hittite term for “to clean” is parkue-. But this term refers not only to physical cleanliness, but also to ritual purity. Hence, in the Hittite culture the concept of hygiene transcended the physical world and included the religious sphere as well. In both realms, water played a significant role. It could be used alone or mixed with natron, and could even be subjected to magical procedures to increase its cleansing power. Water could be sprinkled or poured on the person or object to be cleaned, or they could be immersed in the liquid. Several texts inform us on Hittite cultural conventions on hygiene and ritual purity, but almost none of them refer to ordinary people. However, textual information can be supplemented by the archaeological record, especially through bathtubs and the type of building in which they have been found. Therefore, by combining textual and archaeological information it is possible to shed light on Hittite cultural conventions regarding hygiene.

Session

Workshop 13: Hygiene in the Ancient Near East: Power, Privilege, Inequality

Keywords

hygiene; Hittite; water; bathtub

Artemov, Nikita

Intertextuality in the Prologue to the Annals of Sennacherib



Wednesday 19 July, 09:30–10:00



Lipsius 003

The poetic introduction to the “annalistic” prism inscriptions of the Neo-Assyrian king Sennacherib (Chicago Prism I 1–19) proves to be a “mosaic of quotations” (J. Kristeva) in a quite literal sense. However, both the choice of intertextual allusions and pretexts and their combination within the prologue are highly innovative. A standard royal titulary is followed by two parallel, poetically organised sets of royal epithets, none of which can be called traditional. Whereas some of the royal epithets are borrowed from texts of Sargon II or Assyrian royal inscriptions from the Ishtar temple in Nineveh, other expressions reproduce (rare) divine epithets used in prayers and exorcistic rituals. A closer scrutiny reveals intertextual links to literary texts that played a role in scribal education (Gilgamesh Epic, Codex Hammurapi, Enūma eliš, Angim). In the narrative part of the prologue (‘Legitimationspassus’ Chicago Prism I 10–19), phraseological and compositional borrowings from prologues to earlier Assyrian royal inscriptions (Sargon II, Tiglath-Pileser III, Tiglath-Pileser I, but also Ashurnasirpal II and Adad-nirari III) co-exist, on a deeper textual level, with allusions to a number of older Babylonian (Akkadian and Sumerian) texts which are both “literary” and “historical” (Dynastic Chronicle, Ninmeshara, inscriptions of Sargon of Akkad). Such intertextual references seem to be motivated ideologically, since they evoke traditions about the Old Akkadian empire implicitly suggesting it as a model for Sennacherib’s reign and politics. Both parts of the prologue contain a number of examples for “multi-layered” intertextuality, i.e. parallel intertextual references to two or more different texts that are often intertextually connected themselves.

Session

Workshop 8: Intertextuality in Cuneiform Literature: Latest Research and the Issues of Methodology

Keywords

Intertextuality; royal inscriptions; Neo-Assyrian ideology; Sennacherib

Artemov, Nikita

Inequality between gods and mortals: Conceptualizations of the human–divine relationship in Mesopotamian wisdom dialogues and in the Book of Job



Thursday 20 July 12:00–12:30



Lipsius 019

The notion of inequality (associated with concepts such as dominance and submission, authority, etc.) can be applied not only to interhuman relationships but also, at least metaphorically, to the relations between humans, nature, and the transcendent. It is a well-known fact that the gods are commonly conceptualized in the Ancient Near East as lords, kings, and judges (sometimes, as herdsman, artisans, and parents). Thus, the relationship between mortals and gods is conceptualized as deeply unequal, due to both human fragility and to the fact that the power structures of human society are projected onto the transcendent. Similar to the institution of kingship, the hierarchical nature of the divine order was apparently never questioned in Mesopotamian culture, which had a major impact on the conceptualizations of the self, identity, and human agency. The only human possessing a full-fledged subjectivity was the king. The ancient Near Eastern genre of wisdom dialogue, whose main representatives are Ludlul and Babylonian Theodicy as well as the Biblical Book of Job, problematizes traditional conceptions of divine justice and moral order (and thus, by implication, of human–divine relationship). In my paper, I will explore metaphorical language describing the protagonist’s suffering self and his relationship with the deity in Mesopotamian and Hebrew wisdom dialogues, paying special attention to the conceptual metaphors SUFFERING PERSON IS A CITY UNDER SIEGE and ILLNESS IS AN ENEMY ATTACK. These metaphors occur in Ludlul and Job in comparable context, but with an important difference concerning the involvement of the deity. In Ludlul, the protagonist is attacked by demons, and the metaphors of physical abuse and military aggression describe his medical condition (ll 49–103, esp. 58f); in Job, by contrast, the metaphorical assault is launched by God himself, and the war metaphors refer to Job’s physical and mental state. As God assumes the role of the aggressor, the conceptual framework describing human–divine relationship begins to totter. Whereas Job’s friends stick to the traditional metaphor GOD IS SUPREME JUDGE/OVERLORD, Job inverts it speaking of God as his opponent, witness, or advocate. Such conceptual innovations (foreign to Akkadian texts) are probably indicative of the growing individualization of religion in the late Achaemenid and Hellenistic period.

Session Inequality: Literature

Keywords inequality; human–divine relationship; conceptual metaphors; wisdom dialogues; Book of Job

Aupperle, Eric

On sacrilege



Wednesday 19 July, 12:30–13:00



Lipsius 011

This paper examines the changing social and political dimensions of sacrilege—direct harm to the interests, property, or reputation of a deity—in Mesopotamia from the third millennium BC down through the early second millennium BC. Later material is incorporated where relevant in illustrating either long-run trends or discontinuities in the categorization of sacrilegious acts and the treatment of perpetrators. Central to this investigation is the question of how heterodox actions were managed, portrayed, and discussed. Sacrilege specifically is characterized by its absence from the majority of our sources. This absence is not unexpected, as the lack of canonization of cultic texts, and the syncretic pluralism characteristic of ancient polytheistic systems, was conducive to tolerance and flexibility in belief. The distributed, multi-nodal nature of systems of worship in Mesopotamia need not imply a lack of consensus or consistency, however, in the overall conceptual framework of acceptable interactions with the divine. Sacrilege, in the strict sense of sacred theft, is infrequently but clearly attested in both Akkadian and Sumerian sources (as with the well-known case of Lugal-giškim-zi, recently reinterpreted by S. Démare-Lafont). The most frequent and longest-lasting images of sacrilege, however, take the form of the disruption or redirection of offerings, cultic objects, or sacred spaces, or the alteration of their original location. This triad of appropriation, disruption, and relocation is a trope common not only to the standard curse formulae, but also to literary characterizations of royal misbehavior in chronicles and legends (from the hubris of Naram-Suen to the putative madness of Nabonidus). The portrayal of sacrilege throughout the third and early second millennium is found to have been remarkably consistent. Across genres, perpetrators of sacrilege were generally assigned a clear human motivation, acting out of material concerns, desire for fame, or temporary anger, rather than malevolence or at the behest of sinister forces—a characterization substantially different from portrayals of sacrilege in later monotheistic traditions.

Session

Workshop 9: Religion, Ritual, and Inequality in the Ancient Near East

Keywords

religion; sacrilege; inequality; heterodoxy; law

Bácskay, András

New Late Babylonian manuscript of the series Fumigation (qutāru)



Tuesday 18 July, 15:30–16:00



Lipsius 123

Fumigation as a healing procedure is a widely used technique in Late Babylonian medicine, and textual references to the existence of the therapeutic series Fumigation are also known from the Late Babylonian period. The importance of this medical series testifies that besides therapeutic prescriptions, several medical commentary texts also deal with this topic. The fragment presented here, kept in the Cuneiform Tablet Collection of the British Museum, represents a new manuscript of the first tablet of the Late Babylonian series Fumigation and a parallel to the text of tablets already known in earlier research. Moreover, it also contains lines that have not been preserved in any other manuscripts. In my presentation, I will overview the manuscripts of this series and present the fragment as a new manuscript of the series.

Session
Keywords

Varia (I)
medicine; fumigation; Late Babylonian

Baghizadeh, Saeed; Rouhollah Yousefi Zoshk

Trade networks and the issue of accounting tablets: An overview of numerical tablets in the geographical context of the Iranian Central Plateau (REMOTE)



Wednesday 19 July 15:00–15:30



Lipsius 005

The urbanization process of Ancient West Asia consists of two phases known as the Proto-Urban Period (5500–2600 B.C.) and the Early Urban Period (2600–1900 B.C.). Signs of regional and interregional trade appeared in the internal regions from the earliest beginnings of this process. Seals, bullae, and tablets as administrative tools originate in Western Asia's heartland. The earliest clay tablets bear a series of crudely impressed signs and are usually called 'numerical tablets'. De Morgan discovered the first series of numerical tablets in Iran in Susa in 1901–5 in uncertain contexts. 'Numerical tablet' is the term used for an early writing system in Iran, Mesopotamia, and Syria between 3400 and 3300 B.C. A newly-found Numerical Tablet from the Iranian Central Plateau, MeymanatAbad Tepe, puts the issue of trade and accounting into focus. This site is located on the routes of a trade network, named as Great Khorasan Road. Alongside this piece of tablet, the excavation team has found a stamp seal and an administrative architecture dating back to the Late Chalcolithic Period. The signs on the tablet seem to be related to the impression of the tokens on the surface. The numerical tablets of Tepe Meymunabad offer a unique view of the earliest stages of development of an early writing system in the Iranian Central Plateau. Regarding the trade networks of Southwest Asia during the Late Chalcolithic, this paper will attempt to examine the trade contacts of the early urban societies in the regions of the Iranian Central Plateau and Southern Mesopotamia during the Late Chalcolithic Period. This introductory overview will begin with a summary of the history of accounting and bookkeeping. It will present a summary of the functional evolution of administrative tools in a broader context of Southwestern Asia. Moreover, this paper includes details of the chronology and geographical distribution of numerical tablets, especially the findings of MeymanatAbad Tepe and other regions of Iran. Also, we emphasize the role of these tools regarding the trade networks and routes available in the Iranian Central Plateau. It will end with proposing a framework to interpret the function of accounting tablets, especially numerical tablets, in the context of economic and political actions in the Iranian Central Plateau.

Session

Workshop 10: Tracking and Managing Texts, Things and People in Cuneiform Cultures

Keywords

trade networks; accounting and bookkeeping; numerical tablets; Iranian Central Plateau; Late Chalcolithic Period

Baker, Heather D.

Inheritance and inequality in urban Babylonia



Thursday 20 14:30–15:00



Lipsius 011

This paper argues that the intergenerational transmission of wealth was a significant factor in generating inequality in first millennium BC Babylonia. A long term increase in inequality from the Neolithic to the Iron Age has been linked to changing forms of ancient Near Eastern social and political organization (Basri & Lawrence 2020), and it has been argued that the “Age of Empires” (800 BCE–224 CE) witnessed greater wealth inequality compared with the preceding period (3000–800 BCE) (Squiteri & Altaweel 2022). When comparing Neo-Babylonian and Old Babylonian housing, I noted “not only a general improvement in urban living conditions, but also an unprecedented degree of social inequality” (Baker 2011, 541; similarly Stone 2018). Yet, the underlying causes of inequality in Mesopotamia remain poorly understood. My aim is therefore to explore the contribution of intergenerational wealth transmission to increasing inequality, set in the context of prevailing social, economic and political conditions. Inheritance is widely recognised as a major driver of inequality in the modern world, and the same likely applied in Babylonia, where real estate was the primary means of storing wealth and the eldest son typically inherited the larger share of the paternal estate. While inheritance was the principal mechanism for transmitting wealth down the generations, dowry and gift-giving are also relevant. Critical factors were the size of the paternal estate, the size of the sibling group, and an heir’s position within the sibling group. These factors likely combined to affect the life chances of heirs and their descendants. Moreover, their effects might be compounded over the generations, with the first-born son of another first-born son evidently being better placed than the fourth son of a fourth son. Drawing on the abundant Neo- and Late Babylonian private archival texts concerning family property, this paper explores the potential of a quantificatory approach to examining the link between intergenerational wealth transmission and inequality.

Session

Inequality: Families in society, economy and law

Keywords

inequality; inheritance; dowry; Babylonia; family

Baragli, Beatrice

To each their own language: Explaining linguistic diversity in ritual texts and incantations



Monday 17 July 17:00–17:30



Lipsius 123

Assyriologists nowadays have at their disposal an incredible amount of ritual texts and incantations stemming from different regions, periods, functions and specialists (āšipu, kalû, barû). Furthermore, these texts are written in different languages: Akkadian, Sumerian, Emesal or even in pseudo-languages better known as Abracadabra. Furthermore, each of these languages is usually associated with a certain specialist and thus with a certain textual genre: the kalû speaks or writes laments in Emesal, the āšipu incantations in Sumerian or Akkadian, the barû and the ašû divinatory and medical texts almost exclusively in Akkadian. However, the roles are not always so clearly defined and extensive ritual texts like Bīt rimki, Mīs pî, and Udug ḥulu include incantations composed in different languages. The main research question of this paper is: why such linguistic diversity? Is this difference explainable by the textual transmission history only? Or can other reasons be found? Why maintain such diversity throughout the millennia? This talk will try to answer these questions using a broad range of ritual texts and incantation series mainly from the first millennium BCE. Here, the question “Who is a language good for?” will be explored in an interdisciplinary way, making use of language theories that highlight how different languages relate to each other in the same society and culture. This will also shed light on the performance, addressees, occasions, and audience of a ritual and explain why a certain ritual text or incantation is written in a specific language.

Session

Workshop 4: Who Is It (Good) For? Ritual Texts and Ritual Performances

Keywords

magic; performance; Bīt rimki; Sumerian

Barcina Pérez, Cristina

Before civilization: transcending economy and ritual



Monday 17 July, 14:30–15:00



Lipsius 005

We are theoretically far from Victorian and pre-decolonization scholarship, but the reality of it is that we still consider our particular version of economy and technology to be a viable measuring standard to document what it means to be human, just as we consider life in cities, the concomitant social organizations, and the occurrence of territorially-defined, centralizing states to represent the apex of ‘progress’ or ‘complexity’. We are slowly changing, but there is a reluctance to go beyond our comfort zones. This is particularly visible in the discourses that seek to link sedentists after the Holocene in Southwestern Asia with those who adopted urban life in a specific area of the whole between ca. the mid-4th and the mid-3rd millennium BC. Archaeologists are still seeking stepping stones to sustain an evolutionary discourse, perhaps out of desperation now, more than true belief. Whenever the study of a “technological achievement” —be it house construction, pottery, domestication (whether the emphasis is placed on cereal-based agriculture or ovicaprine pastoralism does not matter), or metallurgy— has not produced the expected results, we have turned to extreme environmental or “cultural” approaches. Social aspects, however, are tackled by implementing the same typologizing exercises that precede reflection in archaeological endeavors. In a majority of cases, the discourse turns towards social stratification and how close we may be to it, since elites and their ideologies can be invoked to justify changes in the direction of civilization and complexity. Very few theoretical paths are proposed, all lacking in originality and showing a direct correlation between clichés and jargon (basically via territoriality, prestige or trade), sharing a quest for a foothold on a viable trail towards increasing social differences. We are reluctant to admit that the peoples we study experienced an ontology based on reciprocity that included negotiation with alterity (by separating between ‘economy’ and ‘ritual’ we are denying their values) and exhibited sophisticated cooperative strategies; that they made choices, and decisions and innovations were rarely made in materialistic terms.

Session

Workshop 1: The Impact of Victorian Evolutionism on Ancient Near Eastern Studies (late 19th–early 20th centuries)

Keywords

materialism; heterarchy; the Biosocial; the study of transitions

Barkowsky, Marie

Rituals over time: A standardised sequence of demons



Thursday 20 July 15:00–15:30



Lipsius 005

The proposed paper is an investigation into a well-known, but little discussed ritual staple: a standardised sequence of demons handed down from the Sumerian incantations of the Old Babylonian period to the Graeco-Babyloniaca towards the end of cuneiform culture. The sequence is most frequently found in *udug ḫul*, but also known from numerous other ritual series (for example *á-sàg gig-ga*, *Maqlû*, *Šurpu*, *nam-erím-búr-ru-da*) and incantations. At least from the Middle Assyrian / Middle Babylonian periods onwards, the order of demons (15 in total, as the paper will argue) shows remarkably little variation. Though the length of the sequence may vary from incantation to incantation, it almost always begins with the first demon (evil *Udug*) and continues without omitting an expected demon or adding an unexpected one. The paper traces the sequence's textual history, analysing how its structure developed over time. It argues that the standardised sequence was expanded several times by merging different pre-existing principles of organising demons. It thereby sheds light on both the rigidity of ritual conventions (in the stability of the sequence over time, across multiple locations, and in different compositions) and their adaptability (in the way the sequence could be used for a wide range of ritual purposes and to various ends).

Session

Varia (III)

Keywords

ritual; textual history; demons; incantations

Bach, Johannes

Intertextuality in Assyriological research: introductory remarks, overview, perspectives



Tuesday 18 July, 14:30–15:00



Lipsius 003

In the last 15 years, intertextual research has gained traction in Assyriology. Two monographs and a row of articles have been published, illustrating a growing interest in renewing the scholarly approach to Ancient Mesopotamia's literature, and its cultures of textuality in general. These developments go hand in hand with a likewise growing scholarly interest in narratology and intermediality. Taken together, these recent advances open new possibilities for the study of ancient poetics, and new gateways for content interpretation. This introductory talk will highlight the state-of-the-art in intertextual research in Assyriology using recent examples. Building on that, future aspects of research will be outlined. This includes a call for an ongoing, productive negotiation of scholarly terminology and methodology, and for a fruitful harmonization of hermeneutical and structuralist approaches to intertextuality. Finally, the talk will address the potential of using intertextual methods heuristically to research and update literary histories.

Session

Workshop 8: Intertextuality in Cuneiform Literature: Latest Research and the Issues of Methodology

Bartash, Vitali

Humans as donations to temples (a-ru-a) in Sumer



Monday 17 July 14:30–15:00



Lipsius 003

Sumerians donated humans to gods. Gelb 1972 remains the only focused study of this phenomenon. He demonstrated that these (mostly) women and children belonged to the permanent staff of temples and grain and textile mills. Gelb identified two origins of the oblates in Sumer. Some were royal donations of foreign prisoners of war. Others were locals: well-to-do and impoverished households donated their slaves and family members to temples out of piety or because of dire straits, respectively. Yet, Gelb marvelled that the donor and the donation were rarely related by kinship. Also, he could not explain why scribes recorded the names of the alleged donors. The status of the oblates posed him the most difficult question: Were they slaves, free or someone else? In this paper, I will provide an overview of the data on the “dedicatees” in southern Mesopotamia in 2500–2000 BC, from the Fara/ED IIIa to the Ur III period. Although not a legal class in a strict sense, the human oblates were a social group with a unique, strongly dependent status that was in many respects similar to that of their Neo-Babylonian colleagues, the širkū. My analysis suggests that the Sargonic and Ur III (but not Early Dynastic) scribes recorded the names of the donors because the dedicatees kept living in their households even after the donation had happened. Otherwise, the sources hint at a “private use” of the oblates by the palace and temple employees and affiliates. In effect, the dedicatees were de jure temple dependants but de facto many of them worked as menials in the palace organisations and private households. In general, donating humans to gods was a smart alternative to slavery in a society that lacked effective mechanisms to control large numbers of unfree people: A dedicatee had no human master and could blame only his divine one.

Session

Workshop 2: Beyond Slavery and Freedom in the Ancient Near East

Keywords

Sumer; temples; dependent status; captives; slaves

Bartelmus, Alexa

Unequal brothers: shedding some light on the relationship between Assurbanipal and his siblings



Wednesday 19 July 10:30–11:00



Lipsius 019

In the month Ayyāru of the eponymy of Nabû-bēlu-uṣur (= 672 BC), Esarhaddon officially designated his son Assurbanipal to be the crown prince of Assyria and his son Šamaš-šumu-ukīn to be the future king of Babylonia. In order to secure his succession arrangement he made all of his governors as well as the rulers of Assyria's client states swear a solemn oath that they would help both of them to take their respective thrones and remain absolutely loyal to Assurbanipal and "his brothers, sons by the same mother" (SAA 2, 6: 94 and passim). Probably three years later, his mother Naqī'a (Zakūtu) concluded an additional treaty with the Assyrians in which she explicitly demanded loyalty to Assurbanipal from Šamaš-šumu-ukīn, Šamaš-mētu-uballiṭ and "the rest of his brothers" (SAA 2, 8: 1–5). In my paper, I intend to show that these passages can be taken as proof that Šamaš-šumu-ukīn and Šamaš-mētu-uballiṭ were not born to the same mother as Assurbanipal. Central to my argument (that will be supported by circumstantial evidence) is the unequal treatment of the two brothers in the late years of Esarhaddon's reign. Whereas Šamaš-šumu-ukīn – due to his role as future king of Babylon – occupied the second rank among Esarhaddon's children in the "House of Succession," Šamaš-mētu-uballiṭ's position at the Assyrian court seems to have been even lower than that of Assurbanipal's youngest full brother. Nevertheless, both Šamaš-šumu-ukīn and Šamaš-mētu-uballiṭ were obviously regarded by Naqī'a as a potential threat to Assurbanipal's claim to the throne, whereas she did not mention the names of his other brothers in her treaty. This situation can only be satisfactorily be explained in such a way that not their age, but their maternal lineage was the decisive factor that distinguished them from Assurbanipal and his other brothers whose rights Esarhaddon wanted to secure with his treaty.

Session

Inequality: Neo-Assyrian king and court

Keywords

Assurbanipal; Šamaš-šumu-ukīn; Šamaš-mētu-uballiṭ;
Succession Treaty of Esarhaddon; Zakutu Treaty

Battini, Laura

The reed and its uses according to the archaeological and cuneiform sources (REMOTE)



Tuesday 18 July 12:00–12:30



Lipsius 028

This paper focuses on a group of the most common wild plants of southern Iraq, along the banks of the Tigris and Euphrates, and along the canals, the reed (Sum. (Ú).(A).GUG4 or also gièn-bar, Akk. elpetu). Reed is a common and ambiguous vernacular name applied to several distinct taxa. After a reminder of its botanical characteristics and its different species, the paper tries to understand if the contemporary taxa of reed were recognized and distinct in ancient Mesopotamia both in the textual and iconological sources. However, reed was poorly represented (essentially in Neo-Assyrian reliefs): it is better attested in written sources (especially Ur III). The existence of few archeological remains both in material culture and architecture will be taken into account. Since the OB period, the atkuppu is the worker who uses reeds for different daily objects (baskets, mats, containers) but also boats. Finally, an ethnoarchaeological approach with the marshes of present-day southern Iraq will be used to understand the variety of reed uses which did not leave traces. The paper, thus, seeks to understand how humans adapted constructions and objects to the resources of the surrounding environment.

Session

Workshop 7: Trees and Shrubs in the Ancient Near East.
Investigating the Plurality of Practices and Meanings in the
Human-Arboreal Relationship

Keywords

reed; Mesopotamia; environment

Baulina, Kateryna

Reflection of the officials: Assyrian «turtan», Achaemenid «karan» and different points of stratification of the highest power



Wednesday 19 July 12:00–12:30



Lipsius 019

In my research, I will consider and compare the titles of officials who held the highest military positions and were mentioned as «second after the king» in Assyria and in the Achaemenid Empire. Examining the Assyrian chronicles of eponyms, we can see a certain hierarchy of titles according to which high-ranking officials became eponyms. Thus, the second after the king, having high military and administrative powers, is mentioned: the commander in chief, turtan (Akkad. turtānu). In the Achaemenid Empire, the troops were led by military leaders, who were close to the ruler – the karanos (Greek κάρανος, Old Pers. kārana), whose title was mentioned by Xenophon in ‘Greek History’ (I. 4. 3) and who named them as «rulers who hold power». There are several versions in historiography about the functions and meaning of this title, so based on the sources, in particular the Behistun Inscription, we will derive our own opinion on the status of the Achaemenid «karan» and compare his office and powers with the Assyrian «turtan». After analyzing the source base and historiography, my vision of the position and power of the commanders-in-chief in Assyria and the Achaemenid empire will be developed and highlighted. My research fits into the theme of the conference and determines the points of stratification of the highest power in these ancient empires.

Session

Inequality: Neo-Assyrian, Neo-Babylonian and Achaemenid kings and court

Keywords

Assyria; Achaemenid empire; turtan; karan; officials

Beaulieu, Paul-Alain

The North Palace project of Nebuchadnezzar II in Babylon



Monday 17 July 17:30–18:00



Lipsius 028

In the third decade of his reign, Nebuchadnezzar II launched the building of a new royal palace north of the fortification wall along the processional way leading to the Gate of Ištar. Five ancient accounts of the building of the North Palace are known: four of them are found in the royal inscriptions of Nebuchadnezzar, and one in the *Babyloniaca* of Berossus, who located the famed Hanging Gardens there. The German expedition to Babylon from 1899 to 1917 uncovered parts of the North Palace, but no extensive excavation or restoration work has been undertaken since. A group of ca. 45 texts from the archive of the Eanna temple yields many important details on the contribution of the city of Uruk to its building. I published a preliminary study of these texts in 2005 (“Eanna’s Contribution to the Building of the North Palace in Babylon,” in H.D. Baker and M. Jursa, eds., *Approaching the Babylonian Economy*, AOAT 330, pp. 45–74). In that study, I concentrated on the logistics of the project, and its date, scope, and organization, since the Uruk texts yield mostly data relevant to these questions. The present talk will focus more on the building itself, comparing the few details that the various textual sources provide on its appearance, function, and structure, with its actual material remains. The talk will also briefly address the question of the Hanging Gardens, and whether there is any foundation for Berossus’s claim that the North Palace included terraced gardens.

Session


Workshop 3: New Research on the City of Babylon


Keywords

Babylon; Nebuchadnezzar II; North Palace; Hanging Gardens; Eanna archive

Beltz, Jonathan

The wearers and creators of inscribed amulets in ancient Mesopotamia

 Monday 17 July 15:30–16:00

 Lipsius 123

Mesopotamians wore a variety of small inscribed objects for protection or blessing, including stone amulets of several shapes (those with a projection on top pierced longwise for hanging, and those of a “flattened cylinder seal” shape), cylinder seals, and clay cylinders. The texts on these objects can be excerpts from large collections of incantations, stock incantations, or created from loose formulae with much room for variation. These incantations have received much attention in scholarship through the creation of critical editions and comparisons with well-known incantation compendia, but the usage of these texts as objects in the lived religion of Mesopotamia has received less attention. In this paper I will consider several amulets containing *zi-pa3* incantations that I am currently publishing and offer some preliminary thoughts on who used them and how. While very few of these objects come from controlled archaeological excavations—and therefore lack any archaeological context—they do provide some evidence for who used them and how they were created. Parsing out the different social players involved in the creation and usage of amulets is foundational to sketching the ways that such religious practices may have varied among members of society.

Session

Workshop 4: Who Is It (Good) For? Ritual Texts and Ritual Performances

Keywords

Rituals; Incantations; Amulets; Lived Religion

Bennett, Ellie

“My liver heated up”: analysing the emotions felt in the liver in Neo-Assyrian texts using digital techniques



Tuesday 18 July 12:00–12:30



Lipsius 003

The project “Embodied Emotions: Ancient Mesopotamia and Today” seeks to compare how emotions were embodied across different cultures. Cross-cultural and cross-temporal studies into emotions are key to understanding emotions at a fundamental level, which has been the centre of discussion for both historians and neuroscientists. In this paper, I will ask how the emotions embodied in the liver differed in Akkadian and modern English. The liver is particularly interesting as a case study for embodied emotions, as it is not normally used in modern English to express how emotions are felt in the human body. The comparisons will therefore reveal key insights into how the speakers of Akkadian understood and expressed their emotions. I will use the open dataset available on the Open Richly Annotated Cuneiform Corpus (Oracc) for an Akkadian dataset consisting of over seven thousand texts from the Neo-Assyrian period. I also built a dataset that was comparable in terms of genre for modern English. Once I had these datasets, I and other members of the “Embodied Emotions” project used several digital methods in order to explore what emotions were closely associated with the liver: 1) word co-occurrence networks visualised which words were most likely to occur close to “liver”; 2) word embeddings quantified which words were used in similar contexts to “liver”; 3) Using the quantifications derived from these methods, members of the “Embodied Emotions” project were able to visualise which words were most closely related to parts of the body as heat maps. These digital techniques illustrate how the liver was associated with the emotions fear and anger in Neo-Assyrian texts, and will demonstrate the importance of integrating digital tools when asking more traditional Assyriological research questions.

Session

Digital methods in Ancient Near Eastern Studies

Keywords

Neo-Assyria; emotions; digital; comparative; embodiment

Bielefeld, Svende

Baths and toilets in Babylon: speculation or reality?



Thursday 20 July 12:00–12:30



Lipsius 003

In the modern understanding of hygiene in Western Europe, daily washing, preferably in the shower, is a matter of course that is taken into account in the planning of housing in the form of a bathroom. Looking at the evolution of the definition of cleanliness in the aforementioned area over the last 150 years, it is striking that it was not until the 18th century AD, but especially with the beginning of the 19th century AD, that the bathroom gained popularity among the upper middle class (Ward 2020, 149), while the majority of the Western population washed themselves, if at all, with the help of a washbowl, often in the kitchen near the stove (Ward 2020, 96). Since 20th century excavators were mostly from the upper class, they associated the concept of cleanliness and hygiene with a bathroom including a bathtub and a toilet, not a washbowl and a water jug. Accordingly, they searched the dwellings of their excavation sites for what they saw as suitable rooms, which they identified as toilets or bathrooms. They took the location of the room in the house into account, the nature of the floor and, ideally, the presence of a drain in the form of a soakaway. If the soakaway had a superstructure, it was considered a toilet without considering any other use. This identification of baths and toilets was not re-analysed in more recent works by Christiane Hemker 1993 or Maria Krafeld-Daughtery 1994. Experiments conducted last summer also showed that the main purpose of soakaways was to deal with large amounts of water in one go. Knowing that the understanding of cleanliness has turned out to be extremely changeable in the history of hygiene, the question arises whether these interpretations can be upheld. Was hygiene really a privilege of an elite class or are there hygiene practices that remain without trace in the archaeological context today? How does a reinterpretation of the rooms affect the interpretation of the few textual sources that exist on this topic? In order to get to the bottom of these questions, the development of the concept of cleanliness will be examined more closely on the one hand, and on the other hand, ten Late Babylonian dwellings in Babylon, Merkes, will be examined and discussed in a case study as an example.

Session

Workshop 13: Hygiene in the Ancient Near East: Power, Privilege, Inequality

Keywords

hygiene; toilets; baths; Babylon

Bishop, Catherine

Aromatic woods in the Old Babylonian Kingdom: A study of diverse smellscales



Tuesday 18 July 14:30–15:00



Lipsius 028

The value of scent is well-known in the ancient world, with complex smellscales dominating cities and rural areas in the middle Bronze Age. The scents influencing such wide smellscales included resinous woods and their products – through oils, perfumes, incense, and resins. I aim to bring to light the availability of these products in the Old Babylonian Kingdom, identifying the lengths to which the ancient peoples went for both local and ‘exotic’ woods and resins, with a focus on cedar, juniper, and pistacia. Particular emphasis will be placed on the prices of such products, and the extent to which political control was expressed over scents. This has previously been investigated by Middeke–Conlin (2014) and Jursa (2009), yet an interdisciplinary approach could be utilised, moving the focus away from trade structures to the botanical environment itself. This will, therefore, build upon textual sources, examining relict forests, pollen analysis, and soil composition, to identify the locations of the discussed resinous woods. Ultimately, I aim to highlight the differing smellscales within the Old Babylonian Kingdom, with aromatic products varying drastically according to price, with the most pure and pungent products only available to the elite. The unequal access to such products would have directly affected the daily lives of communities within the Old Babylonian Kingdom. The importance of this should not be understated, with similar smellscales seen throughout the ancient world, informing us of the differing approaches to aromatics within the ancient Eastern Mediterranean.

Session

Workshop 7: Trees and Shrubs in the Ancient Near East.
Investigating the Plurality of Practices and Meanings in the
Human–Arboreal Relationship

Keywords

Incense; smellscales; Old Babylon; woods

Blasweiler, Joost

The land of Hurama was given to the father of King Labarna



Tuesday 18 July 09:30–10:30



Lipsius 019

Merchants during the MBA period often travelled from Hahhum at the Euphrates into Anatolia. Along this route the merchants had an important stop at the karum in the royal city of Hurama. Here merchants decided to go to Kanesh or to the kingdom of Kussara and other areas like Kizzuwadna and Purušhanda. According to the Zalpa Text (CTH 3.1) the land of Hur(a)ma was given to father of King Labarna. What could have been the reason to give such an important land to the father of an Anatolian king? The act of Hattusili's grandfather is supported by Hattusili's statement that Labarna became the heir of his grandfather according to the Testament Text. According to Hittite texts the kingdom Hurma has a significant role as a vassal kingdom of the king of Hatti. The Palace Anecdotes (CTH8) describe five vassal rulers and officials from Hurma, while "the father of the king" is explicitly mentioned at the palace of Kussara. In Hittitology, there is an actual debate regarding the question in which cities the first kings of the early Old Kingdom had their court. The "gift" of Hattusili's grandfather appears to be an important entry to answer several questions about the rise of the Old Kingdom of Hattusha. My talk will discuss the role of Hattusha in the early Old Kingdom and I will propose a reconstruction by means of a historical analysis.

Session

Inequality: politics

Keywords

Trade city Hurama; Old Kingdom of Hattusha

Boddy, Kaira

Šumma ālu 89–91 according to the Nineveh excerpt tablets



Tuesday 18 July 14:30–15:00



Lipsius 123

The Nineveh series of Šumma ālu covers over a hundred chapters (or, Tablets) with omens relating in some way to man’s direct surroundings or his actions. The series is known from canonical manuscripts that give the complete Tablets, as well as from excerpt tablets that give a selection of omens from different, thematic sections. In this paper, I will elaborate on the important role of the excerpt tablets for reconstructing the Nineveh series, as established by the Šumma ālu project based at the University of Geneva. This project is preparing editions for Tablets 80 and onward, the lesser known final part of the series that has never been completely reconstructed and edited. I will focus on a group of excerpt tablets that all deal with the same part of Šumma ālu, omens that can now be attributed to Tablets 89–91. While many of these omens are familiar, they were not yet placed in the canonical series. The flame omens of Tablet 89 are known from an earlier version of the series, written down toward the end of the 8th century by Nabû-zuqup-kēnu, where they represent Tablets 91–94. The canonical Tablet 91 likewise has omens found in Nabû-zuqup-kēnu’s series, but arranged differently. The washing omens of Tablet 90 were previously known only from Uruk. I will discuss the contents and organization of these and other excerpt tablets of Šumma ālu, which are still underexplored as a text genre in their own right.

Session

Varia (I)

Keywords

Šumma ālu; excerpt tablets

Boivin, Odette

A family dispute in 6th century Babylon and the care of a widowed mother



Tuesday 18 July 09:30–10:00



Lipsius 028

This paper presents a court decision about a family dispute in sixth century Babylon. The text, written in the 8th year of Nabonidus, recounts a dispute whose origin almost certainly rooted in the absence of male heir in the generation of the litigants' grand-parents. In a society in which a patriarchal household with virilocal marriage was the social norm, the family had to find alternative solutions. However, these caused conflicts and left a number of documents, of which one was unearthed in Babylon, in the Merkes quarter, near the temple of Marduk. This court record refers to transfers of family property in relation with the question of care for the widowed mother. I will discuss the legal arrangements leading to the court case and the vocabulary of care (and of neglect) used in the text, and how they reflect the notion of kindness and of what was socially expected or not from relatives, especially when a family found itself outside the patriarchal norm.

Session

Workshop 3: New Research on the City of Babylon

Keywords

Babylon; social history; care in old age; court document

Borkowski, Sebastian; Cynthia Marti

Edubba'a – How to stage Sumerian literature for a public audience



Thursday 20 July 14:30–15:00



Lipsius 028

The play Edubba'a ('At School') was first performed in 2022 at the 75th anniversary of the Swiss Academy for Humanities and Social Sciences in Bern, Switzerland. The literary source of the play is a nearly 4000-year-old Sumerian narrative from Mesopotamia known today as Edubba'a A or Schooldays. Its manuscripts had been copied by apprentice scribes in the Old Babylonian period. The story revolves around everyday life in the Edubba'a, the Mesopotamian school. Protagonist and first-person narrator is a pupil who is bullied by his teachers and finally persuades his father to use bribery to convince the headmaster of his talent in writing. Staging the play was an interdisciplinary project, involving students and doctoral students from the Institute of Archaeological Sciences of the University of Bern and hobby actors. The play was preceded by a short film adaptation of the same literary source in 2018. Since then, a seminar on ancient textiles and fashion taught in collaboration with the Institute of Art History of the University of Bern discussed and designed costumes according to ancient visual and textual sources. A second seminar critically reviewed the reception of ancient West Asian history and material culture in theatre and film productions. The project had the aim to teach students about the processes and relevance of public outreach and to educate a broad public audience about Sumerian language as well as Old Babylonian literature and material culture in a creative and entertaining way. Through the performative reconstruction of everyday school life in ancient Mesopotamia, furthermore, we intended to stimulate an intercultural dialogue about childhood and education in ancient and modern times. Edubba'a is a playful approach to philological and archaeological sources that loosens up the otherwise very academic discussion. A film adaptation of the play is currently under development in order to reach a larger public audience and to document the project for future teaching.

Session

Workshop 14: Equality of Access to Mesopotamia: Public Outreach and Pedagogy

Keywords

public outreach; academic education; performing antiquity; Sumerian literature

Borrelli, Noemi; Palmiro Notizia

Born into privilege: elite children and unequal access to wealth in Ur III Babylonia



Thursday 20 July 10:30–11:00



Lipsius 011

During the Ur III period (2110–2003 BCE), high-ranking military officers and chief administrators were able to acquire considerable economic power by holding key positions within the state apparatus. This power manifested itself in exclusive control over arable land and other types of resources, including the availability of a large workforce. Whereas such a reward mechanism for prominent office holders is well documented and adequately studied, what has been less investigated so far is how access to wealth could be based on birth alone, a privilege enjoyed by male and female offspring of provincial governors and royal children regardless of their actual appointment as state officials. This work explores the rich Ur III documentary evidence concerning movable and immovable properties acquired by children of royal and local elites and shows how the composition of their wealth differed from the resources possessed by those well-to-do individuals who were not tied to ruling families. In this presentation, emphasis will be given to the so-called “household inventories” and other types of administrative documents, which allow us to assess the size of the landed properties entrusted to these privileged men and women, the number of their dependent laborers, and the value of their personal belongings. By evaluating such data, we will address the unequal distribution of opportunities and income between diverse social groups as well as how these parameters varied among people who shared a common identity. To further investigate the issue of horizontal inequality, we will also consider possible gender-based constraints and privileges concerning the accumulation of wealth.

Session

Inequality: Families in society, economy and law

Keywords

Ur III Babylonian; wealth accumulation; vertical/horizontal inequality

Bramanti, Armando; Sergio Alivernini

Mooing or mu-ing? Animal naming in Neosumerian documents



Tuesday 18 July 15:00–15:30



Lipsius 005

In spite of its rare attestation in the available sources, animal naming was probably a common practice in Mesopotamia, especially in the case of domestic animals or even pets. To this date, fifteen animals (cows and oxen mostly from OB texts) have been known to bear proper names. In this presentation the authors will bring the attention to four new Neosumerian attestations of named domestic animals (two cows, one ox, and one female donkey). This will add new elements to the discussion of animal naming in ancient Mesopotamia and will offer new insights in the significance of this practice from both a cultural and a socio-economic perspective. This analysis will also be conducted with particular focus on the onomastics.

Session

Workshop 6: Third Millennium Studies

Keywords

Neosumerian period; animal naming; cattle; onomastics;
legal texts

Burgin, James

Transtextuality in the Old Hittite historiographic tradition



Wednesday 19 July 10:30–11:00



Lipsius 003

The study of intertextuality has with limited exceptions received comparatively little attention in Hittitology to date. Yet a structuralist transtextual methodology has much to offer in questions of Old Hittite historiographical writing. A major recent discussion in Hittitology has concerned the original language of composition of the Old Hittite text corpus. Some have argued for a written Hittite tradition predating the archives at Ḫattuša, while others have argued that Hittite was written no earlier than the reign of Telipinu I in the late 16th century BC, meaning that all prior texts were translations from Akkadian originals or oral compositions written down for the first time. Even the traditional interpretation, which accepts the existence of Hittite originals beginning with Ḫattušili I, acknowledges the lack of a period of development and experimentation at the beginning of the Hittite tradition. This has led to the assumption of a dependence of early Hittite historiography on Mesopotamian models. Evidence for such a dependence remains indirect, and the traditional tools of cultural transmission – the lexical lists and Mesopotamian literature, whether in translation or otherwise – are completely missing from the Old Hittite period. In light of questions of origins, transmission, and translation, the proposed talk will examine intertextuality within the corpus of Old Hittite historiographical texts for instances of hypertextuality and architextual development. A first step will be to create an index of intertextual instances in the corpus, but it may be foreseen that the results might have some bearing on the question of translation: A compressed period of text production in the reign of Telipinu I should be reflected in the texts themselves, since comparison of the Akkadian and Hittite versions of the Annals of Ḫattušili I shows that the Hittites could modify texts as they translated. A Genettean perspective will be used, while acknowledging that the paucity of the preserved corpus more often permits only instances of allusion, the function of which may or may not be apparent, to be recovered.

Session

Workshop 8: Intertextuality in Cuneiform Literature: Latest Research and the Issues of Methodology

Keywords

Hittite; historiography; intertextuality

Ceccarelli, Manuel

Divine epithets and their context: Digital analysis of Sumerian divine epithets



Tuesday 18 July 09:30–10:00



Lipsius 003

While Greek divine epithets are standardised attribute (double name) which identify qualities and aspects of a deity and differentiate between its manifestations, Mesopotamian epithets are much less standardised with regard to semantics and syntactic structure and are often created for a specific context. For instance, “equal to Enlil”, a Sumerian epithet of Ninurta attested in Lugale, can be understood considering that this composition is a clear exaltation of Ninurta. Other epithets are not distinctive attribute of only one deity. For example, the epithet “first-born son of Enlil” does not define an exclusive familial relationship of one particular deity with Enlil since it has been attributed to Nanna, Ninurta, Nergal and Nisaba as well. This epithet stresses the prominence of a deity in the divine hierarchy within a given context. A specific epithet of a deity could also be ascribed to another one within the frame of theological and political transformations resulting in syncretism. Thus, epithets can express not only hierarchical, gender or qualitative differences, but also equivalences between deities. The ongoing project “Divine Epithets in Sumerian Literature and Royal Inscription” (Marie Skłodowska Curie Action) provides not only an online database, but also a first evaluation of the collected epithets. This paper aims to show how the database can be used to evaluate semantics, syntactic structure, religious aspect and context of divine epithets.

Session

Digital methods in Ancient Near Eastern Studies

Keywords

Sumerian language; divine epithets; Mesopotamian religion; Sumerian literature; digital humanities

Chambon, Gregory

The scribes, the oil pressers and the king: Behind and beyond the accounting practices of oil management in the Old Babylonian documentation from Mari



Thursday 20 July 10:00–10:30



Lipsius 005

About 200 edited administrative texts dating from the first five years of the reign of King Zimrī-Līm provide information on oil management in the Old Babylonian palace of Mari. Although they appear to be very concise and repetitive, they are characterised by a great variety of formats and functions, and are sealed or not. Most of the time, the study of such texts seeks to describe how they were written, considering that the accounting practices of ancient administrators are rational and factual responses to economic needs, as they are today. Thus, the focus is on the quantitative data and the administrative terminology (receipts, expenses, deliveries etc.), in order to reconstruct flows of products and the economic situation. In this regard, prosopographical studies are often carried out separately from the study of administrative terms. However, if one also takes into consideration the actors of oil management named in the texts, as well as the context in which these texts were drafted, it becomes possible to go beyond the question of “how?” and ask the question of “why?”: why were these oil management documents written? The purpose of this paper is to show that these texts were not originally intended to be accurate and factual records of reality, but that they were written within the framework of accounting and bookkeeping practices, which were more social products than rational responses to economic needs. In particular, they contribute to a memorisation of networks, which is useful for identifying the responsibilities of each individual in the oil management. This paper will rely on a similar set of contemporary administrative texts also found in the Palace of Mari, and concerning grain management.

Session

Workshop 10: Tracking and Managing Texts, Things and People in Cuneiform Cultures

Keywords

Accounting; bookkeeping; social history; Old Babylonian Period

Chapin, Michael

The Neo-Assyrian “Name Book” (5R 44) in its scribal context



Thursday 20 July 15:30–16:00



Lipsius 019

The tablet sometimes known as the Neo-Assyrian “Name Book” has been known for well over a century, since its initial discussion by Theophilus Pinches in 1880. The tablet consists of a list of names in Sumerian, Amorite, and Kassite alongside translations of these names into Akkadian. The names present on the tablet are varied, including Old Babylonian, Sealand, and Kassite Kings, Middle Babylonian scribes, and a queen from the Sumerian King List. Individual lines of the “Name Book” are often cited in discussions of specific names, particularly those of Kassite kings, but the tablet itself has rarely been treated holistically as a cohesive single text. This paper will seek to situate the “Name Book” in its scribal context, exploring the influence of lexical traditions, of name lists, and of king lists and chronicles on the composition of the text in an attempt to understand the eclectic mix of royal and scribal names present on the tablet. This paper will also examine the hermeneutic principles guiding the Akkadian equivalents given for the Sumerian, Amorite, and Kassite names, which often deviate from straightforward, morpheme-by-morpheme translations. Through these approaches, it is hoped that this paper will shed light on the composition of this unusual text and how the “Name Book” may provide insight into Mesopotamian scholarly understandings of names.

Session

Keywords

Inequality: Literacy and the scribal curriculum
names; onomastics; Neo-Assyrian; lists; Kassite

Charpin, Dominique

The occupation of the kingdom of Ešnunna by the Elamites in 1765 B.C.E.



Wednesday 19 July, 15:30–16:00



Lipsius 028

Ešnunna fell to the Elamites in 1765 BCE. The presence of the latter left some traces in the texts of the kingdom of Ešnunna, but this occupation was badly supported by a part of the population. An unpublished letter from the Mari archives tells us that the Ešnunna generals wrote to Hammu-rabi of Babylon to denounce the intentions of the Sire of Elam, who wanted to send them to the country of Šubartum. We know that this expedition ended badly; and when the Elamites withdrew from the territory of Ešnunna, they practised the scorched earth policy.

Session

Workshop 12: Connecting Babylon and Ešnunna: Textual and Archaeological Evidence of the First Half of the Second Millennium BCE

Keywords

Ešnunna; Elam; Babylon; Mari; Old Babylonian history

Christiansen, Birgit

Everything under control?! The Role of Oracle Inquiries in the Organization of the Hittite State Cult



Wednesday 19 July 14:30–15:00



Lipsius 011

The largest group of texts among Hittite written sources relates to the state cult. These texts encompass regulations for festivals and other cultic practices, inventory texts, royal decrees and proclamations, instructions to temple servants, prayers, and oracle texts. The primary purpose of most of these sources is to organize the state cult and ensure its adherence to religious tradition and divine will. Additionally, certain texts address past or future transgressions and provide guidance on how to prevent them and compensate for them.

Taken together, these texts shed light on both the ideal and the actual state of the cult, revealing significant deviations between the two. This is particularly evident in prayers, instructions, and oracle texts.

While the corpus of Hittite oracular texts has been inadequately studied to date, the inquiries used to uncover cultic transgressions and determine appropriate compensation have received more attention. However, this function is just one aspect of how oracle inquiries were employed in managing the cult. They were also used, for example, to determine the appropriate time and place for celebrating a festival and the nature and quantity of offerings.

Any modifications during the course of the festival were likewise reconciled with the gods through the use of oracles. Furthermore, oracles played a vital role in the administration of temples and the maintenance of divine statues and cult inventory. This aspect, which has received little attention so far, will be the main focus of this paper and will be elucidated through example texts related to the cult of the horse god Pirwa.

Session

Hittite oracles and prayers

Keywords

Hittite oracle reports; Hittite state cult; cult organization; temple administration; horse god Pirwa

Cianfanelli, Elisabetta

Some insights into the real estate assets of Ebla's women



Thursday 20 July 09:30–10:00



Lipsius 011

Some administrative texts from the Palace G archives of Ebla (Syria, 24th century BC) record the real estate assets of Ebla élite's members. Unsurprisingly, they were mainly men, namely the kings, their ministers, members of their families, and also high-ranking officials. Their assets consisted of estates, various facilities, lands, and also working personnel attached to them. Moreover, a few other texts document the bequeathing of these properties from father to son. Interestingly, some texts also mention women's real estate assets. Who were these women? What role did they play in the Ebla society? Could a woman inherit assets from her father's properties? When dealing with these issues, it is necessary to distinguish two levels of inequality: the first is a data inequality, which regards the number of available texts relating to women's properties; the second is an inequality of information, which concerns what and how much is recorded about the typologies of properties owned by women compared to those belonging to men. This paper aims to discuss these problems, defining a picture of the real estate assets of Ebla's women. For this purpose, this study will rely on further information from the chancery texts and will employ both prosopographical and metrological data.

Session

Inequality: Families in society, economy and law

Keywords

Ebla; women; real estate assets; prosopography; metrological data

Clayden, Tim

From immigrant tribe to 'Great King': the route to power for the Kassite immigrants into Mesopotamia



Tuesday 18 July 17:00–17:30



Lipsius 011

A review of the 'history' of the Old Testament toponym 'Shinar' showing its origins as 'Shamharu' and the arrival of the Kassites into upper Mesopotamia and northern Babylonia in the 18th century BCE. The location and role of the Shamharu (identified as an element of the Kassite incursion) as revealed by Babylonian and Hittite documents shows the Shamharu as primarily located on the middle-Euphrates within the mix of Amorite tribal structures in the region. 15th century BCE references to the Sngr (the Egyptian form of Shamharu) show a Shamharu presence in north western Syrian and the adoption of the term in internal Egyptian documents to refer to Babylonia – while using the Kassite term Karduniash in official correspondence with the Kassite kings. A similar pattern of usage of Samharu versus Karduniash is noted in middle Kingdom Hittite documents. The paper reviews the manner in which Shamharu became identified with the Kassite kingdom, and its implications for an understanding of early Kassite history and how the immigrant tribe rose to power and eventual status as one of the great powers of the LBA. Further, it will examine how Shamharu was used by a displaced people in the Old Testament to refer to Babylonia and the echo of Kassites that it represents in the Bible.

Session


Social inequality


Keywords

Kassite; Samharu; tribe; middle Euphrates; Bible

Cohen, Eran

Manner, quality, degree and quantity demonstratives and related particles in Old Babylonian

 Wednesday 19 July 10:00–10:30

 Lipsius 123

Old Babylonian has a particle *kīam* (‘so’), described as a **demonstrative adverb**. It consists of the element *kī* and the accusative suffix *-am*. The bare element *kī* functions as the **interrogative** (‘how’). Most often, however, it constitutes the particle *kīma*: It functions as **preposition** (‘like; according to; as; instead of; in order to’, etc.) or, heading a clause, as a **conjunction** (‘so that; as; when; because; that’, etc.). This exceptional multifunctionality is further complicated by numerous syntactic positions where these particles figure: adverbial (denoting manner), adnominal (referring to quality), or independent.

kīam as MQD–demonstrative expresses manner, quality, degree and quantity (König 2012; 2015; 2017; König & Umbach 2018). In extended view, *kīam* (with the related *kīma*) conveys various simulative meanings (Treis 2017):

<i>kīma</i> <i>ša</i> <i>ūmam</i> <i>nakr-um</i> <i>iṭeḥḥêkkum</i> as PRON.CONST today enemy–NOM 3sg.approach.npst.dat.2msg	correlative construction
<i>kīam</i> <i>ṭēm-ka</i> <i>lū=ṣabīt</i> M.DEM decision–2.MSG mod.ptcl=hold.pass.3msg	manner

‘As if the enemy would attack you today, **thus** you should be prepared’ (ShA 1: 8:25–26)

kīam both denotes **manner** and refers to the simulative clause precedeing it. While *kīam* is anaphoric, *kīma* merely frames the information as a simulative clause. *kīam* expresses degree:

<i>anāku</i> <i>kīam</i> <i>ina=aḥḥ-ī-ka</i> <i>qall-āku=ma</i> I M.DEM in=brother.pl-obl-2msg slight.stv-1sg=conn	degree
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‘Am I (considered) **so** unworthy among your brothers ...?’ (UET 5, 6:4–10)

Somewhat analogous to (1), *kīam* referring to direct speech and *kīma* complement clause both take the slot of object complement. *kīma* encloses the information to which the demonstrative adverb can only refer.

(continue on next page)



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Used adnominally, this association between *kīam* and *kī(ma)* expresses a **quality** (‘such’). Additionally, it can convey some particular similitive meanings, like the approximative:

1	<i>warḥ-am</i> month-ACC	<i>kīam</i> M.DEM	approximative
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‘(for) one month (or) **so**’ (AbB 9, 66:7)

<i>u</i> and	<i>kī</i> around	10	<i>awīl-ê</i> man-OBL.PL	<i>aḥûtim</i> other.MPL.OBL	<i>idūk-û</i> 3.smite.PST-MPL	approximative
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‘they killed ... and **some** 10 additional people...’ (ARM 26/1, p. 243, 11–13)

Despite the difficulties in the investigation of primeval languages, it is possible to describe the MQD-demonstrative *kīam* and the forms associated with it—the preposition ~ conjunction *kīma* as well as other related particles. The intriguing fluctuation in its syntactic function, namely nominal, adnominal and adverbial functions, can be accounted for by several principles which underly the syntax of Akkadian (or that of Ancient Semitic).

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Session

Workshop 11: Akkadian Linguistics

Keywords

manner demonstratives; *kīam*; *kīma*; expression of degree; approximative

Colonna d'Istria, Laurent

Some remarks on the Akkadian dialect in the Middle Euphrates Valley at the end of the *šakkanakku* period (mid-19th century BC).



Wednesday 19 July 15:00–15:30



Lipsius 123

The Akkadian dialect noted on cuneiform tablets from the late *šakkanakku* period (mid-19th century B.C.) is characterized by some linguistic features common to the dialects from northern Mesopotamia and western Syria. This paper proposes to summarize what we know about the *šakkanakku* dialect from Middle Euphrates Valley and to expose some new data as on subjunctive mode, participle derivation, and precativ.

Session

Workshop 11: Akkadian Linguistics

Keywords

Akkadian; Middle Euphrates valley; *šakkanakku* period

Corò, Paola

To be or not to be... admitted. The (in)equal access to land in Hellenistic Uruk



Tuesday 18 July 15:00–15:30



Lipsius 019

A large part of the cuneiform documentation from Hellenistic Uruk records the purchase, transfer, donation, division and allocation of urban properties, consisting mainly of houses, unbuilt plots, shops situated in various areas of the city. Although members of the prominent traditional families connected to the temple largely dominate the scenario, featuring as actors in the contracts at different levels, also individuals of different standing, outside the traditional agnatic families of Uruk participate in business activities where urban property is at stake. The paper aims at exploring the varying degree of access to urban land in Hellenistic Uruk, with an eye to the (in)equality of opportunities to participate in the system and benefit from it in relation to the profession, ethnicity, and family identity of those involved in it.

Session

Inequality: wealth, labor and income

Keywords

Urban land, distribution patterns; (in)equality of access

D'Amico, Davide

Meeting God under a tree: Ritual memories and literary patterns in three biblical narratives (Gen 21; 1 Kgs 19; Jonah 4)



Tuesday 18 July 17:30–18:00



Lipsius 028

The biblical text describes a world populated by a wide variety of fruit trees, forests, and bushes. While it is undoubtedly true that the plant world represents an immobile and often invisible presence, it is also true that the Bible, in some of its traditions, testifies to significant interactions associated with trees and plants. As some studies have shown, among the prophetic invectives denouncing Israel's idolatry, it is possible to recognize traces of tree-related cults and polemics directed at rituals in sacred groves and gardens (cf., for example, Isa 1:27–31; 57:5; 66:17; Jer 2:20; 3:13). Even though the Torah expressly forbids any kind of tree religiosity (cf. Deut 12:2; 21:16), the Bible preserves in its literary structures traces of a rituality linked to trees and shrubs that conceives of these places as particularly suitable for an encounter with the divine. This study aims to highlight the ritual importance of the plant element (tree and bush) that emerges from the analysis of three biblical episodes that share a common literary pattern (Gen 21; 1 Kgs 19; Jonah 4). It will be seen how, through structural fixation, the three texts share the same underlying conception that sees the plant element as a fundamental means of connection with the divine. This study also aims to place this literary pattern in the broader biblical context, highlighting those traditions that see arboreal spaces (woods, forests, gardens) as places associated with the sphere of the sacred.

Session

Workshop 7: Trees and Shrubs in the Ancient Near East.
Investigating the Plurality of Practices and Meanings in the Human–Arboreal Relationship

Keywords

Hebrew Bible; trees and shrubs; literary analysis; biblical narrative

Dayton, John

Herodotean symmetry and the women of Babylon



Thursday 20 July 12:30–13:00



Lipsius 011

The response of Greek authors to Babylon is characterized by their attraction to numerical harmony and agreement. Babylon thus earned repute among them for expertise in astronomical practice and perhaps mathematics. While this intellectual symbiosis peaked in the Hellenistic period, it is perhaps observable as early as Thales and appears in other pre-Hellenistic sources: an affinity for symmetrical relation animates Herodotus' account of Babylon, beginning with his description of the city's design (1.178–181) and the motif appears in his three tales dealing with women of Babylon. Access to the same is important for social harmony, and conflict begins with imbalance of women, as he indicates in the opening of the *Historiae* (1.1–5). His regard for numerical balance is most explicit in connection with the public auction of wives, precisely because this custom ensures that funds are proportionally distributed so that no woman goes unwed and no man goes without a bride (1.196). The practice of "ritual prostitution" is condemned because of the inequality of result – the less alluring women wait years for a taker while others rapidly discharge their obligation (1.199). Presumably if a measure similar to that followed in the auctions of brides were to be applied here – if the price of the beautiful women would be pooled and used as incentive for men to take the less desirable women – thus ensuring a more balanced total outcome, the custom would incur less disapprobation. The final and most telling incident is the revolt of 522–1 in which Herodotus describes the mass strangulation of all Babylonian women beyond one per household (3.151). While Herodotus stops short of applauding the measure, he seems to acknowledge its soundness from a purely tactical viewpoint, given the complete equity of its implementation and its success in prolonging the Babylonians' resistance through a proto-Malthusian levelling of population with food supply. Likewise Darius' restoration of the female population, in which the burden of restoring gender parity is shared proportionally by neighboring cities (3.159.2), is noted with evident approval. Unequal proportionality of female population is a source of conflict in Herodotus, and his application of this motif in his account of Babylon is perhaps affected by the city's association with numerical harmony.

Session

Inequality: Families in society, economy and law

Keywords

Herodotus; Babylon; Darius; women; marriage

Debourse, Céline

New light on the Late Babylonian Kislīmu ritual text (BM 32206+)



Monday 17 July 15:00–15:30



Lipsius 123

BM 32206+ is a Late Babylonian text describing rituals performed primarily in the month Kislīmu. Based on paleographic features, the tablet can be securely dated to the Hellenistic period. However, when Çağırzan and Lambert first published the text, they claimed that its original composition dated back to as early as 800 BCE. Moreover, they pointed out that the “copy” with which we are dealing is pervaded by “textual corruption”, limiting our understanding of the text’s contents. Despite that poor understanding of the text, BM 32206+ is frequently cited and used in modern studies on Mesopotamian ritual. In this paper, I will offer a critical rereading of BM 32206+ in order to reach a better understanding of its contents and context of creation. Based on philological and historical analyses, I claim that the ritual text’s origins can be firmly anchored in a Hellenistic setting. Placing it against this historical background also sheds more light on the question of “who it was (good) for”, as it exposes the text as part of a discourse that gives an unprecedented central role to Babylon’s priesthood (Late Babylonian priestly literature).

Session

Workshop 4: Who Is It (Good) For? Ritual Texts and Ritual Performances

Keywords

ritual; ritual text; Late Babylonian priestly literature

DeGrado, Jessie

The racialization of Assyria and its legacy



Monday 17 July, 15:30–16:00



Lipsius 005

The image of Assyria in the popular imagination remains that of a bloodthirsty, rapacious empire. As a review of the British Museum’s exhibition “I Am Assurbanipal,” published in The Guardian, puts it: “Whether wrestling lions or skinning prisoners alive, the Assyrian king ran a murderously efficient empire.” Although flagrant Orientalism of this sort no longer figures overtly in scholarship, its underlying assumptions continue to shape Assyriology. This is evident in the focus on Neo-Assyrian violence and the general characterization of Assyria as a passive recipient of Babylonian culture, rather than a partner in mutual exchange and contestation. Both assumptions have their roots in 19th-century portraits of Assyria as “Semitic”—i.e., despotic and uncreative. In this talk, I argue that the persistence of Orientalist paradigms results, at least in part, from a hasty attempt to separate the idea of race from language and culture. In practice, this has paradoxically obscured the role racialization plays in the modern constitution of linguistic and cultural categories, especially when applied to ancient groups. The result is that Mesopotamian states are still classified and evaluated based on their perceived proximity to ill-defined 19th-century categories like “Semitic” (Assyrian) and “Sumerian,” with Babylon occupying an intermediary position between the two poles. Recent scholarship (e.g., Collins 2021), has recognized that the “Sumerians” were initially valued for a perceived proximity to privileged groups in the Euro-American racialized hierarchies. This paper explores the process in mirror image: the ongoing effects of the 19th-century denigration of Assyria as prototypical “Oriental despot.”

Session

Workshop 1: The Impact of Victorian Evolutionism on Ancient Near Eastern Studies (late 19th–early 20th centuries)

Keywords

Assyria; empire; race; ethnicity; language

De Graef, Katrien

Accounting rituals or ritual accountings? Managing rites within the Chief Dirge Singers' archive (Late Old Babylonian Sippar- Amnānum)



Thursday 20 July, 09:30–10:00



Lipsius 005

Within the Chief Dirge Singers' archive, a group of ca. 150 texts pertain to the organization, management and financial aspects of the various rites performed in the Annunītum temple under the auspices of the Chief Dirge Singer. The majority of these texts are economic in nature — loans, IOU's, and lists enumerating income, expenses, and outstanding debts — which, in combination with letters and other documents allow to reconstruct the complex accounting system involving not only the Chief Dirge Singer and the performers of the rites, but also other parties such as guarantors, patrons, commissioners, and the fatteners of the nakamtum storehouse. This paper focusses on how the actions involved in the performance of the rites, including the various transfers of silver and other commodities by various parties before and after the actual performance, were translated into formal, calculative, and above all historically institutionalised accounting procedures. Treating the accounting system as a social, institutional, and organizational practice rather than a neutral reporting technique, allows to shed light not only on the processes and perception of the ritual activities and the transfers of silver and other commodities involved, but also on the networks and relationships between Temple, State and urban elites in which the accounting system is embedded.

Session

Workshop 10: Tracking and Managing Texts, Things and People in Cuneiform Cultures

Keywords

accounting practice; rituals; economic networks; Old Babylonian period; Sippar

Delnero, Paul

Literacy and inequality: Syllable Alphabet B and access to writing in ancient Mesopotamia



Thursday 20 July 14:30–15:00



Lipsius 019

In studies of Mesopotamian scribal education, it is frequently assumed that scribal training was intended primarily as a means of elite identity formation, and that only all but a privileged few could learn to read and write. More recently, however, it has been argued that if literacy is considered as a continuum, with functional literacy at one end, and advanced mastery of the entire scribal art at the other, then it is likely that the number of people who could read and write at a basic level in ancient Mesopotamia was higher than previously thought. In this paper, the question of access to literary will be reconsidered through an examination of the elementary sign exercise, Syllable Alphabet B, copied and learned at the very beginning of scribal training at Nippur during the Old Babylonian Period. It will be argued on the basis of the list's didactic structure and the quantity and nature of the preserved copies that basic literacy was widespread at the time and place the list was learned, if not beyond.

Session

Inequality: Literacy and the scribal curriculum

Keywords

Scribal education; literacy; sign lists

De Ridder, Jacob Jan

Akkadian Nominal Patterns



Wednesday 19 July, 10:30–11:00



Lipsius 123

Studies of Akkadian word formation require several considerations. Foremost a substantive can be stripped down to various core aspects, e.g., a simple pattern like PaRS has a P–R–S root, CvCC template and an –a– melody. More complex are the extended patterns, e.g., maPRaSūt– has in addition to its identical root, template CvCCvCvC and melody –a–a–ū–, a prefix ma– and augmented suffix –ūt. The difference between the two is that the latter can be taken away and a functional noun remains (maPRaS). These types of labels can help describe Akkadian nominal morphology in a more accurate way which can in turn help describe the derivational (or non-derived) character of nouns, i.e., various classes can be distinguished: 1) primary nouns, often with Semitic cognates; 2) loan words; 3) deverbal nouns, derived from a verbal root; 4) denominal nouns, derived from another noun by either means of a different pattern or the augmentation of various suffixes. In this paper we will discuss the nominal patterns associated with these classes and discuss to what extent these differ. Trends and tendencies of building various grammatical constructions will be a point of interest, for instance the frequency of the PaRaSS type of nouns, whereas QaTaLL buildings are otherwise uncommon in other Semitic languages. Similarly also pattern changes, such as alleged PiRS > PuRS; PaRīS > PiRīS or malaḥḥu ‘sailor’ > mal(l)āḥu. While we may expect a restriction of some patterns to specific dialects, time periods, or genres, there are also instances of rare patterns to the extent that they are not productive. This paper presents an overview of the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft funded project 320051369: “Akkadian noun patterns” (2016–2020).

Session

Workshop 11: Akkadian Linguistics

Keywords

grammar; Akkadian; pattern; morphology

Desset, François

Kere (devotion) for zemi (grace): new data on the late 3rd–early 2nd millennium BC Hatamtite (Elamite) royal religion based on the recent decipherment of the Linear Elamite writing



Tuesday 18 July, 09:30–10:00



Lipsius 005

The recent decipherment of the Linear Elamite writing (ca. 2300–1850 BC) gave access to “new” texts recorded in the Hatamtite (Elamite) language. Some of them are inscribed on specific silver kunanki vessels, found in the Kam–Firuz area (Fars), and dated between 2050 and 1850 BC. Ordered by kings related to the Shimashki and so-called Sukkalmah dynasties, these vessels were probably deposited originally in the temple of the then-most important god Napiresha, located maybe in the city of Anzan (modern Tal-i Malyan). Besides interesting linguistic and historical information, these texts document an up-to-now invisible feature of the Hatamtite (Elamite) royal ideology, where kings were notably offering Napiresha kere (devotion) in exchange for zemi (fortune/grace), being somehow rulers of divine right.

Session

Workshop 6: Third Millennium Studies

Keywords

Iran; Bronze Age; Linear Elamite writing; Sukkalmah dynasty; religion

Deubelbeiss, Irene

Rising star, center stage, or background actor: The changing role of the Ur III kings in the Sumerian precedence debates



Thursday 20 July 10:00–10:30



Lipsius 019

My presentation will examine the original Sitz-im-Leben of three Sumerian precedence debates: “Silver and Strong Copper”, “Tree and Reed” and “Summer and Winter”. In these texts, two normally inanimate protagonists, taken from the daily life of the agrarian society of the time, debate each other over the question of who takes precedence over the other, with the dispute finally being settled by a divine judge. All three compositions probably originated during the time of the Third Dynasty of Ur, and thus stand at the beginning of a literary genre that perhaps encompasses the idea of inequality as a basic fact of life more clearly than any other type of literary text. Among all the Sumerian precedence debates, “Silver and Strong Copper”, “Tree and Reed” and “Summer and Winter” stand out because of several common factors that are not found in any of the other compositions normally classified as such: a) their doxology in praise of Enlil; b) a narrative setting of the debate ensuing the offering of gifts in a temple; and c) their clear indications for an original Ur III date. Previous researchers have mainly placed the original Sitz-im-Leben of the Sumerian precedence debates at the royal court and/or public festivals. At such an event, they would have served on the one hand as entertainment, but on the other hand also as a confirmation of royal authority and superiority. However, close examination of the three texts mentioned above shows that this picture is more nuanced. In particular, the role of the kings mentioned and their position in relation to Enlil varies significantly. Whereas Urnamma in “Silver and Strong Copper” only makes his entrance after the debate proper, receiving the victor (Copper) as a gift from the debate’s adjudicator Enlil, Shulgi in “Tree and Reed” takes center stage, taking over the role of the divine judge himself. Finally, in “Summer and Winter”, Ib-bi-Sin only makes an appearance as a background actor, and we can even trace a shift in the degree of agency afforded to him across different manuscripts, with later traditions assigning him an increasingly passive role. I will analyze both how these differences reflect the changing fortunes of the dynasty and the importance that they bear for the development of the genre in general.

Session

Inequality: Literature

Keywords

precedence debate; Sumerian literature; Sitz-im-Leben;
Ur III kings

Devecchi, Elena; Erica Scarpa

The project “Kassite Prosopographic Records”: traditional and digital prosopography for the study of society and economy in Kassite Babylonia



Monday 17 July 17:00–17–30



Lipsius 011

As in other periods of Mesopotamian history, cuneiform texts from Kassite Babylonia record the existence of thousands of individuals who interacted in various capacities with the main economic and administrative institutions, which produced the vast majority of sources that have come down to us for this period. In most cases, we know only their name, rarely accompanied by patronymic and/or profession. However, if one considers these individuals as minimal components of a complex system and analyzes the specific contexts in which they interact, even simple names can become valuable sources for studying and understanding an economic and social organization, especially when it comes to central figures in the management of primary resources. Building upon these assumptions, the project aims to bring these people “out of anonymity” through a prosopographical study aimed at investigating the underlying socioeconomic structures of Babylonia in the 14th–13th centuries BCE. The project combines traditional prosopographical analysis with the use of digital methods (social network analysis, data visualization). Specifically, the data is organized in a relational database built with Omeka S that has been designed to adequately represent the complexity and peculiarities of the Kassite epigraphic and prosopographical record and uses an appropriately modified version of the Factoid Prosopography Ontology (FPO). This enables the use of visualization and statistical analysis techniques such as social network analysis for quantitative and qualitative evaluations of the collected data that can contribute to reconstructing the network of interactions between different actors who operated in the economic and administrative system recorded by the sources.

Session

Inequality & digital methods: social network analysis, prosopography, onomastics

Keywords

Kassite Babylonia; prosopography; social network analysis; data visualization

De Zorzi, Nicla

Repetition and parallelism in Akkadian literature and scholarly writing



Thursday 20 July, 09:00–09:30



Lipsius 123

Studies on formal characteristics of Akkadian scholarly and literary texts not tied to the edition of a particular text are rare. In the present paper, I will offer some insights into the role of literary forms in the construction of meaning in Akkadian literature and scholarly writing. I will discuss through a series of examples the creative application of a principle of ‘repetition with variation’ as a means of constructing and structuring literary and scholarly compositions. By drawing on a wide range of scholarly and literary texts and on a methodology that can be described as a ‘constituent analysis,’ I will demonstrate how the interplay of similarity and contrast of (near-)contiguous textual elements is a major vector for stylistic as well as epistemological creativity and for rhetorical effectiveness in Akkadian. Particular attention will be paid to parallelism and to the aspects of language that count toward parallelism (semantic content, syntax, morphology, sound elements, and balance of line lengths).

Session

Workshop 15: Construction of Meaning in Ancient Mesopotamian Literature and Scholarship

Keywords

letters; rhetoric; network analysis; Old Assyrian

Edmonds, Alexander Johannes

New light on the Temanites, a subaltern early Iron Age people



Tuesday 18 July, 14:30–15:00



Lipsius 011

The seven campaigns to ‘Hanigalbat’ (the southern foothills of the modern, Ṭūr ‘Aḇdīn, Turkey) undertaken by Adad-nārārī II of Assyria between 901 and 894 BC prominently describe the conquest of three polities ruled by ‘Temanites’ (tēmānnû). After Adad-nārārī II’s conquests, this socio-ethnic term all but disappears from historical sources, with only a few later references attested. Following various detailed studies of the Assyrian account of these conquests, a scholarly consensus has formed that these individuals were Arameans. However, this conclusion suffers from a number of issues. Firstly, these ‘Temanite’ polities do not display a bītu structure similar to that of those polities in the Upper Ḥābūr conventionally identified as Aramean. Secondly, the name tēmānnû is demonstrably an exonym, originating in Aramaic tmyn ‘south’, and thus designating ‘southerners’ in Aramaic, although the cities in which Temanites are to be found in the textual record are all in a relatively northerly position. Thirdly, the onomastics of Temanites display some clearly non-Aramaic features. Fourthly, and most vitally, the toponymy of settlements associated with them is not Aramaic in origin when closely examined. Rather, it becomes clear from systematic study that most ‘Temanite’ personal and place names bear very close affinities to North Arabian linguistic material, a view which had been previously dismissed. By carefully philologically reassessing the variants of Temanite toponyms and their etymologies (most strikingly in the case of Gidāra/Raq(am)mat/Sa’amê), and other evidence, it is demonstrated that the Temanites were likely a nomadic, linguistically Northern Arabian group which entered the Upper Ḥābūr during the turmoil of the late Middle Assyrian period and settled on the fringes of the Ṭūr ‘Aḇdīn, gradually acculturating to their surroundings but likely retaining some of their language and traditions by the time of the Assyrian conquest. As modern scholarship has viewed them from an Assyrian lens, they have been presumed to have been Aramean. Patient study proves otherwise, and provides some further insights into how to approach subaltern populations in early Iron-age sources.

Session

Social inequality

Keywords

Temanites; Assyria; Arameans; Northern Arabia; subaltern peoples

Eertink, Mark

Insults and offensive language in the Old Babylonian lexicon



Thursday 20 July, 10:30–11:00



Lipsius 019

Insults may be some of the most universal forms of human communication. Nevertheless, they are considered taboo in social interactions. This and their resulting rarity in written sources may explain the lack of scholarly engagement with this phenomenon until recently. Literary texts originating from Old Babylonian scribal schools form a popular corpus to study explicitly offensive language. Especially the so-called disputations yield large numbers of insults. In my paper, I will widen the scope of investigation and study insults from the school curriculum in combination with those found in personal and official letters from the Old Babylonian period. The paper will present the most common types of offensive language and discuss the methodological problems involved. Invectivity is highly personalised and determined by context. In order to evaluate the offensive nature of insults, or even to identify them in the first place, the vast semantic web of the Babylonian terminology of invectivity needs to be disentangled. Not only are these oldest-known insults interesting and sometimes fun to read, they offer us a great deal of insight in social interactions, rhetoric, and morality among the literary elites of the Old Babylonian period.

Session Keywords

Inequality: Literature
insults; Old Babylonian period; Sumerian literature; letters

Erskine, Neil

Socioeconomic diversity amongst Ancient Near Eastern archaeology student cohorts in UK higher education



Thursday 20 July, 12:30–13:00



Lipsius 028

Though many initiatives seeking to quantify, qualify, and improve equality, diversity, and inclusivity in archaeology courses have been undertaken or are ongoing in the UK, these have understandably prioritised protected characteristics, particularly gender and ethnicity. Little work has sought to assess or address the socioeconomic background of archaeology students, and very little of either has been conducted with a view to identifying patterns in students of ANE archaeology specifically. This paper presents the results of a pilot study collecting data concerning the socioeconomic backgrounds and course-choices of students studying ANE-specific archaeology degrees, students studying ANE-courses as part of general archaeology degrees, and students undertaking general archaeology degrees but who opt not to undertake any elective ANE courses. The data identifies socioeconomic demographic patterns in UK undergraduate ANE-archaeology cohorts, highlights relationships between students' socioeconomic background and their degree programme decision-making, sheds light on push/pull factors for ANE-focussed research, and highlights some potential strategies for outreach and student retention.

Session

Workshop 14: Equality of Access to Mesopotamia: Public Outreach and Pedagogy

Keywords

Socioeconomic diversity; accessibility; inclusion; decolonisation

Feder, Yitzhaq

Disgust, disease and exclusion in Ancient Near Eastern texts



Thursday 20 July 09:00–09:30



Lipsius 003

Disgust and fear fulfil a crucial biological function in motivating avoidance of mortal threats. Viewed in this light, banishment of impure and diseased people, attested already in the 21st century BCE (Gudea) may not be any more irrational than quarantine practices of the 21st century CE.

Nevertheless, it should be recognized that these exclusionary practices often extend far beyond the dictates of physiological safety and wellbeing. For example, avoidance of menstrual impurity, nearly ubiquitous in world cultures, could be viewed as an expression of misogyny and cultural biases. In this paper, I will examine the various rationales for exclusion and their social ramifications in the ancient Near East, specifically Mesopotamia, Hatti and Israel. In particular, attention will be given to impurities associated with women and their implications for understanding gender conceptions. It will thereby examine the manner in which the body serves as a point of intersection, where the boundaries between biology and politics, nature and culture, turn out to be fluid.

Session

Workshop 13: Hygiene in the Ancient Near East: Power, Privilege, Inequality

Keywords

disgust; disease; impurity; pollution; contagion

Fincke, Jeanette

What is the DUR in astrological cuneiform texts ?



Tuesday 18 July, 17:00–17:30



Lipsius 123

While the celestial omens refer to the position of constellations and planets relative to one another, astrological texts refer to the position of the planets in relation to the zodiac. Hellenistic astrology, a type of horoscopic astrology, identifies “five essential dignities”, to designate four special planetary positions within the zodiac and its subdivisions that exert particular influence on a new-born child at a given moment. Classical authors claim that only two “essential dignities” were adopted from another culture: the planetary position *hypsōma* (exaltation) from the Chaldeans (a position already attested in Neo-Assyrian texts) and the decans from the Egyptians. Late Babylonian astrological texts (ca. late 5th – 1st century BCE) refer to planetary positions within the zodiac with terms such as DUR and *mi-ḫir* (also written GABA or GABA.RI). In my presentation I shall show that when studied in context, it becomes clear that these positions correspond with four of the “essential dignities”. So they are attested in cuneiform texts long before Claudius Ptolemy (ca. 100 – 170 CE), who described them in his book *Tetrabiblos* I (17–19). We may now conclude that the Greeks adopted their system of all the special planetary positions from the Babylonians. Also for the other subdivisions of the zodiac that are relevant for astrology, with the exception of the decans, which come from Egypt, there are Babylonian forerunners. So the Greeks did not invent astrology, they just elaborated on it.

Session

Varia (I)

Keywords

study of specific terminology; transfer of knowledge;
astrological texts; Hellenistic astrology; zodiac

Flores, Marc

Human–nonhuman encounters in Gilgamesh and Huwawa A and Lugalbanda II



Tuesday 18 July, 15:00–15:30



Lipsius 003

Not available on livestream

Both Gilgamesh and Huwawa, Version A (GH A), and Lugalbanda II contain a passage where one of the main characters enquires into the ontological status of another character. In GH A Gilgamesh asks whether Huwawa is a human or a god, and in Lugalbanda II Anzu asks the same question about Lugalbanda, whom he has not encountered yet. Both Gilgamesh and Anzu identify Huwawa and Lugalbanda as lu2s, producing a triangulation between lu2, lu2–ulu3, and diĝir that is unparalleled in Sumerian literature. Considering that both compositions were widely copied as part of scribal training, that Lugalbanda is Gilgamesh’s father, that both Anzu and Huwawa are liminal creatures, and that these human–nonhuman encounters take place in the mountains east of Sumer, it is very likely that the GH passage would have called to mind the Lugalbanda II passage in antiquity, and vice versa. The aim of this paper is to discuss the intertextual connection between GH 94–95 and Lugalbanda II 105–110 and explore its implications for our understanding and reading of GH A. This paper takes a reader–response approach to intertextuality that counts familial relationships between characters, the type of interactions between them, the location of the action, and similar ontological preoccupations as intertextual references, paying attention to how the scribal setting of GH A and Lugalbanda II made intertextuality possible.

Session

Workshop 8: Intertextuality in Cuneiform Literature: Latest Research and the Issues of Methodology

Keywords

Gilgamesh; Huwawa; Lugalbanda; Anzu; intertextuality

Frame, Grant

The Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia and Royal Inscriptions of the Neo-Assyrian Period Project



Tuesday 18 July, 09:00–09:30



Lipsius 011

Royal inscriptions are our most important source of information on the history of ancient Assyria, although it must always be remembered that they are also works of propaganda and reflect official ideology. Albert Kirk Grayson conceived the idea of initiating a project publishing up-to-date, standardized editions of all the Assyrian royal inscriptions in the mid-1970s, although his work on them had begun about a decade earlier when he had prepared translations of the inscriptions down until the time of Ashurnasirpal II. His plans for the project were in large part modelled on the well-known LOEB classical library series and the publications were intended to be accessible to non-specialists. He created “The Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia” project (RIM), which he directed at the University of Toronto with support from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada from 1979 until 2002, although its last volume, the tenth book produced by the project, did not appear until 2008. Only four of its ten books dealt with Assyrian royal inscriptions, and one of these only included inscriptions on clay cones in Istanbul. The remaining six books presented Sumerian, Old Akkadian, and Babylonian royal inscriptions. In 2008, and with the support of the National Endowment for the Humanities, I began “The Royal Inscriptions of the Neo-Assyrian Period” project (RINAP) at the University of Pennsylvania in order to complete the editions of the remaining Assyrian kings, the rulers from 744 BC until the end of Assyria. Since that time, seven books have appeared, with the final book of editions (RINAP 5/3) having been handed over to the publisher at the beginning of this year; it will appear in a few months. The presentation will discuss the two projects.

Session

Workshop 5: Assyrian Royal Inscriptions in Honor of A.K. Grayson

Keywords

royal inscriptions; Assyria

Gabriel, Gösta

Who is the bride of Lugalbanda? Re-reading IAS 327



Tuesday 18 July, 12:00–12:30



Lipsius 005

We know the idea that Lugalbanda and Ninsumuna are a couple from the Gilgamesh tradition since the 21st century BCE. Thus, when the manuscript IAS 327 was discovered at Tell Abu Salabikh, it seemed clear that this earlier text would tell of their marriage. Since its excavation, IAS 327 has become one of the most discussed manuscripts of the ED IIIa period. Bing presented an initial study in 1977. In 1989, Jacobsen published a first complete edition of the text, including an extensive commentary. Further editions have been presented by Wilcke (2014) and Lisman (2019). The present paper returns to the manuscript and asks whether the established notion of a marriage between Ninsumuna and Lugalbanda can be maintained. For this purpose, aspects of the tablet layout are considered. The unusual double ruling in the last column is subject of discussion, as is the reading order of the cuneiform signs in the cases. Finally, semantic questions are raised. First, why is the text so strongly focused on the theme of knowledge? Second, what is the specific role of Lugalbanda, Ninsumuna, and Innana in the narrative? The approach of hyleme analysis is used to answer these questions. Based on these observations, a new reading is proposed. It situates the text and the story in a ritual context, more specifically in the context of the so-called “sacred marriage”.

Session

Workshop 6: Third Millennium Studies

Keywords

ED literature; Lugalbanda; Innana; Ninsumuna; sacred marriage

Garcia-Ventura, Agnès

The evolutionary myth of the matriarchal past and its echoes in ancient Near Eastern studies



Monday 17 July, 15:00–15:30



Lipsius 005

Matriarchy, as a historiographical myth with an evolutionist flavour, has a long history. It was already present in ancient Greek sources, which were taken as the basis for its 19th century (re)construction. Since then, even though critical voices recurrently appear, the myth, with its evolutionary background, has been regularly taken up again. Every time this myth comes up again, the past is used to discuss the alleged existence of matriarchy: for instance, Classical sources, specifically Greek written sources, or Neolithic sources, specifically material culture from different areas of Europe. However, ancient Near Eastern sources are conspicuously absent from these debates, at least at first sight. Are these sources really absent from these debates? And, if so, does it mean the debates on matriarchy are also absent in ancient Near Eastern studies? In this communication I provide some tentative answers to these questions by discussing the treatment of matriarchy and patriarchy in ancient Near Eastern studies. It will lead me to defend that, despite the almost total lack of explicit debates on matriarchy in this field of study, the evolutionary myth of a matriarchal past underlies several hypotheses regarding the alleged decline in the status of women from the third to the second millennium BCE.

Session

Workshop 1: The Impact of Victorian Evolutionism on Ancient Near Eastern Studies (late 19th–early 20th centuries)

Keywords

matriarchy; patriarchy; historiographical myth; women's history

Garfinkle, Steven

Why what we don't know is so important: merchants' accounts in early Mesopotamia.



Wednesday 19 July, 10:00–10:30



Lipsius 005

Merchants' accounts form some of our most detailed accounting records from early Mesopotamia; and yet, like much of the Ur III corpus, so much is missing amidst this abundance. In this paper, I will examine the missing details of the merchants' accounts to better understand their record keeping as social and economic practice.

Session

Workshop 10: Tracking and Managing Texts, Things and
People in Cuneiform Cultures

Keywords

Ur III; merchants; accounting

Goddeeris, Anne

How to avoid Cinderella's fate. Provisions for children in Old Babylonian marriage and adoption contracts



Thursday 20 July, 11:30–12:00



Lipsius 011

Few inequalities bite deeper than those between siblings, whether in terms of parental emotional investment or financial favoritism. Thus, several Old Babylonian marriage contracts not only stipulate obligations between spouses but also contain clauses regulating the fate of children from earlier marriages. These issues are dealt with in some adoption documents and court decisions as well. In this talk, I will examine the position of these children. How was the relationship with their future half-siblings regulated? Did they have equal rights and obligations? Could a parent favor one of them? Did children from first marriages have a claim on the property of their biological parent and/or on the property of their stepparent? Did they have obligations towards their (step)parents? Obviously, the answers to these questions are related to the specific social and economic status of husband and wife in each individual case.

Session

Inequality: Families in society, economy and law

Keywords

Old Babylonian archival documents; social and economic history; marriage; inheritance; adoption

Gonçalves, Carlos

Time and Social Network Analysis: another study of the Old Babylonian archive of Nūr-Šamaš



Monday 17 July, 15:00–15:30



Lipsius 011

Building on previous social-network-analysis studies of the Archive of Nūr-Šamaš, which comes from the Old Babylonian Diyala, this paper explores the possibility of visualization of time in a graph model of the relations established by the people who took part in the documents. The need of a tool providing more information about the chronology of the archive of Nūr-Šamaš results from the fact that year names appearing in its documents refer mainly to king Sîn-abūšu's reign, whose chronology is still poorly known. However, in at least two cases, relative dating is possible. Each of these cases involves year names for the year after an event and for the second year after the same event. Thus, any proposal of chronology for the archive must respect, at least, the ordering of these documents. For this paper, attempts were made to limit the complexity of the graph visualization by reducing edge overlapping, because, under assumptions on actors' frequency in the activities represented by the network, this action can be shown to be consistent with a visually chronological ordering of the material. One way of reducing edge overlapping is obtained when the graph is drawn with a so-called hierarchical layout. Several trials of this layout were made, sometimes by omitting certain nodes or small groups of nodes, in order to challenge the limits of the documentation and the procedure. The results showed, first, that names occurring in the same document tend to group together in a vertical line. Thus, documents get approximately distinguishable, one after the other, from left to right. The results, furthermore, consistently showed that the documents for which the relative dating is possible were arranged in a way that visually respected this dating. In other words, the hierarchical layout of the graph has some consistency with the, albeit scarce, information on the dates of the documents. Studying hierarchies within graphs has already been recognized as a useful tool for the study of evolving patterns of a class of networks, and it might be the case that, together with traditional documental and contextual analysis, this kind of study might help to better understand some aspects of the chronology of Ancient Near Eastern communities, such as the one formed around Nūr-Šamaš.

Session

Inequality & digital methods: social network analysis, prosopography, onomastics

Keywords

Old Babylonian period; year names; social network analysis; graph layout; Diyala

Gonçalves, Vera

Non-anthropomorphic symbols in the Diyala glyptic: Power agencies of gods and goddesses in the 3rd millennium BC



Tuesday 18 July, 16:30–17:00



Lipsius 005

Traditional historiographical approaches tend to conceive Mesopotamian deities as being mainly anthropomorphic. This seems to be due to the literary prominence of the human form and behaviours for describing/evoking divine figures. However, more recent analyses have come to consider other data (textual, material and iconographic) where deities are depicted through other elements – astral, zoomorphic, or vegetal. These non-human forms seem to be used not only to mark the divine presence but also to evoke specific characteristics and functions of the depicted deity. In this context, the analysis of the iconographic contents found in cylinder seals is essential to rethink divine roles, through an intertwined approach between the History of Religions and Archaeology. Thus, in this paper I intend to focus on some scenes displayed in 3rd millennium BC Diyala glyptic, to contribute to the debate on the uses of non-human forms to represent Mesopotamian deities.

Session

Workshop 6: Third Millennium Studies

Keywords

history of religions; archaeology of religions; Mesopotamia; cylinder seals; divine representation

Gordin, Shai; Luis Sáenz

eAkkadian: a coursebook for doing Assyriology digitally



Thursday 20 July, 11:30–12:00



Lipsius 028

Gamified and interactive pedagogic environments have grown in use throughout the humanities, but have not been taken seriously within the rigorous philological scholarship of Assyriology. This paper will present our first impressions teaching Akkadian and cuneiform with eAkkadian, an interactive and open-source coursebook we are writing using the Jupyter Book platform. Communicating ancient languages has never been an easy task, and most languages, like Greek and Sumerian have a rather steep learning curve. Yet, Classics and Biblical studies, have been quick to embrace the “digital turn” in communicating their research and especially their teaching materials. It is therefore fortunate that Assyriological resources online have been painstakingly reproduced as born-digital resources, namely, they were manually rekeyed rather than scanned and corrected. Not only do the digital publications of texts have much fewer errors, they can be easily incorporated into an interactive environment published on a static website (i.e. without a complicated database in the backend which requires constant care and maintenance). Once complete eAkkadian will be a coursebook based primarily on teaching cuneiform using a variety of text genres, with the virtual possibility of endless expansion. Experts of different periods could create their own subsections and contribute to the teaching resource as a whole. While the initial purpose for creating such a resource to begin with, was providing larger accessibility to the variety of teaching materials in the same online environment, we understood there is greater potential for such a digital publication. Primarily, we started incorporating gamification and natural language processing tools into teaching of cuneiform language and culture, which in turn created a new kind of dialogue between the students and the ancient sources.

Session

Workshop 14: Equality of Access to Mesopotamia: Public Outreach and Pedagogy

Keywords

gamification; pedagogy; Unicode cuneiform; linguistic annotation; digital coursebook

Gordon, Jane

Narrative inequality and the restriction of marginal characters in Akkadian and Sumerian literature



Wednesday 19 July, 15:00–15:30



Lipsius 019

All characters in a story, regardless of their social status, exist on a particular hierarchy: that which is constructed by the narrative itself. Characters play roles of unequal centrality to the plot and receive unequal focus in the text. Therefore, a character of minor importance to the plot will take up less narrative time; they will be mentioned less, be described less, and speak less or in less individualized ways. This paper examines the storytelling choices through which Mesopotamian literary narratives restrict the presence in the text of already marginal characters and limit the ways that they participate in discourse. These are characters who appear in a single scene and whose presence in the narrative is linked to other supporting characters, whose utilitarian role in the story they ultimately reinforce. For instance, in the trope in which the protagonist unsuccessfully petitions two gods before successfully approaching a third (e.g. in Inana's Descent or Gilgamesh, Enkidu, and the Netherworld), not only do the unhelpful gods consign themselves by their refusal to a peripheral and inferior role, but they also tend to speak in repeated phrases. Their individual presence in the narrative is subordinated to the formula in which they participate, even as it also suggests alternate paths the story could have taken. Or characters such as Anzu's wife in Lugalbanda and the Anzu Bird or Uta-napishti's wife in Gilgamesh, who are referred to only through their relationship to their more central-to-the-plot husbands, are similarly restricted in their narrative presence and speech: their ongoing presence in a scene is only noted when they contribute to that scene's ultimate result, their husbands' assisting of the protagonist. All of these choices—having a character only say something that is repeated elsewhere, only mentioning a character at the precise moment their presence is relevant, having them engage in conversation in a restricted way—are narrational means of placing limitations on characters that reinforce their peripheral role. Yet though these characters' textual presence operates on a strategic economy of scale, that presence nevertheless enlarges the world of the text, expanding its cast of characters, hinting at unrealized possibilities, and contributing, marginally but crucially, to the plot and the construction of the narrative.

Session

Inequality: Literature

Keywords

narrative; minor characters; hierarchy; textual presence

Gori, Fiammetta

Rendering numerical notation of 3rd millennium Ebla cuneiform texts: new tools for a persisting challenge



Tuesday 18 July, 10:00–10:30



Lipsius 005

In 3rd millennium Ebla texts, cuneiform numbers and figures are expressed through different numerical notational styles. In these texts, numerical notation, like written language, reflects a complex linguistic reality linked to varying practices and norms. Therefore, the study of these texts requires an approach that also includes the palaeography of numbers. Such an approach can provide helpful information that may be lost if one does not focus on the type of numeral signs used by the scribe. Different shaped numerals are used depending on the type of item or unit of measure accounted. Dealing with strings of arithmetical and metrical signs constitutes a well-known challenge for those who are working on a daily basis with metrology in administrative texts. Previous attempts to meet this challenge include those of R.K. Englund (for Uruk texts) and M. Molina (for Sargonic texts). In their footsteps, while aiming at improving the problem proposed by long strings of numerals, and using Ebla as a case study, I propose a new tool for transliterating numerical notation in order to aid understanding and facilitate accessibility.

Session

Keywords

Workshop 6: Third Millennium Studies

numbers; metrology; Ebla; palaeography; administration



Gries, Helen

Between fortification and sacred space: The Ishtar Gate of Babylon



Monday 17 July, 17:00–17:30



Lipsius 028

The lavishly decorated Ishtar Gate was one of Babylon's city gates but also had a significant symbolic value. The paper highlights the significance of the Ishtar Gate in different times and presents current research of the Vorderasiatisches Museum Berlin on this iconic monument.

Session

Workshop 3: New Research on the City of Babylon

Keywords

Babylon; Ishtar Gate; fortification; sacred space; glazed bricks

Groß, Melanie

A study of the account ADD 953 and its wider meaning



Thursday 20 July, 12:00–12:30



Lipsius 005

The aim of this paper is the thorough discussion of the administrative document SAA 7 115 (ADD 953). This record of consumption of linen fibre, madder and red wool is a unique witness of the Neo-Assyrian palace administration and how it might have worked as a whole. Luckily it is relatively well preserved and thus allows us to study several aspects of it: What administrative procedure and what stage of this administrative procedure is documented? Which administrative keywords and key phrases are used in this text and what do they actually mean? Who are the consumers of the textile materials and what are they supposed to do with these materials? What does this tell us about the administrative landscape of Assyria in general? Finally, is this text representative for how Assyria dealt with textiles and related materials? In addition to a thorough analysis of the text itself, we will look at other comparable texts dating to the Neo-Assyrian period and to other periods. While recent studies provide an overview of administrative documents preserved from the NeoAssyrian period, this study looks at the Neo-Assyrian administration by emanating from one specific text. A text which also allows us to recapitulate on the Neo-Assyrian “non-bureaucratic ethos”, in reference to N. Postgate’s well-known article (2007).

Session

Workshop 10: Tracking and Managing Texts, Things and People in Cuneiform Cultures

Keywords

Neo-Assyrian empire; palace administration; administrative documents; bureaucracy

Hajinezhad, Sara

Mythological and ritual functions of the Sacred Tree in Elam, from a comparative Mesopotamian perspective



Tuesday 18 July, 17:00–17:30



Lipsius 028

Sacred Tree is the term commonly used to refer to the motif of a tree generally flanked by some animal or human figures. Based on comparative case studies, the characteristics of the Sacred Tree are in accordance with the contemporary style attested in the pictorial sources of the ancient Near East in a large geographic area and among different cultures; some of them can be classified as narrative portrayals. Up to the present time, the first appearance of this motif in Elam dates to ca. 3100–2900 BCE. Using a new approach, proposed by the present author to adapt Panofsky's Iconography/Iconology method, the concept of the Sacred Tree among Elamite and Mesopotamian peoples will be discussed in depth perusing textual and figurative sources having, in this perspective, equal priority. To what extent the principles of the representation of the Sacred Tree are similar in both these different contexts? Can we discuss the unparalleled mythological and ritual functions of the Elamite Sacred Tree? The spread of this motif proves a common meaning and function even in different cultures; however, its meaning has provoked many discussions and controversies among scholars. In the first place, it should be discussed which principles should be considered as the indicators of the Sacred Tree and why the term Sacred Tree has priority over the term Tree of Life in ancient Near Eastern studies. The interpretation of the concept of Sacred Trees goes hand in hand with the understanding of the role of some motifs paired with it, such as quadrupeds, anthropomorphic robed gods and goddesses, hybrid animals, and genies. According to the textual sources, there is a link between the Sacred Tree and Inanna/Ishtar; moreover, it is recognised as a symbol of femininity and fertility, a divine insignia, and a source of magical virtue rather than a recipient of it. While it is clear that the first portrayals of this motif were affected by the shape of the palm tree, the present author is in agreement with C.J. Gadd's interpretation that although the Sacred Tree was not a natural tree the common model of the Sacred Tree existed among the peoples who believed in its magic power. Based on this anthropological approach, the repetition of this motif throughout the millennia is an unwritten indication of the common mythological knowledge whose concepts circulated orally.

Session

Workshop 7: Trees and Shrubs in the Ancient Near East.
Investigating the Plurality of Practices and Meanings in the
Human–Arboreal Relationship

Keywords

Elam; Sacred Tree; Mesopotamia; comparative study;
common mythological knowledge

Hätinen, Aino

Purification, defilement, and privilege? An example from the hemerological corpus



Thursday 20 July, 09:30–10:00



Lipsius 003

The Lying Down Menology is a newly reconstructed text that contains month-specific instructions for an incubation ritual (an edition by the present author is in press). As its epilogue states, the goal is to obtain auspicious visions about the future throughout the year and thus promote one's well-being. This menology was transmitted along other hemerological texts such as the Prostration Hemerology and the Tašrītu Hemerology, which suggests that it formed an integral part of the hemerological corpus. Moreover, the Lying Down Menology is one of the texts that were used to compile the royal hemerology *Inbu bēl arḫi* that is attested in the royal tablet collections at Nineveh, and it is also quoted in a letter to Esarhaddon or Assurbanipal. It can, therefore, be assumed that these ritual instructions were heeded by the Assyrian king, although they must have originated in the social context of upper-class citizens (*amēlu*). The preparation for the incubation in the Lying Down Menology deals with aspects of basic human behaviour: hygiene, clothing, alimentation, mood, and sexual relations. Purity is a crucial element here and is obtained through washing and anointing. While the instructions for most of the months deal with cleansing, the complete opposite, a defilement, is prescribed in some cases. This defilement is then associated with other negative actions, such as remaining gloomily silent or eating foods that normally were tabooed (fish, leek, garlic). This paper aims to investigate the purity instructions in the Lying Down Menology in the context of the hemerological corpus and the larger context of ritual instructions. The focus will be on assessing how the purification and the defilement are described and what kind of materials are specified for obtaining the desired effects. A further question is: Can the material basis of the incubation ritual – infused oils, textiles, and specific types of food – be described as luxury items available only to a small portion of the population?

Session

Workshop 13: Hygiene in the Ancient Near East: Power, Privilege, Inequality

Keywords

hygiene; hemerologies

Hausleiter, Arnulf; Hanspeter Schaudig; Malik al-Sulaimi; Majed Alonazi

Nabonidus at Fadak: New discoveries in the oasis of al-Ḥā'it



Wednesday 19 July, 12:30–13:00



Lipsius 019

At the oasis of ancient Fadak, modern al-Ḥā'it (Province of Ha'il, Saudi-Arabia), a second relief and inscription by the Babylonian king Nabonidus (556–539 BCE) has been discovered by the Heritage Commission in spring 2021. A heavily eroded cuneiform inscription and a relief depicting the Babylonian king worshipping divine symbols were identified at a distance of approx. 1 km from the first relief. In November 2021, a joint expedition of the Heritage Commission and the German Archaeological Institute's Orient Department investigated the site and recorded both reliefs by means of structure from motion. Next to the astral symbols of Sîn, Šamaš, and Ištar, a further symbol has been observed on either relief. The paper discusses the preliminary interpretation of the findings.

Session

Inequality: Neo-Assyrian, Neo-Babylonian and
Achaemenid kings and court

Heath-Whyte, George

An inequality of forms: Divine agency and the images of Marduk in Assyria and Babylonia



Wednesday 19 July, 09:00–09:30



Lipsius 011

It is well known that the *ṣalmu* – the ‘image’ or ‘statue’ – of a god in first millennium BC Assyria and Babylonia was thought, in some sense, to be equated with the god itself. However, as the polemics of the Hebrew Bible’s prophets were keen to point out, these images could not visibly do anything without human assistance (see, e.g. Isaiah 46:1–2). For these gods to travel from one place to another, for example, they had to be carried by humans, or by animals. How did the rulers of Assyria and Babylonia navigate the tension between this fact, and the connection of these divine images to the immensely powerful beings decreeing their destinies and overwhelming their enemies in battle? This paper addresses this question by looking at the language used in the Neo-Assyrian and Neo-Babylonian royal inscriptions to write about the god Marduk, both as manifested in his divine images within temples, and in passages not focused on the temple cult. It will suggest that the Assyrians and Babylonians did not shy away from this tension, but embraced the ‘inequality’ between Marduk and his manifestations, both acknowledging the perceived limits of his divine images, whilst also recognising them as powerful divine agents.

Session

Workshop 9: Religion, Ritual, and Inequality in the Ancient Near East

Keywords

Marduk; religion; cult; agency; royal inscriptions

Heeßel, Nils P.

Middle Babylonian omens from Babylon as a source for reconstructing the bārûtu series



Tuesday 18 July, 09:00–09:30



Lipsius 028

Among the clay tablets from German excavations in Babylon 1899–1917 in the archaeological museum in Istanbul are some large-format omen tablets. These tablets are very badly damaged due to transport accidents, but they are extremely important for the reconstruction of the extispicy series bārûtu. The lecture will present some of tablets and shed light on their significance for the history of serialisation in Babylonia and Assyria.

Session

Workshop 3: New Research on the City of Babylon

Keywords

babylon; extispicy; omens; bārûtu

Helle, Sophus

Parody and paradigm: Aluzinnu and the question of emic “genres”



Tuesday 18 July, 16:30–17:00



Lipsius 003

A vexing problem in the study of cuneiform literature is how literary compositions were understood by the cuneiform scholars, scribes, composers, and performers themselves. One example of this problem is whether there existed in the ancient world a subdivision of texts that bears comparison to the modern notion of “genre.” In this paper, I argue that cuneiform parodies are an as yet unprobed source of information about the question of emic “genres,” or, to use a more neutral term, textual paradigms. Building on Henry J.A. Lewis’s contribution to the workshop, I will argue that cuneiform parodies often take as their object or hypotext not a single composition, but a textual paradigm, such as the heroic form that according to Lewis is mocked in *The Poor Man in Nippur*, the incantations and royal inscriptions skewered by the *Bēl-ētir* texts, or the contracts and letters whose “generic” conventions are exposed in other parodies. With this argument in mind, I examine the text known as *Aluzinnu*, which can be taken as an anthology of parodies of textual paradigms, including god lists, divination, *ašipūtu* (the learning of the incantation priest), *asūtu* (the learning of the physician), and so on. It is the juxtaposition of these paradigms that makes the text an interesting source for an ancient concept that is at least comparable to “genre”: the humor of *Aluzinnu* clearly relies on a notion of textuality as being subdivided into a number of distinct paradigms that are each defined by a set of conventions, tropes, and formal characteristics. My claim, in short, is that a study of how these paradigms are satirically warped in *Aluzinnu* can provide us with indirect information about how they were understood by the composer(s) of the text.

Session

Workshop 8: Intertextuality in Cuneiform Literature: Latest Research and the Issues of Methodology

Keywords

Babylonian literature; *Aluzinnu*; intertextuality; genre; parody

Herman, Joost

Emotions and inequality: shame and pride in the community of the Neo-Assyrian courtly elite



Wednesday 19 July, 11:30–12:00



Lipsius 019

This paper discusses expressions of the social and self-conscious emotions of shame and pride in the community of the educated courtly elite of the Neo-Assyrian period. Shame and pride, for the Assyrian elite, were closely linked to social status and a concept known as *bāštu* 'dignity, (source of) pride' (CAD B, 142–144, s. *bāštu*). This concept includes socially and culturally relevant qualities, character traits, and physical features that were considered to be essential aspects of a good person. An individual who possessed the qualities and traits embodied in *bāštu* was considered a respectable person by the people in the community, and therefore experienced dignity and pride. Individuals who lacked these qualities were often evaluated in a negative way, and could experience social isolation and feelings of shame. *Bāštu*, like the social and self-conscious emotions of shame and pride, is a learned, social phenomenon that is closely tied to socially and culturally relevant norms and values. In hierarchical communities these phenomena are especially relevant, as they can be used to negotiate one's social identity. In the Assyrian world, every human being and supernatural entity had a specific place in the social hierarchy, related to a particular social and ideological role. The social hierarchy included ideal types such as gods and other superhuman beings, heroes, kings, high ranking officials, scholars, and scribes, but also negative types such as demons and the everpresent un-Assyrian peoples who threatened the social order. An ideal type generally embodied the qualities embodied in *bāštu*, while a negative type explicitly lacked them. As such, the concept also sheds a light on emotional and ideological inequality. Failing to live up to a social role was a constant concern for the Assyrian elites, and therefore *bāštu* is a concept of particular interest to the study of shame and pride. In this paper I will present a number of sources, including mythological compositions, wisdom texts, ritual texts, prayers, personal letters, and even personal names that illustrate what qualities were considered causes for shame or pride for the Assyrian elite, and demonstrate how *bāštu* functioned within this community.

Session

Inequality: Neo-Assyrian, Neo-Babylonian and Achaemenid kings and court

Keywords

shame; pride; social identity; Neo-Assyrian

Hernáiz, Rodrigo

Sentential complementation in Akkadian: *kīma*-complements in early-documented data



Wednesday 19 July, 12:00–12:30



Lipsius 123

The study of Akkadian complementation is a topic that has transcended the field of Akkadian linguistics. The evolution of finite *kīma*-complement clauses was analysed in Deutscher's (2000) ground-breaking examination of Akkadian historical syntax, and his conclusions have informed studies about complementizers in other Semitic languages (e.g., Tewelde 2003, for Tigrinya); studies about the evolution of language complexity (Sampson et al. 2009); or studies about language typology (e.g., Schmidtke-Bode 2014). However, the purported initial emergence of sentential complementation in Akkadian has been challenged by new data and by different analyses of the evidence. Streck (2002) already pointed out important issues regarding the assumption that complementation arose in the Old Babylonian period, and that it did so through a reanalysis of pre-existing causal clauses. This presentation will review the question of the emergence of complementation in Akkadian by doing a systematic examination of data from the Old Akkadian, Old Babylonian and Old Assyrian varieties. It will be concluded that Akkadian complementation developed before the Old Babylonian period. The presentation will also expand on and qualify Streck's (2002) observations, identifying evidence on corpora and on grammatical descriptions that suggest that the early data for *kīma*-complementation is more plausibly related to the simulative function of *kīma*. These conclusions are of interest for the interpretation of cognate complement markers in other Semitic languages.

Session

Workshop 11: Akkadian Linguistics

Keywords

Akkadian syntax; complementation; Old Babylonian; Old Assyrian

Hess, Christian W.

A DIŠ for a pauper, a DIŠ for a king: On the transmission history of Syllabary B



Thursday 20 July, 15:00–15:30



Lipsius 019

The sign–list Syllabary B emerges from the Late Bronze Age to become a fundamental text of the cuneiform scribal curriculum, attested at almost all major sites. Partly because of its repetitive nature, the list has remained largely neglected today, though fundamental problems on the history of the list, its structure, and its genetic relationship to the sign–lists Syllabary B, Ea, and Aa remain unsolved. The paper provides an overview of the distribution of the sources across curricular and archival contexts and argues that it is precisely the list’s combination of small–scale variation and repetitive currency that provides an important witness to the relationship between scribal practices and the process of standardization until the end of the first millennium.

Session

Inequality: Literacy and the scribal curriculum

Keywords

Inequality: Literacy and the scribal curriculum

Hirmis, Amer

Inequality continuum: from Eridu to Baghdad through Lagash: 5500 years of persistent income inequality



Tuesday 18 July, 12:00–12:30



Lipsius 019

The paper intends to provide qualitative and quantitative historical evidence of income inequality focusing on the Ancient Near East (3500–500 BC) and extending the analysis to present-day Iraq, by way of noting certain echoes from the ancient past. Following a brief review of approaches deployed in recent academic research on quantitatively measuring inequality in the ANE, using proxies to wealth differentials, this paper moves to explore the evolution of income inequality in the ANE. It explores the reasons (i.e., social stratification, wars, and legalised slavery and gender discrimination) and consequences (e.g., diminishing market size and economic growth eventually, let alone not achieving sustainable social cohesion and prosperity) of persisting large scale income inequality. As the title implies, the paper will attempt to provide evidence of continued inequality; a continuum engendered essentially by the ‘state’. It will also touch on historical instances of oppressing poverty-stricken people/uprisings (for which textual evidence is unequivocal during the 8–13 Century Iraq) and at the present time too. The paper will conclude with two explanatory hypotheses for the inequality continuum, thus setting research challenges for the future, to develop our understanding of income inequality and how we might create the objective conditions to ameliorate the situation and diminish inequality, in a country that once belonged to the ANE. In so doing, the paper will attempt to demonstrate the importance of the long view (5500 years) in understanding the present, given the different contexts and transformations that present themselves throughout history.

Session

Inequality: wealth, labor and income

Keywords

inequality; income; slavery; legal codes; state

Hoskin, Keith; Ann-Christine Frandsen

“Accounting Changes Everything?” On the consequences of the written naming-and-counting statement



Wednesday 19 July, 10:30–11:00



Lipsius 005

We approach accounting as constituting ways of thinking and acting that transform our modes of ‘subjectivation’ and ‘objectivation’. If ‘writing restructures consciousness’, it is through accounting as first and non-glottographic writing form, making the ‘naming-and-counting’ statements that it still makes today. Proto-cuneiform surpasses token accounting through (i) differentiating naming and counting signifiers thus increasing the range of naming-and-counting statements: (ii) generating ‘archives’ of statements, constituting a new ‘accounting memory’; and (iii) systematizing the mathematically-regularized naming of objects to be counted, both metaphysical and physical. While the *gur* apparently already named a standard-bowl-sized volume of grain from about 4000 BCE, proto-cuneiform extends such mathematical regularization to the naming-and-counting of time, space, weights and measures, constituting Uruk as the first-known ‘mathematical state’. Thence space, time and valuing, as a triad, constitute a new ‘space-time-value dispositif’, wherein the literate and non-literate both become ‘disposed’ systematically towards mathematically regularized modes of thinking and acting. Accounting’s written naming-and-counting statements then suffice to construct first forms of ‘governmental reason’ and thence the construction of ‘the state’ along with its correlatives, ‘the social’ and ‘inequality’. The literate subject is formed through submission to a new pedagogic regime: a rote learning of the arbitrary naming and counting signifiers through which written accounting statements are articulated. Immersion in this new form of meaningless learning renders the learner initially ‘governable’, but then as the ‘able-to-govern’ or ‘Govern-able Subject’ once mutated into a literate, knowledgeable member of the governing elite: the Guarantors of Inequality. Finally we consider some early extensions or mutations in the ‘non-glottographic statement form’, first in such modified forms of ‘naming and counting’ as the list and the table, and then in the metonymic transformation of the ‘*gur*’ into the ‘money of account’ statement form, wherein is constituted the ‘numéraire’ function of money, and the possibility of thinking money’s mathematically regularised ‘time value’ as the ground for enacting its credit and debt functions.

Session

Workshop 10: Tracking and Managing Texts, Things and People in Cuneiform Cultures

Keywords

Accounting; non-glottography; governmentality; rote-learning; subjectivation

Howe, Adam

The exploiting exorcist: Marginalized people in Mesopotamian ritual



Wednesday 19 July, 10:30–11:00



Lipsius 011

Mesopotamian exorcists had various means of removing evil or impurities from their clients, including transferring them to other carriers. These could be inanimate objects, parts of the natural environment, or frequently animals, but there are also a few instances in which humans, especially marginalized people, were used in this way. Outright examples are relatively rare but include leaving impure materials in places such as rubbish dumps where they might be carried off by other people, or making an orphan remove contaminated waste-water at the end of a ritual. Most famously, the Substitute King Ritual involved forcing vulnerable people to die in place of the king. Presumably, such people were regarded by exorcists and their clientele as disposable, of little more value than animals or inanimate objects. Indeed, this handful of examples corresponds to a broader picture that emerges from the exorcistic texts, which are full of language and imagery that exploits and dehumanizes marginalized groups of people. This ranges from the inherent misogyny of depictions of witches to descriptions of illness and suffering that suggest becoming disabled, emasculated, or impoverished were among the most undesirable states of existence for the exorcists and their patients. This situation provides strong support for the commonly-held assumption that the exorcist was part of a social elite working almost exclusively on behalf of clients from the highest strata of Mesopotamian society. In order to protect not only the lives and health but also the property of these people, the exorcist did not shrink from exploiting marginalized and disadvantaged members of society, in part by further reinforcing the social inequalities that contributed to the preservation of a highly stratified society. At the same time, recognizing this allows us to shine a light on the non-elite people exploited by these ritual texts and their underlying motivations.

Session

Workshop 9: Religion, Ritual, and Inequality in the Ancient Near East

Keywords

ritual; exorcism; social inequality; marginalized groups

Hussein, Laith; Eleanor Robson

Mathematical education in Old Babylonian Šaduppum



Wednesday 19 July, 11:30–12:00



Lipsius 028

In this paper we first present eight previously unpublished mathematical tablets from Old Babylonian Šaduppum (modern Tell Harmal), including word problems, arithmetical tables and calculations. We will also discuss the archaeological context of these tablets and others, previously published. Building on prior work by Baqir and Bruins in the 1950s, and more recent publications by Gonçalves (2015, 2022) amongst others, we discuss our corpus-based approach to researching the educational function of mathematics in the Old Babylonian kingdom of Eshnunna.

Session

Workshop 12: Connecting Babylon and Ešnunna: Textual and Archaeological Evidence of the First Half of the Second Millennium BCE

Keywords

Old Babylonian; mathematics; scribal education; Eshnunna; digital methods

Iommelli, Marta

Trees and shrubs in Mesopotamian medical tradition



Tuesday 18 July, 15:00–15:30



Lipsius 028

The knowledge of Mesopotamian medical tradition is increasing year by year. The study and the publication of several medical texts and incantation series have led to a better understanding of medical practice, pharmacology, the conception of human body and the illnesses that affected it. Diseases and disorders (mental or physical) were cured by a mixed approach that included incantations and “pharmacological therapy”. In both these practices, plants and trees were used for their “magical” and symbolic properties as well as for the beneficial effect on human body, probably observed through a testing process based on the method of “trial and error”. Unfortunately, not much information is known about the plants and trees involved in these practices. Their identification, the way they were used, for what illnesses or disorders and the reasons why they were chosen, is still a work in progress. This paper aims to address some of these issues by analysing a sample of trees used in Mesopotamian pharmacopeia and incantation texts. The focus will be on trees that are always listed together in both pharmacological texts (*bulṭū*) and lexical lists (i.e. URU.AN.NA-*maštaka*), like the triad of trees *sīhu*, *argānu* and *barīrātu*. The analysis of these clusters of phytonyms is made with the purpose of ascertaining if these sequences of tree names reported in medical literature reflected a mnemonic strategy or a pragmatic logic implying that the asû or āšipu had at least a generic empirical awareness of the functional characteristics of individual plants.

Session

Workshop 7: Trees and Shrubs in the Ancient Near East.
Investigating the Plurality of Practices and Meanings in the
Human–Arboreal Relationship

Keywords

trees; phytonyms; asûtu; āšipûtu; medicine

Ivanova, Sofiia

Military and political inequality in the conflict between Elam and Babylon (1765–1764 BC) (REMOTE)



Tuesday 18 July, 09:00–09:30



Lipsius 019

One example of how inequality manifests itself is when upper- and lower-class conflict arises. But does inequality exist at the very top? What is the expression of inequality of kings? The main goal of this paper is to define the nature of king inequality and trace its stability on the material of events that occurred during the reign of Hammurabi (1792–1750 BC). Yarim-Addu, an envoy sent by the ruler of Mari Zimri-Lim (1774–1759 BC), appears at the court of Hammurabi in 1765 BC. Being in the midst of heated situation Yarim-Addu sent reports back to his king about actions of Babylon during the confrontation between Elam and Babylon (1765–1764 BC). He was versed in the subtleties of diplomatic games and thanks to his reports we are aware of the position that a certain king occupied in the political arena. According to him it is obvious that the chief vizier of Elam Siwepalarhuppak did not regard Mesopotamian rulers as equals but rather as subordinates. For instance (ARMT 26/2 362), in order to prepare for the planned attack of Larsa, the Elamite ruler demanded of Hammurabi to mobilize and supply him with his best troops. He requested assistance from Rim-Sin, ruler of Larsa (1823–1863), against Babylon in a similar message. Yarim-Addu also mentions that he was obliged to inquire about the health of Siwepalarhuppak. Additionally, Zimri-Lim acknowledged his superiority by addressing him with the honorific “my father” (Akk. *abī*) in reports he sent to the latter. But why did Siwepalarhuppak require submission from Mesopotamian kings? Did he succeed in keeping the initiative in the conflict with Babylon? Elam possessed a favorable geographic location between Babylonia and farther-off areas, and it ruled over one of the main commerce routes for the importation of expensive goods. Elam was able to assume a confidently dominant position since it was a significant transit center. However, the years 1765–1764 BC are distinguished by a continuous redistribution of military and political forces, resulting in Elam’s internal and external weakness, which grants Babylon supremacy. Hammurabi was able to establish himself as a shrewd tactician who skillfully enlisted the support of allies, benefited as much as possible from their relationship, and successfully ousted his opponent from his position despite the fact that at that time he had not yet gained considerable influence.

Session

Inequality: politics

Keywords

reports; Babylon; Elam; allies; inequality

Jacquet, Antoine

En marge d'Archibab: The *bukânum*-clause once again. A reinterpretation of a particular clause in Old Babylonian sale contracts using digital methods



Tuesday 18 July, 10:30–11:00



Lipsius 003

In 1970, D. O. Edzard treated the *bukânum*-clause in depth, collecting almost all its occurrences then available in Mesopotamian texts (Edzard ZA 60, 1970, pp. 8–53). In 1985, M. Malul completed the commentary by insisting on the legal value of what Edzard proposed to interpret as a symbolic gesture accompanying, at the conclusion of a sale contract (essentially of slaves or real estate), the transfer of the object sold from the seller to the buyer (Malul ZA 75, 1985, pp. 66–77). Nearly 40 years later, the available documentation has considerably increased and its processing in the Archibab database allows to propose a new interpretation of this clause. A careful study of the chronological framework and geographical distribution of the attestations, combined with a diplomatic approach to the sales contracts in which the clause appears, makes it possible to draw new conclusions not only about this particular clause but also about the legal customs surrounding sale in the Old Babylonian period.

Session

Digital methods in Ancient Near Eastern Studies

Keywords

Old babylonian archives; legal history; sale contracts; digital methods

Jallet–Martini, Jules

Freeborn vs freed heirs in some Old Babylonian texts



Monday 17 July, 17:30–18:00



Lipsius 003

Slaves (ÎR/*wardum*) mentioned in the OB texts dealing with inheritance of free persons, especially divisions of property, are usually listed among the items composing the shares of the estate. However, in a limited number of texts, slaves appear as true heirs of the deceased, who adopted – and manumitted – them in the absence of any other descendant. Such a practice seems to be legally accepted during the OB period (e.g. BIN 7 206) as long as no competing heir was involved. Things became more complicated when the adopting parent of the slave already had a descendant, as shown by two letters: A.1186 from Mari (<https://www.archibab.fr/T24264>) and TCL 18 153 from Larsa (= AbB 14 207, <https://www.archibab.fr/T15780>). I will try to show that these documents point to a customary rule according to which the inheritance rights of a freeborn heir prevailed over those of a freed and adopted slave. This was perhaps a general principle throughout Babylonia during the OB period, as the local authorities got involved and recalled the rule in both texts. This case study is another example of the in-between situation of slaves, at least in the context of inheritance: freed slaves could enjoy full inheritance rights as long as they did not threaten those of freeborn heirs. They were thus granted a kind of intermittent or relative freedom, depending on the situations.

Session

Workshop 2: Beyond Slavery and Freedom in the Ancient Near East

Keywords

inheritance; freeborn; law; heirs

Jeffers, Joshua

The Broken Obelisk and the eponyms of Tiglath-pileser I's reign



Tuesday 18 July, 09:30–10:00



Lipsius 011

During excavation work in the early 1850s at Nineveh, Hormuzd Rassam unearthed the upper portion of a large obelisk in a ditch that was located about halfway between the palaces of Sennacherib and Ashurbanipal on the city's citadel. The object—deemed the “Broken Obelisk” and now housed in the British Museum— contains five columns of an unfinished inscription belonging to an Assyrian king, but the monument does not preserve any Assyrian royal name due to the damage it has sustained. Through extensive comparisons with other Assyrian royal inscriptions, previous scholars concluded that the object most likely belonged to the late Middle Assyrian king Aššur-bēl-kala (1073–1056 BCE). However, recent work on the Assyrian materials have led some to ascribe the Broken obelisk to the reign of Tiglath-pileser I (1114–1076), thus situating the object's historical content, its usage of Babylonian month names, and its reference to two fully preserved eponyms and one partially preserved eponym in his reign instead of that of one of his successors. While the present paper cannot address the numerous issues involved with redating the Broken Obelisk to Tiglath-pileser I, it will explore the ramifications and potential difficulties of such a redating on the sequence of eponyms from the latter part of his reign.

Session

Workshop 5: Assyrian Royal Inscriptions in Honor of A.K. Grayson

Keywords

Broken Obelisk; Aššur-bēl-kala; Tiglath-pileser I; eponyms; Middle Assyrian period

Jursa, Michael

Letters as part of the ‘paper trail’ in Neo-Babylonian temple archives



Wednesday 19 July, 11:30–12:00



Lipsius 005

The paper looks at administrative epistolography as a social practice as it is attested in the temple archives of the sixth century. It will present a rough typology of missives in terms of content and communicative intentionality. The main focus, however, will be on the question to which degree letters (as contrasted to letter orders whose administrative setting is much clearer) were integrated into the overall documentary record created by temple administrations, whether they were systematically archived or gave rise to the drafting of secondary records, and under which circumstances they were made to circulate in a wider context and perhaps even copied.

Session

Workshop 10: Tracking and Managing Texts, Things and People in Cuneiform Cultures

Keywords

Neo-Babylonian temple archives; epistolography; bureaucracy; accounting

Kellner, Angelika

Genealogies in 1st millennium BC Mesopotamia



Thursday 20 July, 15:30–16:00



Lipsius 011

Anthropological and ethnological studies have thoroughly analysed the fundamental roles that genealogies play in various societies, which they summarize under the umbrella term descent. To have distinguished descent is therefore defined as a conscious strategy of individuals or groups to distance themselves from the rest of society and to thereby strengthen their position of power. Genealogies form a substantial part of the written remains from the ancient world (and in particular Mesopotamia), but they remain an understudied research topic. I propose to collect and study genealogies of individuals (spanning over at least three generations or more) from the Neo-Assyrian Period to Hellenistic times, thus rendering a detailed discussion and analysis of case studies possible. The text corpus is highly diverse, as it includes, among other things, royal inscriptions (Neo-Assyrian and Achaemenid), king lists, Babylonian legal documents and colophons of late cuneiform texts. The paper will focus on some preliminary observations particularly regarding the methodological approach. The main aim is not to scrutinise the genealogies' historicity but rather to classify their varying functions (e.g. political or juridical) and contexts (e.g. monarchic). This framework shall allow to identify differences as well as similarities in the genealogical material and in the underlying societal structures. It shall also help to address geographical and temporal factors by further investigating the relationship between the (written) history of events and the changing socio-political conditions.

Session

Keywords

Inequality: Families in society, economy and law
genealogies

Kamil, Iris

Middles, perfectives, pluractionals: A reinvestigation of the usage and function of the –ta–infix in the Old Babylonian Mari letters



Wednesday 19 July, 09:30–10:00



Lipsius 123

Akkadian is notable among the Semitic languages for its reanalysis of the middle marker –t– to a perfective marker (Kouwenberg 2010:154ff.). It is typically inserted after the first overt consonant in the template, meaning following the first root radical in the G and D and following the prefixes in the Š and N stems. As such, two seemingly identical forms can be interpreted differently, depending on the context they are found in. While this development and the subsequent problem are typologically observable in other languages, too (see for Indo-European De Acosta 2006), the problem is enhanced in Akkadian by the addition of pluractionals. An Akkadian pluractional is formed through the insertion of the morpheme –ta(n)– into the same slot as the middle/perfective –ta–. The ‘full’ morpheme, i.e. –tan–, only surfaces in imperfectives, see (1a), whereas, where templatically possible, the n assimilates to the next consonant (1b). If the morpheme is inserted before a consonant cluster, the n is dropped, and we are left again with a –ta– (1c). (1) a. i–šappar–Ø 3–√špr.‘send’.IMPF–SG.M ‘He writes again and again’ (ARM 2 12:23) b. šikun–√škn.‘put, place’.STAT.3.M.SG ‘(It) is placed again and again’ (YOS 10 41:33) c. u–lḥḥiš 3.D–√lḥš.‘whisper’.PRET ‘He murmured’ (ARM 2 23: rev. 3’) With an overlap of three semantically distinct functions verbalised through seemingly one morpheme –ta–, one may then wonder how native Akkadian speakers differentiated between the forms, and if context alone was a sufficient factor. In a related thought, it was hypothesised that the three functions were in fact not too distinct semantically, but that certain overlaps, specifically between middles and perfectives and middles and pluractionals could be found. If no overlap could be found, it was hypothesised that a form was likely to be interpreted mostly in one of the three ways in order to avoid ambiguity. The present study thus set out to answer these questions by investigating the semantics and distribution of all –ta–forms found in ARM 1–4.

Session

Workshop 11: Akkadian Linguistics

Keywords

Akkadian; Akkadian grammar; t-morpheme; Archives Royales de Mari; morphology

Khwshnaw, Ardalan

A washing ceremony in light of a new Old Babylonian document in the Slemani Museum



Thursday 20 July 12:00–12:30



Lipsius 011

This paper is the publication of a previously unknown Old Babylonian letter kept in the Slemani (Sulaymaniyah) Museum in Iraqi-Kurdistan, situated inside the center of the city of Slemani – Slemani Governorate (catalog number SM.0022921). The tablet was inscribed on the obverse and reverse of a single-columned tablet. It measures 8,1cm long by 4,7 cm wide. The text is unprovenanced, it was acquired by the Museum on 22 December 2008. The manuscript of Slemani contains 29 lines, and all the lines of Slemani’s manuscript are completely or partly preserved. The scribe of the text wrote in a neat, medium-sized hand, thereby producing well-formed signs.

The paper gives a brief overview of the letter of Irra-naṣir who addressed Sîn-[...], Ištar-mā[nšum], Šumum-libiši, Imgur-Sîn, Ilī-damīq, and Mašjam-ilī. In the letter, Irra-naṣir asks each of the addressees to prepare various types of baskets. In the last three lines of the letter, he adds that all his requests should be available and ready for him for the washing ceremony on the first day of the month.

Session

Inequality: Families in society, economy and law

Keywords

Old Babylonian letter; Slemani Museum; washing ceremony; Mesopotamia

Kikuchi, Saki

Personal hygiene or cultic purity? Analysis of cleansing acts in hemerologies



Thursday 20 July, 10:00–10:30



Lipsius 003

Recent pandemics have made us think consciously about hygiene and health issues. And yet documentation of supra-regional epidemics and diseases is already well-attested in the ancient Near East. However, the hygiene practices to prevent said epidemics and diseases are less known. Therefore, the purpose of this paper is to determine whether there existed cleansing for health purposes on a daily basis in the ancient Near East. Hemerologies from the first millennium BC are among the texts that inform us about everyday life in the ancient Near East. They are calendrical works, recording a positive or negative value of a day, or informing one about the appropriateness of various social activities on a particular day. Such instructions are often formulated by means of a recommendation or prohibition, sometimes followed by predictions in case of their observance or ignorance. In this way, they could serve as the reader's guidance for daily life. The cleansing acts are among various topics of instruction. This paper aims to determine whether there is cleansing for health purposes. By comparing the assigned dates of such hemerological instructions with the dates of cultic events in the annual cult, I investigate whether the cleansing and purification instructions are motivated by a hygiene or health problem, or intended to secure cultic purity.

Session

Workshop 13: Hygiene in the Ancient Near East: Power, Privilege, Inequality

Keywords

cleansing; purity; hemerologies

King, Rhyne

From Governor of Babylon to Satrap in Syria: The life and times of Bēlšunu, son of Bēl-uṣuršu (ca. 425–400 BCE)



Tuesday 18 July, 10:30–11:00



Lipsius 028

In this paper, I will examine the career of Bēlšunu, son of Bēl-uṣuršu, whose personal records survive from the city of Babylon (via the Kašr Archive). Bēlšunu’s career is highly unusual, as he rose from the position of governor of Babylon to become a satrap, and in fact, he is one of very few non-Persians known to become a satrap in all of Achaemenid history (559–330 BCE). In this paper, I will consider why Bēlšunu was able to navigate this social rise, both from his local Babylonian context and from the context of the Achaemenid royal court. As a way to contextualize Bēlšunu’s political and business career, I will emphasize the importance of crown grants (literally “gift of the king,” *nidinti šarri*) among Bēlšunu’s landholdings. The growing importance of crown grants to Bēlšunu’s business enterprise both shows that he was becoming an increasingly powerful estate-holder in Babylon and demonstrates that he was able to ingratiate himself with the Achaemenid court.

Session

Workshop 3: New Research on the City of Babylon

Keywords

Babylon; Achaemenid Empire; Bēlšunu; satraps; crown grants

King, Rhyne

Impossible accounts? Mobile seals, absent administrators, and the practice of bookkeeping in the Persepolis Fortification Archive



Wednesday 19 July, 14:30–15:00



Lipsius 005

The Persepolis Fortification Archive (509–493 BCE) is one of the largest governmental archives in the entire ancient world, with around 15,000 surviving texts. The Archive documents the production, transfer, and distribution of food and beverages in the region around Persepolis. Although the study of the Archive has become increasingly popular over the last two decades, fundamental questions about the mechanisms of accounting and administration in the Archive remain unanswered. This paper will investigate a series of documents which cannot have actually been written as the texts present them.

The basic flow of information in the Archive is broadly understood as follows: first, administrators in villages and storehouses wrote texts recording transactions of food in their local jurisdiction. Administrators commonly used seals to authenticate this documentation. Second, these texts were transported to Persepolis where they were synthesized into accounts that summarized prior transactions. However, this process must have been more complex than it appears. Certain seals are often impressed on tablets written at the same time in different places. The natural conclusion, therefore, must be that the sealing took place at a different time (and, perhaps, at a different location) than the writing of the text. But such a dislocation of writing and authenticating would seem to speak against the policing function that is often assumed of institutional accounting. Moreover, the texts show that certain administrators appear to be in different places at the same time. Other workers, therefore, must have been conducting administration in their name. The authority of the textual record again comes into question.

As a case study, I will present a number of these seemingly impossible accounts in the region to the east of Persepolis. By demonstrating the contradictory nature of what the texts present versus what the actual practice must have been, I hope to raise questions about the purpose of these bookkeeping practices. Rather than considering these accounts to have largely auditing or economic purposes, it may be helpful to consider these accounts as a result of ingrained social practice: bookkeeping became part of the social habit for participants in the Achaemenid government. Auditing and authenticating may have been less important than the mere act of writing and sealing.

Session

Workshop 10: Tracking and Managing Texts, Things and People in Cuneiform Cultures

Keywords

Persepolis Fortification Archive; Achaemenid Empire; accounting; seals; social practice

Kitazumi, Tomoki

Inequality of language status? Again on the history of interpreters in the ancient Near East



Tuesday 18 July, 17:30–18:00



Lipsius 011

Although evidence in cuneiform texts suggests that, in many different times and places, people of widely differing languages lived together in the ancient Near East, the mentions of people who undertook mediation between foreign languages are surprisingly rare. In contrast to the large number of texts with foreign languages and translations, the evidence for interpreters, who certainly mediated oral communication between two parties who did not speak the same language mutually, is quite manageable. The focus of the study will be on such people, with special reference to the interpreters as a part of inter- or transregional state administration. Starting from the primary texts, an attempt will be made to shed light on the cultural–historical context of interpreters as actors, including their tasks, function, and social position, and to consider the overall phenomenon as such with the help of the general bibliography on the historiography of translation. There has been no comprehensive work on the topic since the classic seminal paper “Dolmetscher und Dolmetschen im Alten Orient” (1989) by Wolfram von Soden; therefore, some updates are justifiable after more than 30 years of research.

Session

Social inequality

Keywords

multilingualism; language mediator; interpreters;
historiography; translation studies

Kleber, Kristin

“Governance in Babylon” (GoviB): Editing the Neo-Babylonian texts from the Koldewey excavation



Monday 17 July, 14:30–15:00



Lipsius 028

The paper presents an overview of the ongoing ERC–Consolidator project that aims at the publication of Neo-Babylonian texts that were excavated by the DOG–excavation in Babylon 1899–1917. Most of these texts are currently housed in Berlin. After a general presentation of the aims of the project, the methods it uses for the documentation of the tablets, and the current state of the work, I will zoom into one of the very early archives stemming from the Chaldean and Neo-Assyrian rule over Babylon.

Session

Workshop 3: New Research on the City of Babylon

Keywords

Babylon; text editions; Neo-Assyrian; Neo-Babylonian

Knott, Elizabeth; Spencer Elliott

RS 24.643: Parts and their Sum: integrated ritual writing at Ugarit



Monday 17 July, 16:30–17:00



Lipsius 123

Ritual texts from the site of Ugarit offer an intriguing dataset for the study of ritual writing and its purpose(s): Written in alphabetic cuneiform, they are similar to Akkadian ritual texts in their use of prescriptive verb forms, interest in actions and things being offered, and frequent calendrical orientation. Excavations at Ras Shamra / Ugarit were sufficiently well documented to allow us to assign ritual texts to various buildings and, in some cases, specialists, offering the opportunity to think in more archaeologically-precise terms about the function of the tablets in society.

At the same time, however, many of the texts cannot be linked in a straightforward way to cultic activities; or, rather, the particulars of their link(s) to cultic activity are difficult to flesh out. Thus, the question “Who was it good for?” remains unresolved, and in many ways, understudied. In this paper, we explore one particularly baffling text: RS 24.643 — a composite ritual text with different elements, including a Hurrian hymn written in alphabetic cuneiform and several god lists that many think were used as an offering list. With respective interests in the use of the Hurrian language in Ugarit rituals (Spencer Elliott) and the function of god lists in administrative activities and theological beliefs (Elizabeth Knott), the two speakers will unpack the possible functions of this single text in Ugaritic ritual life and its interaction with different levels of society at Ugarit.

Session

Workshop 4: Who Is It (Good) For? Ritual Texts and Ritual Performances

Keywords

Ugarit; ritual texts; ritual practice; scribalism

Kogan, Leonid; Ilya Arkhipov

New grammatical and lexical facts from the Ebla chancery texts



Wednesday 19 July, 14:30–15:00



Lipsius 123

The paper aims at establishing new, more reliable meanings and functions for a number of lexical and semi-grammatical elements of Eblaite (Syrian East Semitic). The so-called “chancery texts”, first published by Pelio Fronzaroli and Amalia Catagnoli as ARET 13, 16 and 18, are in the focus of the analysis. While feasible contextual interpretation is an absolute priority, other (notably, comparative) methods are also used when applicable. As a result, a substantial progress in our understanding of these exceedingly difficult documents is expected to be achieved.

Session

Workshop 11: Akkadian Linguistics

Keywords

Ebla; East Semitic; Third Millennium; grammar; lexicon

Konstantopoulos, Gina

Don't you have a beard on your chin: Representations of age and aging in Mesopotamia



Wednesday 19 July, 15:30–16:00



Lipsius 019

In an oft-cited letter, Shamshi-Adad delivers a severe reproach to Yasmah-Addu, the ruler of Mari and the younger of his sons, decrying his lazy behavior and inability to effectively govern: “Are you a child, and not an adult? Don’t you have a beard on your chin? When are you going to take charge of your house?” Within this text we can read both an insult from a father to his disappointing son, and a reflection on how his behavior reflects an apparent immaturity, revealing insights into how age and maturity was detailed in Mesopotamia. This paper presents an overview into how age is categorized and described in Mesopotamian texts. First, we see three major categories of aging: infancy/childhood, adulthood, and old age/elderly. For each, different terms may be employed for men vs. women, and different degrees of agency applied to each. The most agency, unsurprisingly, is given to young, able-bodied, adult men, while the young or the elderly may be viewed as less able, or given less agency. Interestingly, these qualities are not universally applied: an able-bodied woman may be given equal, though different, degrees of agency as compared to an elderly man, for example. A systematic study of the terms for different “categories” of age and their use helps to reveal the underlying the social structures in Mesopotamia

Session

Inequality: Literature

Keywords

literature; letters; age; aging; agency

Koubková, Evelyne

Rituals as texts in antiquity and today: the case of the Exorcist's Manual



Monday 17 July, 14:30–15:00



Lipsius 123

There are no Mesopotamian rituals we could directly study and so our perspective is always filtered through textual evidence. Unsurprisingly, when Assyriologists talk about rituals, they very often mean ritual texts, a broad category of technical texts describing or prescribing a ritual procedure. The collapsing of text and performance, however, dates back to Mesopotamian ritual specialists. In this process of representing rituals through texts, many aspects of the ritual event become obscured, intentionally or inadvertently. The so-called Exorcist's Manual, a catalog of text series relevant for the profession of the exorcist (āšipu), is a paramount example. Many, but not all, of its entries can be identified with known texts: ritual texts, incantation series, divinatory compendia, and more. Other entries, however, do not necessarily relate to a specific text but provide an important commentary on the exorcist's profession. Analyzing the Manual's structure and individual entries reveals its complex editorial history that changes our understanding of its contents. Its final textual form conceals the dynamic development of the exorcist's profession and obscures the ideology of his self-presentation.

Session

Workshop 4: Who Is It (Good) For? Ritual Texts and Ritual Performances

Keywords

ritual; ritual texts; performance; exorcist; Exorcist's Manual

Koubková, Evelyne

The exorcist's purity



Thursday 20 July, 10:30–11:00



Lipsius 003

Although the Mesopotamian exorcist (āšipu) exposed himself to the most dangerous and polluting forces of the Mesopotamian universe, he presented himself as unquestionably pure, and even immune to pollution. While he was ready to voice his need for divine protection, he never admitted any doubt surrounding his purity. Attestations of his self-purification practices exist but are surprisingly few and unremarkable. In fact, they do not differ in either kind or intensity from those purifications that the exorcist prescribed for his clients. If cleanliness formed the basis of social acceptance in the human society, purity fulfilled a similar purpose in relation to the gods. To achieve the state of purity, a common man as much as the king had to follow a set of rules and purification measures. Only pure individuals were allowed to approach the gods so as not to offend them. However, these rules do not seem to have applied in the same way to the exorcist, who was pure by virtue of his profession. He had to be pure in order to purify others. Even more importantly, he had to be pure in order to be the perfect mediator, since any pollution would present an obstacle in communication with the gods. If the rules of purity served to control access to the gods, the exorcist defined and controlled these rules. His own unquestioned purity appears as a constructed identity and status marker, setting the exorcist apart from his clients as well as from other ritual practitioners.

Session

Workshop 13: Hygiene in the Ancient Near East: Power, Privilege, Inequality

Keywords

exorcist; purity; status; identity

Koval, Sergey; Sergey Loesov

The Ventive and the Deictic Shift in Old Assyrian (REMOTE)



Wednesday 19 July, 09:00–09:30



Lipsius 123

The ventive marker obligatorily encodes motion toward the writer as well as towards the addressee. Remarkably, this marker can also point to a future location of speech act participants or even to third-person goal as well, by way of a deictic shift. This happens in certain cases we try to single out and explain. The ventive marker has three allomorphs which are also allomorphs of the 1st person singular indirect object pronoun ‘to/for me’. The cislocative and personal index meanings of the marker arose in the course of a complex interaction which we trace down in the etymological part of the study.

Session

Workshop 11: Akkadian Linguistics

Keywords

Old Assyrian; morphosyntax; ventive

Kozuh, Michael

Cuneiform texts and new accounting theory



Wednesday 19 July, 09:00–09:30



Lipsius 005

This presentation will introduce the basic tenets of “new accounting theory” to cuneiform studies. After a detailed overview, and drawing heavily from first-millennium institutional texts, it will give examples in two areas where new accounting theory might prove useful. First, focusing on account settlements, I will examine the use of accounting as a political threat. Here I will argue that accounting was embedded in larger processes of imperial control; calling someone to account was indeed just that —an exercise of power, the rational accounting expectations of which were only part of the desired outcome. Here we will explore how accounting functioned in the contested space where imperial desires for control through simplified quantification met the messy economic and social realities of Babylonian society.

Then, using the work of Peter Miller, we will look at institutional accounting and the individual. In particular, I will use the example of lists to argue that, in addition to policing and planning, accounting could elevate, protect, and sanctify. In this sense, getting one’s name on a list could entitle one to sustenance, allow one entry into restricted parts of a temple, or enable one to call upon various authorities for justice. Here we see that accounting could also function as a means of conferring status, protection, and access to resources, highlighting the crucial role that accounting played for the individual in shaping one’s social, political, and economic relationships in Babylonian society.

The adoption of “new accounting theory” into the field of cuneiform studies could offer fresh perspectives on Babylonian accounting practices. As demonstrated through the examination of account settlements and the use of lists, accounting served as a tool for both imperial control and individual agency. While accounting was primarily used to regulate and police economic activities, it also had the potential to elevate, protect, and sanctify individuals through conferring entitlements and privileges.

Session

Workshop 10: Tracking and Managing Texts, Things and People in Cuneiform Cultures

Keywords

accounting; first millennium; economic; administration; institutions

Kraus, Nicholas

Cuneiform artifacts of Iraq in context: The archives of Ur



Tuesday 18 July, 09:00–09:30



Lipsius 005

This paper presents an introduction to the work on the tablets from the city of Ur as part of the newly formed project Cuneiform Artifacts of Iraq in Context at the Bavarian Academy of Sciences in Munich, Germany. It will give an overview of the project's goals and progress with third millennium tablets to date, including the work that has been done on the tablets from Ur. Highlights include the use of Social Networking Analysis to identify archives and dossiers among the Ur III tablets, new additions to the Early Sargonic archive, and the presence of the Early Semitic calendar at Ur.

Session

Workshop 6: Third Millennium Studies

Keywords

Ur III; Ur; digital humanities

Lacambre, Denis; Julie Patrier

Death, alliance and commemoration in the Old Babylonian period: death of individuals mentioned in year-names



Thursday 20 July, 14:30–15:00



Lipsius 005

Some texts from the Old Babylonian period indicate that the death of an individual (king, tribe leader) puts an end to all alliances he had made. Some Old Babylonian year-names allow us to add new information about it. Indeed, some year-names mentioned the death of individuals. Most of the time it is a ruler of a foreign kingdom or a tribe leader (as mentioned in Diyala year-names for example). The most emblematic case is that of the death of Samsī-Addu (around 1775 BCE) commemorated in the name of the 5th year of Ibal-pi-El II of Ešnunna. The documentation of Mari allows a better understanding of the context, notably family ties that existed between the two dynasties and that appear notably in the Mari Eponymal Chronicle and in the Mari archives (for example one son of Išme-Dagan was called Ibni-Tišpak i.e. “Tišpak has created”, a reference to the principal god of Ešnunna). Thus, if at first sight one could think that it is a question, through the intermediary of these year-names, of rejoicing over the disappearance of an enemy, it would seem that it refers rather to the commemoration of the end of an alliance between two individuals, which is often coupled with family ties. For studying this complex question, we will use data coming from various sites in the Diyala region and from Isin, Kisurra, Kiš, Marad or Sippar for example.

Session

Varia (III)

Keywords

Old Babylonian; alliance; death; commemoration; year-name

Laneri, Nicola; Rachele Mammana

The Baghdad urban archaeological project: Resuming excavations at the Old Babylonian site of Tel Muhammad (Baghdad)



Wednesday 19 July, 14:30–15:00



Lipsius 028

In 2022, a team of the University of Catania resumed the archaeological work at the site of Tel Muhammad, a second-millennium BCE settlement located in the southern suburbs of the modern city of Baghdad, that is marked by the presence of a sacred area dated to the Old Babylonian period. Tel Muhammad has a long stratigraphic sequence that starts during the Ur III period, at the end of the third millennium BCE, and ends during the Kassite period (ca. XVIth–XIIIth century BCE). Moreover, the long history of research started in the middle of the XIXth century when F. Jones and A. H. Layard discovered a series of objects among which the two copper-alloy hollowed mace-heads with the inscription “É.GAL *ha-am-mu-ra-bi*” (i.e., the palace of Hammurabi) confers to the site a probable Old Babylonian royal presence during Hammurabi’s kingdom. After the excavations carried out by the Iraqi State Board of Antiquities and Heritage between 1978 and 1985 that brought to light the sacred area together with hundreds of cuneiform tablets probably dated to the end of the Old Babylonian period. Aims of this paper will be to present a preliminary analysis of the architecture and the material culture discovered during the first season as well as to reconsider the archaeological results from the previous excavations carried out at this important site.

Session

Workshop 12: Connecting Babylon and Ešnunna: Textual and Archaeological Evidence of the First Half of the Second Millennium BCE

Keywords

Old Babylonian; Baghdad; Hammurabi; urban archaeology; Kassite period

Le Ban, Genevieve

Accessing and Amplifying Assyriology: The Need to Broaden and Establish Connections in Australia



Thursday 20 July, 12:00–12:30



Lipsius 028

Assyriological studies in Australia and the wider Southern Hemisphere are acutely remote and widely perceived to be highly esoteric. For scholars living and studying in this region, it frequently requires regular travel to Europe and North America for research and/or interacting with others in the field. The impact that Covid-19 had on our field saw the move to more digital modalities, making it easier for us to connect, albeit through a screen. The introduction of these digital modes as a response to Covid-19 epitomises the extent of the disconnect between those in the Northern and Southern Hemispheres. Networking opportunities are therefore extremely limited and costly, further exemplifying the inequality in what people can access. Within the context of Australia, there are a small number of scholars of Assyriology with no set programs or pathways into the field. Current tertiary education curriculums often incorporate “ancient Near Eastern” studies with Egyptology, under an amorphous heading: “*Egypt and the Near East*”. For students wanting to pursue research in Assyriology, they are limited by what is accessible and the educational support available. An example of this can be seen in the numerous databases that have been established in the past decade. These databases are teeming with information; however, without the support or direction of staff and scholars who are aware of these resources, the work is made redundant to broader scholarship. To navigate this, this paper proposes ways to establish more local connections and research interests as a primary objective.

Session

Workshop 14: Equality of Access to Mesopotamia: Public Outreach and Pedagogy

Lewis, Henry

‘Parody’ in the ancient Near East: A case for employing Genettean terminology



Wednesday 19 July, 09:00–09:30



Lipsius 003

Gérard Genette once wrote that ‘Parody’ had become “the site of a perhaps inevitable confusion” (1997, 15), that quickly became the *raison d’être* for his 1997 *Palimpsests: Literature in the Second Degree*. Therein, Genette provided workable distinctions between the various sub-genres of ‘Parody’ under his all-encompassing ‘Transtextuality’, exhibiting the different relationships a hypertext might take toward its hypotext. The methodology and terminology of this work has, today, made its way in to studies of intertextuality, and rightly so. Remarkably, however, Genette’s sub-generic titles and their different facets have not been employed in studies of ‘Parody’ in the ancient Near East, despite the ubiquity of ‘Parodic’ texts. To the ancients this was, of course, not of concern—they do not share in our generic taxonomies—but to the modern scholar Genette’s terminology is invaluable as a tool “to check and focus with greater swiftness and accuracy what it is [we] are (probably) thinking about when [we] (haphazardly) utter the word parody” (1997, 26). This paper attempts to clarify the ‘parodic scene’, so to speak, in the ancient Near East. I will survey the cuneiform texts usually denoted as ‘parodic’, demonstrating by Genettean terminology how similarities and differences abound. To be sure, one can certainly tell and feel the difference between, say, a model court document and the Bēl-ēṭir texts, but one must also explain why they are different beyond, e.g., ‘one is more serious/more humorous’. In so doing, I hope it will become clear why we need a specific terminology when talking about ‘parody’ in the ancient Near East, and how Genette can help us achieve this. I will conclude the paper with a brief case study: a new reading of the Poor Man of Nippur as ‘Mock-Heroic Pastiche’, to demonstrate, in a specific case, how fruitful Genettean parodic intertextuality can be.

Session

Workshop 8: Intertextuality in Cuneiform Literature: Latest Research and the Issues of Methodology

Keywords

parody; Akkadian; intertextuality; Genette; Poor Man of Nippur

Lopatin, Matvei

Plants, humans, and insects in-between: on the meaning of NIM-insects (“flies”) in human-nature relationship in cuneiform sources (REMOTE)



Tuesday 18 July, 16:30–17:00



Lipsius 123

The experience of interaction with insects should be considered an integral part of the human-nature relationship, various aspects of which have been widely documented in cuneiform sources of different genres and types. A distinct group of insects, mostly flying ones, is listed in canonical lexical lists of the Ura, Murgud and Uruanna series under the Sumerian generic name *nim* “flies”. At least 12 of the 21 Akkadian ‘*nim*’-designations listed in Ura XIV among the ‘*nim*’-insects are attested outside of the lexicographical corpus, as well as some of those listed in Murgud and Uruanna III. At the same time only two of 27 Sumerian equivalents are attested in the Sumerian corpus proper, which could point to the artificial nature of the Sumerian designations that consisted of a generic name and a specific epithet or epithets. Some of these epithets include plant names, e.g., *nim ukuš2* “fly (infesting) cucumbers” and *nim nisig* “fly (infesting) greens”, both of which are equated with the Akkadian term *tambukku* (*tebukku*). Associations with plants can be found in the descriptions of insect behaviour and habitats, as is the case with *nambūbtu* “eating the fruit of the orchards” (*ākilāt inib šippāti*, BWL 216 49) and *nim-saḥar-ra* = *lamṣatu*, for which “a reed-mat is woven” (KID-aš-rin-na ba-e-si, Dial. 1.15 // i-aš-rin-na ma-ḥi-si, BWL 236 obv ii 9–10). These and other attestations of ‘*nim*’-insects in literary texts include contexts mentioning different animals, such as *piazu* “mouse”, *ettūtu* “spider”, *ṣurārū* “lizard”, while the generic terms *nim* and *zubbu* can be used in association with death (cf. A. Draffkorn Kilmer, *Studies Reiner*, 175–180). At least 7 of the 21 Akkadian ‘*nim*’-insect names are mentioned in omen texts, in which their unusual behaviour or appearance could be interpreted as a bad or a good sign. The terms for the ‘*nim*’-insects appear among different plant names especially often in Akkadian medical texts, where these insects, sometimes crushed or squeezed, could be used together with oil or sap of plants for therapeutic purposes. Such are, for instance, *zubbu* (AMT 33 3 obv 1–2), *zubbi kalbi* (BAM 6 575 rev i 60), *zubbi ḥurāši* (AMT 88 3 5) and *ḥāmītu* (BAM 3 237 iv 6), which are mentioned in recipes in the listing of various plant names.

Session

Varia (I)

Keywords

insect names; lexical lists; medical texts; flies

Lorenzen, Søren

Proper names and essences: Tracing evolutionism through conceptions of proper names in Hebrew Bible scholarship



Monday 17 July, 17:30–18:00



Lipsius 005

In some of the most prominent works on the Hebrew Bible and Ancient Israel written in the 20th century (e.g., Walter Eichrodt and Gerhard von Rad's theologies, Johannes Pedersen's Israel, or Roland de Vaux's Ancient Israel), the idea that the proper name was intimately tied to the name bearer's essence was a commonly shared theme. According to many authors, the ancient Israelite was unable to distinguish sign from referent, and the manipulation of a proper name would result in bodily changes for its bearer due to sympathetic magic. This idea was rooted in theories of primitive mentality, magical thinking, and a limited self-consciousness that, among others, was promoted by the British anthropologists E. B. Tylor and James Frazer. This paper will archaeologically work its way back in time through often-cited works in biblical scholarship and map the influences of this evolutionistic idea on the conception of the human being in the Hebrew Bible and Ancient Israel. Furthermore, the paper will discuss how these influences from Victorian evolutionism still reverberate in contemporary scholarship.

Session

Workshop 1: The Impact of Victorian Evolutionism on Ancient Near Eastern Studies (late 19th–early 20th centuries)

Keywords

proper names, evolutionism, Hebrew Bible, primitive mentality

Maiocchi, Massimo

Gender inequality and the Ebla laws



Thursday 20 July, 10:00–10:30



Lipsius 011

The paper aims to inquire the topic of gender inequality in a mid-third millennium BCE city-state, focusing on Ebla as a case-study. The data provided by the local archives are in fact very informative with respect to several topics relevant to the present research, such as: gender-based labor division, unbalanced access to resources, social visibility, as well as legislation. As for the latter, the starting point of the discussion is provided by a new understanding of a remarkable Ebla text – namely ARET XVI 1 – in terms of a law collection. Special points of interest are crimes related to sexual offenses, as well as male vs. female inheritance practices. The new data add substantially to what is already known from other sources, most notably the so-called chancery texts from Ebla (such as for instance the famous Abarsal treaty). In order to achieve a balanced view, the overall picture as emerging from the analysis of the Ebla legal material (broadly understood) will be compared and contrasted with data from other domains, such as administration (with special reference to ration lists and personnel management), as well as the Ebla royal rituals. The result of such inquiry will be framed in a broad historical shell, highlighting shared and original features in the development of gender inequality as a function of space and time, throughout the early history of the ancient Near East.

Session

Inequality: Families in society, economy and law

Keywords

gender inequality; legislation; third millennium BCE; Ebla

Marf, DLshad

Trees and shrubs in the Zagros mountains: cuneiform and visual records



Tuesday 18 July, 15:30–16:00



Lipsius 028

Since the early Sumerian dynasties, trees and shrubs of the Zagros mountains have been depicted in Mesopotamian artistic and literary records. The Mesopotamian epics and myths are also referring to the numbers of trees and shrubs in the Zagros. The Assyrian textual and visual records give many details, not only from the royal inscriptions, but also from the economic and administrative records referring to different types of trees, shrubs, grains, herbs, and bushes in the Zagros mountains. The paper deals with the recorded trees and shrubs of the Zagros in the cuneiform and visual records and tries to categorize them according to their types, as well as identifying their modern types and modern names in the local languages of the modern Zagros. This paper will also discuss the uses of trees, shrubs, bushes, grains, and seeds in food, medicine, magic, crafts, and construction.

Session

Workshop 7: Trees and Shrubs in the Ancient Near East.
Investigating the Plurality of Practices and Meanings in the Human–Arboreal Relationship

Keywords

trees; shrubs; Zagros mountains; cuneiform records; visual evidence

Marf, DLshad

Dekon Archaeological Project (Seasons 2021–2022)



Wednesday 19 July, 09:30–10:00



Lipsius 028

Dekon Archaeological Project: Recent discoveries during the autumn Seasons 2021–2022. DLshad A. Marf (field director); team members: Mahdi J. Mustafa, Ali Hejran, Jaza Sh. Hamasharif, Sara A. Mahmood, Wafa T. Mohamamad and Aram Hama Ali (Department of Archaeology at University of Sulaimani). Gird-i Dekon is located on the west bank of the Serchinar River in the western part of Sulaimani City in Kurdistan-Iraq. The Department of Archaeology at the University of Sulaimani leads the Dekon Archaeological Project. Every academic year we do archaeological excavation, train the students of our department, and also survey the banks of the Serchinar River and the foothills of the Sherkuzh Mountain Range northeast of it. We record the nearby contemporary settlements, raw materials, and the ecology of the district. In the autumns of 2021–2022, we had two fruitful seasons; a multi-room single palace with thick stone foundations was revealed, and a central room with brick pavement was discovered as well. We reached two different layers; the upper one dates back to the Late Bronze Age, and the lower one dates back to the Middle Bronze Age. The discovered materials at these levels showing multicultural interaction during the second millennium are: lots of Shamlu Ware that we think is a typical Bronze Age Ware of the Lullubis; lots of Kassite goblets and beakers; a few Late Khabur Ware potsherds; and two seal impressions (a Kassite seal impression bears a long inscription and a Mittani one), also a Mittani cylinder seal. Moreover, we discovered three cuneiform tablets, one of which is a complete incantation, and two economic and administrative texts.

Session

Fieldwork

Keywords

Middle & Late Bronze Age single palace; Kassites; Lullubi; Middle Assyrian; Shamlu Ware

Marti, Lionel

The “archives” of the meat of the Mari palace: when accounting reveals social practices



Thursday 20 July, 10:30–11:00



Lipsius 005

Administrative archives are still too often studied as providers of numbers and statistics. Yet they can also provide a great deal of other information about the society that produced them. It is the case, for example, of a small group of texts found in the palace of Mari which documents the accounting of the meat of the residence of Zimrî-Lîm. We shall see that this corpus, although particularly arid at first sight, provides a great deal of information that goes beyond the numbers, notably concerning the meal and the sharing of foodstuffs, social practices par excellence.

Mastelli, Géraldine

Fish for men, fish for gods: confrontation of archaeological, iconographic, and epigraphic data in the land of Sumer in the Early Dynastic Period (2900–2350 BCE)



Tuesday 18 July, 17:00–17:30



Lipsius 005

In her article “Fish–Offerings in Ancient Mesopotamia” (1948), E. Douglas Van Buren related thick layers of remains of fish discovered in several monumental buildings in South Mesopotamia to massive sacrifices to the gods. This hypothesis has since been challenged in favour of a warehouse hypothesis, whether or not associated with a temple. Nevertheless, far from being a simple daily resource, fish seems to have a symbolic charge in Sumerian society: its logogram is part of the name of gods, royal inscriptions define it as a divine messenger, fish amulets in precious materials and scenes depicting it in ritual contexts are found in tombs and temples... This paper will first confront the different hypotheses proposed by scholars. Then we will cross the information from cuneiform texts (lexical lists, administrative and literary sources), archaeological contexts where fish remains were found, iconography of fish from different materials to understand its cultic place in the land of Sumer in the Early Dynastic Period.

Session

Workshop 6: Third Millennium Studies

Keywords

fish; offerings; Sumer; Early Dynastic Period; archaeology

Matuszak, Jana

Inequalities of interpretation: the case of Early Dynastic proverbs



Thursday 20 July, 09:00–09:30



Lipsius 019

The Old Babylonian transmission of Early Dynastic Proverb Collection 1 (EDPC 1) allows fascinating insights into scholarly engagement with arcane sources from the mid-third millennium BCE. Only a tiny fraction of the lexical lists from the third millennium BCE survived the overhaul of the lexical tradition in the Old Babylonian period. They are a testament to the antiquarian interests of accomplished scribes. Among them, two manuscripts of EDPC 1 stand out, as they do not simply preserve the ancient content but add pronunciation glosses and oddly tendentious Akkadian translations: wherever possible (or not), gender-neutral Sumerian forms are rendered as feminine and given a negative bent, which is why EDPC 1 has been interpreted as a collection of insults against women by Civil and Biggs, Alster, Klein, and others. Through a careful comparison of Early Dynastic and Old Babylonian manuscripts and by connecting the Old Babylonian interpretation to a related literary composition I will argue that the misogynist content is most likely an Old Babylonian innovation or re-interpretation. By providing new contexts for old decontextualised sayings the scribes actively sought to keep the Sumerian legacy alive and meaningful.

Session

Inequality: Literature

Keywords

proverbs; lexical list; Sumerian; Old Babylonian; insult

May, Natalie Naomi

Whose Head is Hanging down the Tree? Inequality in punishment



Wednesday 19 July, 15:30–16:00



Lipsius 003

My paper deals with deconstructing one of the most long-living myths of Assyriology—the identification of the head hanging down the tree in the “Garden Scene” of Assurbanipal as the head of his enemy, the Elamite king Teumman. The case of the severed head of Teumman is the best documented in preserved pictorial evidence but it is by no means unique. Written sources provide rich materials on decapitation of enemies of the Assyrian kings and triumphal rites performed with these heads. Moreover, the epigraph of the “Garden Scene” relief itself does not permit to assume that the head hanging down the tree, depicted on it, could belong to Teumman. Despite ample evidence for the Assyrian rites with severed heads the idea that the head in the “Garden Scene” is that of Teumman prevailed for a long time without even attempting to base this opinion. Assurbanipal boasted of decapitating many of his enemies besides Teumman. I prove that the head in the “Garden Scene” belongs to another and much more hated enemy of this Assyrian king, the traitor Nabû-bêl-šumāti, the dead body of whom Assurbanipal ordered to decapitate. The matter of inequality in punishments of Assyrians and enemies of Assyria and publicity of these punishments for the latter ones as opposed to the former will be treated on the backdrop of the topic under discussion.

Session

Varia (II)

Keywords

pictorial narrative cycles; principles of Assyrian
programmatic décor; “Garden Scene” of Assurbanipal;
severed heads

Mayr, Rudi

Social stratification as reflected in seal design at Ur III Garšana



Tuesday 18 July, 15:30–16:00



Lipsius 005

The Garšana archive preserves the impressions of seals belonging to over a hundred people with extremely diverse social backgrounds. The ‘owners’ of the estate at Garšana belonged to the highest social stratum, the royal family; three seals of Šu-Kabta, the owner of the estate at the beginning of the period of the archive, used seals given to him by the king himself (first Amar-Suena, then Šu-Suen). The actual running of the estate, however, was left to scribes such as Adad-tillat, who was apparently the chief administrator of the estate, with a staff of other scribes working for him. He and the many people who worked on the estate used seals with legends identifying their owners as servants of Šu-Kabta. In addition to these, there were also people working on the estate who were not, according to their seals, anyone’s servant. The seals these people used are as diverse as their owners, and they clearly reflect some aspects of their owners’ status, both in their legends and in their scenes. The chronological range of the Garšana archive is less than ten years, but (fortuitously, for our purposes), Šu-Kabta died right in the middle of this period. On his death, the estate passed to his widow, the princess Simat-lšaran, and many of his servants subsequently received new seals identifying them as her servants (though many did not); the new seals provide a slightly different view of the same social stratification that was evident under Šu-Kabta. Not all of the Garšana tablets were sealed, but the ones without seal impressions often concern the people whose seals we know from the sealed tablets, and provide an independent view of the same social structure. Most of the seals used at Garšana were servant seals of either Šu-Kabta or Simat-lšaran; in contrast, servant seals were comparatively rare at Umma. A comparison between the seals used at Garšana and Umma suggests very different social situations at these two places during the same period, though only a short distance from one another.

Session

Workshop 6: Third Millennium Studies

Keywords

Ur III; Garšana; social stratification; seal design; servant seals

McGrath, William

Wisdom and unequal outcomes in the proverb collections of Mesopotamia



Thursday 20 July, 09:30–10:00



Lipsius 019

This paper will examine the proverb collections of Mesopotamia with interest to those specimens which bear on the issue of inequality in the ancient Near East. As they survive today, the proverb collections take the form of pithy aphorisms, which were assembled (in all probability) by school teachers. It follows, given that these proverb collections were to provide a sort of didactic instruction to pupils, that this written tradition was intended to impart a certain moral and ethical wisdom that says something about what is in addition to saying something about how to act. This study will juxtapose the situation of the poor man in the Mesopotamian proverb tradition with that of his wealthier counterpart, a juxtaposition which is encapsulated in the saying that while the “powerful one” eats off of the price of his wages, the “weak one” eats off of the price of his children. It will be concluded that, from the point of view which is emic to early agrarian society, unequal outcomes divide those who wisely cultivate proper living and prosper from those who do not. Inequality is the result of unequal wisdom and application.

Session

Inequality: Literature

Keywords

proverbs; inequality; wisdom; agrarian society

Menicatti, Lucrezia

The interpretation of colors in the 1st millennium extispicy series Bārûtu



Thursday 20 July, 09:30–10:00



Lipsius 123

In my talk, I will focus on some omen sequences from Bārûtu which employ colors to define the ominous mark(s) observed in the omen protases. The aim is to determine the meaning of colors in this divinatory context, and how the omen apodoses reflect the value of the color mentioned in the omen protases. More precisely, I will examine examples of omen sequences which display a paradigmatic set of colors in the protases, and I will show that the apodoses create parallel sequences of predictions which are meant to reflect the color gradation in the protases. This will demonstrate that sets of colors are used as structuring devices in the arrangement of Babylonian extispicy texts and will ultimately shed light on the role of colors in the creation of meaning in 1st millennium Bārûtu.

Session

Workshop 15: Construction of Meaning in Ancient Mesopotamian Literature and Scholarship

Keywords

colors; textual structure; omen sequences; extispicy; bārûtu

Michel, Cécile; Pavla Rosenstein

Public outreach and pedagogy: contemporary approaches



Thursday 20 July, 15:00–15:30



Lipsius 028

The dissemination of scholarship pertaining to Mesopotamian history and languages can take different forms. The first part of this presentation will focus on two different initiatives to share Mesopotamian culture with a wider public in France: a) chain transmission towards doctoral students of other disciplines who lead workshops for school children, for example in mathematics (<http://hebergement.u-psud.fr/miss/ateliers/histoire-des-nombres/>); b) using associations to intervene in underprivileged areas, and setting up exhibitions with local residents for the schools of their children (<https://scilogs.fr/breves-mesopotamiennes/code-de-hammurabi-arrive-a-grande-borne-a-grigny/>). The second part of the presentation will cover public outreach and basic language instruction on social media, through a case study involving two introductory language series: Akkadian (AKKD 101) and Sumerian (SUM 101) posted through The Yale Babylonian Collection on Instagram ([instagram.com/yalebabyloniancollection](https://www.instagram.com/yalebabyloniancollection)). The series outlined the basics of Akkadian and Sumerian grammars, the cuneiform writing system and further resources for study. The series resulted in overwhelmingly positive engagement, including 49k post impressions, 7k post engagements (including 2.6k of 2.58%; source: Statista.com), and therefore demonstrates the potential of disseminating introductory knowledge of Assyriology to the broader public, including potential future scholars.

Session

Workshop 14: Equality of Access to Mesopotamia: Public Outreach and Pedagogy

Keywords

public outreach; pedagogy; Mesopotamian culture; languages

Mladenov, Kiril

The medical information in Ludlul bēl nēmeqi: Who can afford to be treated in the ancient Near East and how



Thursday 20 July, 11:30–12:00



Lipsius 019

The poem Ludlul Bēl Nēmeqi (“I Will Praise the God of Wisdom”) concerns itself with the problem of unjust punishments inflicted on a righteous and once important man. The author, Šubši-mešrê-Šakkan, probably composed the text in Kassite Babylonia around the XIIIth century B.C. but all the existing manuscripts date from the Neo-Assyrian period (Xth–VIIth century B.C.). Many of the penalties reveal different facets of the inequality in the world back then — social hierarchy and authority, power relations, and medical care, among others. This paper deals with the medicinal information in the poem. It seems that the language of the author reveals sophisticated knowledge of the topic. There are some rather specific lines in the poem describing internal diseases, lung problems, and suffering from li’bu disease. The research will investigate whether these parts of the text could be linked to what we know about the Assyro-Babylonian medicinal theory and knowledge. It is possible that the author learned some of the medical treatises as part of his education. In the paper, I will try to find parallel information in the Nineveh Medical Encyclopaedia and Assur Medical Catalogue concerning similar symptoms, diseases and treatments as those found in the poem. These two texts reveal the complex system of medical knowledge in the ancient Near East which developed mostly since the Old Babylonian Period and was codified later. Most renowned is indeed the treatise from 7th century Nineveh found in the Palace of King Assurbanipal. Additionally, I will speculate about the accessibility of the healing procedure consisting of ritual, incantations and medicines, and whether it was possible for a common man to afford it or whether a higher status and wealth were needed. For the opportunity to do this research, I am indebted to the NinMed team, who in the last few years did a huge amount of work on editing and publishing medical texts and made them freely available.

Session Inequality: Literature

Keywords Mesopotamian science; ancient medicine; Assyro-Babylonian medicine; Ludlul bēl nēmeqi

Moser, Jason

Computational cuneiform intertextuality: Building an interface to discover and assess linguistic connections between corpora



Wednesday 19 July, 12:00–12:30



Lipsius 003

Identifying linguistic connections between texts or corpora can aid scholars in discovering more information about many aspects intrinsic to these documents, including literary influences, facts about textual transmission and common themes or motifs. With the assistance of computational tools, these scholars can locate such potential connections more quickly as well as assert a quantitative basis for any inferences they make about these discoveries. Some computational tools of this nature already exist for areas outside of the cuneiform world and have already been well-developed, like the Tesserae project (<https://tesserae.caset.buffalo.edu/>) for Greek and Latin literature. Our project attempts to provide a similar interface for cuneiform texts but using a different technique that is more applicable to cuneiform documents. Such a technique can prove beneficial for texts that have not been delimited by paragraphs and sections, as have been canonized in the Classical literary world. We take the approach a step further by matching documents not only on exact words, but words that are semantically similar. This will enhance the types of links that are made between these documents and provide more connections from which to build arguments about intertextuality.

Session

Workshop 8: Intertextuality in Cuneiform Literature: Latest Research and the Issues of Methodology

Keywords

digital humanities; intertextuality; corpus; linguistics

Moukarzel, Kabalan

The capture of sacred objects as a sign of inequality in the policy of the Neo-Babylonian kingdom



Tuesday 18 July, 10:30–11:00



Lipsius 019

The capture of sacred objects, mainly statues of gods, is a repressive measure well attested in records from ancient Mesopotamia. It was used with different purposes by the stronger side in a conflict and marked victory achieved. When and where was this measure imposed by the Neo-Babylonian kings? And more importantly, with which intentions? The present paper is an attempt to answer these questions from a historical point of view. All available sources on the issue belong to cuneiform and Old Testament traditions reflected in passages from Neo-Babylonian chronicles, royal inscriptions, historical, and prophetic books. The geographical range of all information includes the territories of Northern Mesopotamia, Palestine — Judah, and her neighbouring areas. The earliest capture of sacred objects was realized by Nabopolassar in 616 BC, during his campaign along the Middle Euphrates, the latest by Nabonidus in 553–550 BC when he conquered Edom and North-Western Arabia. Direct and indirect information states that Nabopolassar used the repressive measure four times, Nebuchadnezzar II five times, whereas Nabonidus imposed the measure probably two times. Every capture was part of a mechanism for conquest and control consisting of different, and selectively applied repressive measures: military defeat, imposing of vassalage, plundering of property as spoil, implementation of limited or mass deportations. In some cases the measure under review marks an initial stage of subjugation, yet in other cases it marks the reorganization of entire states. The capture seriously affected the religious life of the conquered societies and led to a loss of prestige among the local elites. In the hands of the Neo-Babylonian rulers the measure became an instrument for subjugation and imperial domination with cultic, ideological, and political dimensions.

Session

Inequality: politics

Keywords

repressive measure; cult statue; conquest

Mzali, Sonia; Morgane Pique

“Les Sciences Infusent”: an academic outreach program



Thursday 20 July, 9:30–10:00



Lipsius 028

At the University of Lille, there is an outreach program called “Les Sciences Infusent” which makes academic research available to the wider public. This program includes several projects about Assyriology that we have participated in or created. Indeed, we have created a workshop about Mesopotamian gods and goddesses through the Epic of Gilgameš for school programs, another one dealing with the various uses of clay in ancient Mesopotamia and a third workshop about the decipherment of cuneiform and hieroglyphic script with a fellow Egyptologist, both workshops were presented at the “Fête de la Science” in 2020 and 2021. “Les Sciences Infusent” also offers an introduction to cuneiform writing available to elementary and secondary schools since 2013. Among the nine different “Les Sciences Infusent” workshops about the ancient world offered to school teachers in the north of France, the one about cuneiform represents third of the 225 classes booked this year. We wrote part of the reading material for “Mésopotamie — Terre d’argile” exhibition in 2020 which also offered cuneiform writing workshops. This exhibition is now portable and can be borrowed together with playful learning resources . In addition to the exhibition, “Les Sciences Infusent” produced a web documentary about Ancient Mesopotamia called “Mésopotamie : à l’origine de notre civilisation” . The aim of our presentation is to introduce all these resources and workshops offered freely by the University of Lille through the program. We will also present the methods and ideas for public outreach that we have developed through these various experiences and activities as well as our future projects.

Session

Workshop 14: Equality of Access to Mesopotamia: Public Outreach and Pedagogy

Keywords

cuneiform; outreach; pedagogy; exhibition

Nation, Trey

The city god and access to power at Kültepe / Kanesh



Wednesday 19 July, 12:00–12:30



Lipsius 011

One particularly enigmatic character in the Old Assyrian corpus has been the goddess Ana, a Kaneshite deity who was apparently worshipped by the Assyrian merchants who lived in the Anatolian city. In general, there is little evidence that Assyrians dwelling in Anatolia adopted the worship of local gods; among the many known local deities, Ana appears to be the only major exception. Yet within a generation of the full-time settlement of Assyrians at Kanesh Ana appears in Assyrian personal names and receives votive offerings. While our knowledge of Ana's personality and cult remains incomplete, the steady publication of new texts from Kültepe now allows for a better description of the goddess. Scholarly discussions of the Assyrian worship of Ana tend to focus on models of syncretization or hybridization. However, Ana's role as the city god of Kanesh provides a clear warrant for the participation of Assyrian merchants and their peers in her cult. Much as in the hometown at Assur, cultivating social relationship with gods was an important part of accessing human social hierarchies as well, and Ana in particular presided over spheres of Kaneshite society that were crucial to Assyrian trade and life in their adopted city. This paper will investigate not only the character of Ana based on currently available evidence, but particularly the ways in which Assyrians and Anatolians navigated cross-cultural social hierarchies at least in part through the mediation of gods and their cults.

Session

Workshop 9: Religion, Ritual, and Inequality in the Ancient Near East

Keywords

religion; Anatolia; Old Assyrian; hybridization

Nett, Seraina; Rune Rattenborg

Mapping the cuneiform world: preliminary results from Geomapping Landscapes of Writing (2020–2023)



Tuesday 18 July, 11:30–12:00



Lipsius 003

Counting a conservative estimate of 500,000 inscriptions known from public and private collections across the globe, the corpus of cuneiform texts ranks among the largest discrete bodies of textual source material from the ancient world. Moreover, the specific circumstances and processes of formation and discovery of this corpus mean that the relative prevalence of textual genres represented is markedly different from most other textual corpora from the ancient world. As such, this corpus offers unique opportunities for the study of the use and spread of writing across early human societies. This paper summarises the aim, structure and most important outcomes of the project Geomapping Landscapes of Writing (GLoW), a three-year research project at the Department of Linguistics and Philology of Uppsala University with the aim to provide an updated survey of the cuneiform corpus (<https://www.lingfil.uu.se/research/assyriology/glow/>). With its focus on updating and augmenting basic digital reference indices for overseeing and querying the cuneiform corpus, project outcomes include open-access geospatial data sets (Rattenborg et al. 2021), preparation of extensive text metadata collections from analog sources, and derived case studies on the composition, distribution, and materiality of the cuneiform corpus. Relying on an ongoing collaboration with the Cuneiform Digital Library Initiative (CDLI), the canonical digital index of cuneiform texts, we also highlight the advantages of contributing to existing repositories, and contributions to the development of new features forming part of the updated CDLI website launched in summer 2022.

Bibliography

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Session

Digital methods in Ancient Near Eastern Studies

Keywords

geodata; digital repositories; corpus-based approaches; materiality of writing

Neumann, Georg

Mining the archives: Understanding and analyzing archeological data from Koldewey's Babylon excavations (1899–1917)



Monday 17 July, 16:30–17:00



Lipsius 028

The aim of the paper is to give some insights into the work with Koldewey's excavation documentation from Babylon and to show possibilities as well as limitations of the analysis of the find contexts of the Neo-Babylonian archives. Therefore, the paper will present an overview on the documented data. The data comprises excavations diaries, find journals, and photographs. Although the excavation was documented in great detail by the standards of the time, there is often a lack of information on small finds. That is due to the fact, that the excavators mainly focus on the architectural remains and the reconstruction of the urban landscape and not on artifacts and their find heights and findspots. Unfortunately, even later pits were often not recognized or documented. And already Hormuzd Rassam remarked that Babylon had probably been heavily looted for centuries by illicit excavations, especially for getting baked bricks. How it is possible to reconstruct findspots, contexts and the progress of excavation, which was recorded often only sporadically in the excavation diary, will be shown in the paper.

Session

Workshop 3: New Research on the City of Babylon

Keywords

Babylon; Koldewey; DOG; history of science

Nicolas, Thibaud

Traces of tacit social practices and financial operations through accounting: the example of CT 47, 80



Thursday 20 July, 11:30–12:00



Lipsius 005

In this paper we will study the cuneiform text CT 47, 80. This tablet from the Old-Babylonian period is an accounting document that informs us on the way grain circulated in Mesopotamia, from the farming areas to the storage areas of the city of Sippar. After having made a philological analysis of the text, we shall clarify the different accounting operations listed in this tablet. This first stage of research will enable us to shed light on the way in which the Old-Babylonian scribes thought about and organised their accounting summaries. In the third part, we intend to show how we can deduce from the chain of accounting operations the real circuit of the grain, by looking in particular at the enumeration of several groups of individuals receiving rations. Finally, the last stage of our communication will focus on the different types of measurements used to evaluate the volume of grain. It is this phenomenon that will interest us, as well as its anthropological implications.

Session

Workshop 10: Tracking and Managing Texts, Things and People in Cuneiform Cultures

Keywords

accounting; Sippar; CT 47 80; book-keeping; circulations

Nielsen, John

Was there cadastral accounting for *ḫanšû*-land?



Wednesday 19 July, 12:00–12:30



Lipsius 005

Fields designated as *ḫanšû*-land were created by the institution of the crown in a series of royal land divisions (*zu'uztu*). In most cases, these allotments seem to have benefitted the restricted class of prebendary families that were closely aligned with the institution of the temple. Nevertheless, there is little evidence of institutional accounts or cadastral records of *ḫanšû*-land. Given the apparent institutional overlap with this distinct category of property holding, it is interesting that lists of *ḫanšû*-land and holders only survive from Uruk, where implementation of the system may have differed from practices observed at Babylon and other northern cities. The paper will examine the evidence from Babylonia and consider the possibility that there may have been more institutional oversight over the possession and alienation of *ḫanšû*-land than previously thought.

Session

Workshop 10: Tracking and Managing Texts, Things and People in Cuneiform Cultures

Keywords

ḫanšû-land; cadastral accounting; prebendary families; Neo-Babylonia; land

Novotny, Jamie

Assyrian royal inscriptions: newest horizons



Tuesday 18 July, 10:00–10:30



Lipsius 011

From 1987 to 2023, the University of Toronto-based Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia (RIM) Project and University of Pennsylvania-based Royal Inscriptions of the Neo-Assyrian Period (RINAP) Project published more than 1,900 Assyrian royal inscriptions. These discipline-standard editions, which are also now accessible in a linguistically-tagged (lemmatised) and open-access format on the Open Richly Annotated Cuneiform Corpus (Oracc) platform, serve as the basis for research on Assyrian history and royal ideology, among many other topics. This presentation will discuss the future prospects and challenges of annotating, editing, standardising, and updating this large corpus of Assyrian royal inscriptions, as well as harmonising personal and geographic names, with the now discipline-standard reference tools The Prosopography of the Neo-Assyrian Empire (PNA; 1998–2011) and Répertoire Géographique des Textes Cunéiformes (especially A.M. Bagg, Die Orts- und Gewässernamen der neuassyrischen Zeit [2007–20]) and Akkadian words with the Concise Dictionary of Akkadian. The presentation in honour of A. Kirk Grayson will also introduce the LMU Munich-based Royal Inscriptions of Assyria (RIA) Project, whose aim is to reedit the inscriptions of Assyria's first 107 rulers both in print and online.

Session

Workshop 5: Assyrian Royal Inscriptions in Honor of A.K. Grayson

Keywords

Assyrian royal inscription; digital humanities; RIMA; RINAP; Kirk Grayson

Pappi, Cinzia; Nyaz Azeez; Costanza Coppini

Deconstructing inequality in scientific communication: The challenge of preserving memories and raising cultural awareness in the region of Koisanjaq/Koya (Iraq)



Wednesday 19 July, 10:00–10:30



Lipsius 028

The conservation of cultural heritage and the development of cultural awareness are both crucial and widely debated topics in countries that have experienced the effects of conflicts, particularly those which have also suffered a long political and cultural isolation. The Kurdish Region of Iraq, which had experienced a long cultural period of relative isolation, is currently undergoing a time of intense field investigations which contribute greatly to our knowledge of this area.

Archaeological investigations conducted since 2015 by the department of Koisanjaq/Koya of the Antiquity Service of the Kurdish Region of Iraq in cooperation with the Archaeological Survey of Koisanjaq/Koya (ASK) Project have highlighted the multi-cultural character of this region. After a short overview of the project, this paper will mainly discuss the methodology applied by the project, re-examined against the background of previous archaeological and anthropologic research in this area, and presents case studies for new directions in recording the cultural heritage. It will further present ongoing archaeological and anthropologic projects aimed to the conservation and promotion of the cultural landscape of the region of Koisanjaq/Koya, focussing on the ongoing specific strategies aimed at the (1) improvement of site management, (2) scientific dissemination, by using different media, and (3) preservation of cultural memory. All these projects, conducted with the involvement of the local academia and the main stake-holders, have as main objectives: (1) the mutual exchange of data between scholars and local communities, (2) to raise cultural awareness, (3) to preserve historical narratives on the developments of the landscape of the recent past, and (4) to explore the cultural reception of the local Antiquity.

Session

Fieldwork

Keywords

fieldwork in Iraqi Kurdistan; cultural heritage; remote sensing; social media; cultural dissemination; visual anthropology

Pat-El, Na'ama; Øyvind Bjøru

Existential Angst: non-existential use of *ibašši* in Neo-Assyrian



Wednesday 19 July, 12:30–13:00



Lipsius 123

The verb *ibašši*, the 3ms durative of *bašā'um*, functions as an intransitive existential predicate in all dialects of Akkadian. It typically has a nominal subject and frequently an adverbial complement. While the vast majority of this form's attestations are as an existential, in Neo-Assyrian it also appears in non-existential and non-predicative functions, and it is generally treated in the secondary literature as a modal adverb (e.g., Hämeen-Anttila 2000: 109). In this paper we will explore the non-existential function(s) of *ibašši* in Neo-Assyrian. We will argue that it is a focus sensitive particle which may stand after any constituent in the sentence, except the predicate. We trace the development of this function of *ibašši* in Assyrian and suggest a diachronic process by which an existential marker becomes a focus particle.

Session

Workshop 11: Akkadian Linguistics

Keywords

Neo-Assyrian; syntax; historical linguistics; existential

Paulus, Susanne

A broader view of the Kassite archives from Babylon



Tuesday 18 July, 10:00–10:30



Lipsius 028

The Kassite archives from Babylon provide rich textual evidence for studying the Kassite period and ideally complement other known archives and text groups. The 90 tablets housed in the Vorderasiatische Museum in Berlin come from family archives and are primarily legal. As legal documents are still underrepresented in the Kassite material, the additional Babylon sources allow us to understand better how different legal genres evolved from earlier periods. Diving deeper into the development of contracts and legal languages opens questions about scribal training and the transition from the Old Babylonian period. There are two phases: the first is characterized by traditionalism and continuity, and the second is with innovation. Finally, I will situate those phases in the broader picture of Kassite history.

Session

Workshop 3: New Research on the City of Babylon

Keywords

Babylon; Kassite; history; legal history; archives

Pedersén, Olof

Babylon: New perspectives with reconstructions through archaeology and ancient texts



Monday 17 July, 15:00–15:30



Lipsius 028

The results of the German and Iraqi excavations some 100 or 50 years ago in Babylon as well as cuneiform texts will be used for a critical discussion of possible interpretations of the main remains. Reconstructions in museums and in Babylon will be discussed and compared with recent preliminary fieldwork and digital reconstructions.

Session

Workshop 3: New Research on the City of Babylon

Keywords

Babylon; archaeology; reconstructions; cuneiform texts

Pfeifer, Guido

In fear of contingency: oath and ordeal as means of judicial decision-making



Tuesday 18 July, 15:00–15:30



Lipsius 123

For many civilizations of antiquity, law, especially litigation, is attributed an agonal character, as it is one of the basic principles of Greek culture according to Jacob Burckhardt. The paper is dedicated to the question of whether an agonal principle in the broader sense can be identified in oath and ordeal as decision-making mechanisms in the cuneiform tradition of the ancient Near East. In addition, the view of legal history is to be expanded to include a sociological perspective to approach the phenomenon in this way. The hypothesis is the assumption that the agonal principle has unfolded its actual meaning precisely in so-called prescientific legal cultures, in which law as a system was not yet or still little differentiated.

Session

Varia (I)

Keywords

legal history; sociology; oath; ordeal; agon

Pfoh, Emanuel

Victorian evolutionism, the ethnography of Palestine and biblical Orientalism



Monday 17 July, 17:00–17:30



Lipsius 005

Under the main umbrella of the ideology of progress, the development of evolutionism during the nineteenth century had a certain impact on Victorian anthropology, and consequently, on biblical archaeology and the practice of proto-ethnography in Ottoman Palestine. Such an impact was also evident in the field of biblical or Hebrew studies, especially in the many histories of ancient Israel appearing in the period well into the early twentieth century. This communication explores these issues, setting them into their correspondent ideological and historiographical contexts within the wider development of ancient Near Eastern studies under the shadow of European imperial expansion into the Middle East and its related Orientalist expressions.

Session

Workshop 1: The Impact of Victorian Evolutionism on Ancient Near Eastern Studies (late 19th–early 20th centuries)

Keywords

Victorian evolutionism; Palestine; Orientalism; ethnography; Hebrew Bible

Piccin, Michela

Repetition and the beating of drums in a selection of Eršaḫunga



Thursday 20 July, 10:00–10:30



Lipsius 123

My paper will focus on the form and function of the Eršaḫunga–prayers which are collected in Maul’s edition (1988) “Herzberuhigungsklagen”: die sumerisch–akkadischen Eršaḫunga–Gebete. These prayers have different divine addressees, some of which are impossible to determine due to damage on the tablets, but they include well-known high deities such as Anu, Aya, Ishtar, Enlil, Ninlil, Nusku, Damkina, Ea, Sin, Shamash, Marduk, Ninurta, Zarpanitum, and Tashmetum. There are also Eršaḫunga –prayers to other gods and ones directed to “any god”. Their form goes back to Old Babylonian times, but most of the currently known prayers come from the first millennium and were discovered in the remains of Ashurbanipal’s library in Nineveh (though other sites have also yielded some prayers). The Eršaḫunga –prayers exhibit a common structure and are characterized by numerous repetitions. The first step of this study will be to offer an overview of the various forms of repetition attested in the selected corpus. The second step will be to consider the performative aspects of the Eršaḫunga–prayers. A full picture of the rituals associated with the Eršaḫunga–prayers is not available, but a few details are known. They belong to the corpus of the cult–singer (*kalû*), but in contrast to other prayers, Eršaḫunga–prayers were never sung (*zamāru*). Rather, the Eršaḫunga–prayers were ‘made’ (*epēšu*), ‘spoken’ (*dabābu*), ‘recited’ (*manû*), and ‘lifted up’ (*našû*). Although Eršaḫunga–prayers were not sung, kettledrums often accompanied their recitation. In this paper, I will argue that the frequent use of repetition in the Eršaḫunga prayers may be closely connected with their recitation in a ritual context.

Session

Workshop 15: Construction of Meaning in Ancient Mesopotamian Literature and Scholarship

Keywords

repetition; linguistics; sociology; performance studies

Pintér, Anna Krisztina

On Sumerian verbs of existence, change of state, and dislocation



Thursday 20 July, 14:30–15:00



Lipsius 123

The present paper contains a linguistic and semantic analysis of Sumerian verbs from the semantic fields of existence, caused motion, and change of state. Recent linguistic theories have put great focus on verb classes of various semantic fields, including change of state, and existence. Typologies of verbs have been set up based on each verb's grammatical behaviour and semantic components. These studies have become indispensable in any lexicographic and semantic studies, as the various grammatical elements described in these studies form the basis of a dictionary writing. As part of the project "A Dictionary of the Sumerian Royal inscriptions of the Third Millennium", defining verb classes and their common denominators is an inevitable task. The verb classes, their senses, and the grammar of these verbs are closely intertwined. The findings of these investigations, which focus on these connections, provide the information which appears in the paragraph of a lexical unit. Sumerian language also possesses several synonyms and verb groups from diverse semantic fields; their shared grammatical behaviour and common patterns of verb usage has not been delineated so far. Synonyms, relations of verbs, and the grammatical properties of verb classes will be discussed in the paper, whether existence, dislocation, and change-of-state have equal or unequal semantic properties from a grammatical, and also, from a language philosophical perspective.

Session

Linguistics: Sumerian and Akkadian

Keywords

lexicography; Sumerian verbs

Podany, Amanda

Using microhistories to engage the public in Mesopotamian history



Thursday 20 July, 10:00–10:30



Lipsius 028

The Mesopotamian merchant Ea-našir became an internet star in part because he seemed like a familiar character in what most people view as an impossibly distant time. The nature of cuneiform sources allows for the development of microhistories about other men and women of the ancient past, each of which can provide a window into that person's era. Scholars who have already taken this approach in their research are particularly well positioned to write for a wider public. This includes an audience of school teachers who look for ways to make ancient Mesopotamian history more accessible to their students. Public fascination with Ea-našir suggests that learning about the lives of real people of Mesopotamia could result in the whole field gaining more interest among general readers.

Session

Workshop 14: Equality of Access to Mesopotamia: Public Outreach and Pedagogy

Keywords

microhistory; outreach; public perceptions of Mesopotamia

Portuese, Ludovico

Bathing rooms and hygiene in first millennium Assyria



Thursday 20 July, 12:30–13:00



Lipsius 003

This paper offers an investigation of the spaces that are commonly designated as “bathrooms” in literature and that were found in buildings excavated at Assur, Kalhu, Dur–Sharrukin, Nineveh, Til Barsip and dating to the first millennium BCE. The inquiry will proceed first with a definition of the Assyrian “bathroom” by relying on architectural features and potential activities performed therein, especially inferred from visual and textual sources. Second, the issues of hygiene, purity, and cleanliness will be discussed to understand the extent to which the inaccessibility to cleanliness and purification practices led to a lack of good hygiene and implied a kind of social ostracism. It is concluded that “bathrooms” were conceived as means to protect specific groups from those things that could pollute or defile the integrity of the Assyrian culture.

Session

Workshop 13: Hygiene in the Ancient Near East: Power, Privilege, Inequality

Keywords

Assyria; hygiene; bathrooms; purity; ostracism

Pottorf, Andrew

The lives and work of the serflike UN-il2 in the Ur III period



Monday 17 July, 15:30–16:00



Lipsius 003

The UN-il2 were a well-attested social stratum during the Ur III period. Though the term is found in administrative texts throughout the third and early second millennia as well as in lexical texts and a proverb, the meaning and reading of this term are uncertain. Nevertheless, during the Ur III period, the UN-il2 were clearly serflike individuals distinct from citizens and slaves, though they shared common features with these other social strata. Like citizens, UN-il2 worked and presumably lived with their nuclear and extended families. They held a wide range of the same occupations as citizens, except for many cultic and high-ranking managerial occupations. They could be allotted shares of subsistence land (šuku) like citizens, though their shares tended to be smaller. Like slaves, their work was entirely controlled by those upon whom they were dependent, which were generally temple households. As such, they were usually conscripted full-time throughout the year with only a few days off a month, though they may have had additional days off for festivals. Similar to slaves, they may not have owned private households. In contrast to citizens and slaves, they do not appear to have been salable. Their origins are unclear, though they inherited their status from previous generations. They were typically impoverished, and many of them were probably donated by citizens to temple households. This presentation covers these topics and more in order to investigate how the UN-il2 lived and worked according to abundant Ur III documentation.

Session

Workshop 2: Beyond Slavery and Freedom in the Ancient Near East

Keywords

Ur III period; UN-il2; social stratification; servitude

Pottorf, Andrew

Adding it all up: A synthesis of accounting data from Ur III Umma



Wednesday 19 July, 09:30–10:00



Lipsius 005

The Ur III period is well known among Assyriologists and similar scholars for its extensive administrative documentation. Such documentation includes a wide variety of genres dealing with accounting data, including allotment reports, balanced accounts, inspections, sealed receipts, surveys, and work rosters, among others. This presentation examines these genres, particularly their administrative notations and terms, in order to synthesize their data across Umma texts. In so doing, a variety of demographic and economic measures relating to the citizens and serflike UN-il2 of Umma are offered, such as their family sizes as well as their conscription rates and annual barley incomes, especially according to their occupations. Since this synthesis requires extensive prosopographical analyses, a few key examples are highlighted that bridge some of the gaps in these texts. Overall, this synthesis of accounting data illuminates correlations between the social hierarchy and economic inequality of the Ur III society, notably with regard to its social stratification and occupational structure.

Session

Workshop 10: Tracking and Managing Texts, Things and People in Cuneiform Cultures

Keywords

Ur III period; accounting; economic inequality

Quillien, Louise

Inventories and accounts concerning craftsmen (weavers and goldsmiths) in the Ebabbar archive, 6th c. BCE



Wednesday 19 July, 12:30–13:00



Lipsius 005

In the Neo-Babylonian archives of the Ebabbar temple of Sippar, several files of texts concern the work of craftsmen. This workforce belongs to the temple personnel and is in charge of making the precious objects used during the ceremonies. Scribes working for the temple administration used writing and accounting to control and organise the work of the craftsmen, and to monitor the movements of materials and objects for the cult. Through the example of the long inventories concerning the work of weavers and goldsmiths, I will see what were the objectives of the temple administration for writing these documents, at what moment they were written in the working process and if they were also of some utility for the workers. The relations between the form and content of these texts will be studied. Certain writing and accounting practices will be considered more specifically: the choice of units of measurement and their degree of precision, the use of tables, headings and dividing lines, and the practice of sealing. The aim is to study how these texts fit into the larger group of Ebabbar archives and to understand the reasons for their particularities.

Session

Workshop 10: Tracking and Managing Texts, Things and People in Cuneiform Cultures

Keywords

Neo-Babylonian; accounting; craft; writing; Sippar

Radner, Karen

New epigraphic discoveries from Assur and Dur-Sharrukin



Tuesday 18 July, 10:30–11:00



Lipsius 011

Not available on livestream

The paper celebrates the monumental contribution of A.K. Grayson to the study of Assyrian royal inscriptions and presents new epigraphic discoveries from Assur and Dur-Sharrukin from fieldwork conducted in February–March 2023 and November 2022, respectively.

Session

Workshop 5: Assyrian Royal Inscriptions in Honor of A.K. Grayson

Keywords

Assyrian Empire; Assur; Dur-Sharrukin (Khorsabad); royal inscriptions

Rainford, Samantha

“The Gods Belong to the Main House”: Gendered legal fictions and cultic inheritance at Emar



Wednesday 19 July, 11:30–12:00



Lipsius 011

At the Late Bronze Age city of Emar, on the great bend of the Middle Euphrates, hundreds of texts have been unearthed that illuminate the practice of law and how families at Emar crafted legal fictions to remedy social and religious concerns about inheritance. Within these legal documents, the role of women illuminates how locals understood inheritance of the cult of the ancestors through a highly gendered lens. As previous scholarship has noted, the ancestral cult was inherited by the primary heir, usually the eldest son. The primary heir would inherit the ancestral estate, often translated as the “main house” at Emar (written *é gal*), to which the deified ancestors were inextricably tied. But what happens if there are no male heirs? Although the “female and male” status and its occurrences have been observed in Emar texts, some scholars have focused on the inheritance of the ancestral cult but with little attention to gender. Others have emphasized the unique legal protection of women at Emar, with little interest to its connection to the family cult. As a contribution to the larger discourse concerning women at Emar, this paper analyzes how legal fictions for the purposes of inheritance are created with consideration of the domestic cult, and vice versa, with gender as an essential component regarding who can maintain the ancestor cult. When established “female and male,” daughters are afforded the legal capacity to inherit the ancestral cultic responsibilities akin to a male primary heir. This paper will investigate the social ramifications of the “female and male” status assigned to daughters that have yet to be considered, illuminating how gender and the cult of ancestors are inextricably connected, but still malleable in the practice of Emarite law.

Session

Workshop 9: Religion, Ritual, and Inequality in the Ancient Near East

Keywords

Emar; women; ancestors; cult; law

Rauchhaus, Felix

Creditworthiness and the unequal access to capital in the 3rd millennium: A new look at Presargonic and Ur III loan documents



Tuesday 18 July, 12:30–13:00



Lipsius 019

Access to capital is fundamental for a smooth flow of overall business activity. If economic actors do not have any capital at hand but wish to maintain their business activity and their living standard, they require credit. Even though the debtors' role is central to economic performance, research has not focused on the 3rd millennium debtors too much. This paper will take up previous findings and focus primarily on the debtor. 3rd millennium loan documents from the Presargonic and Ur III periods will serve as a source basis. While the documented Presargonic creditors granted loans privately, Ur III money lenders gave institutional and private loans. Addressed dossiers will mainly consist of Amarezem's Presargonic credit business, SI.A-a's Ur III business, and Ur III institutional credit transactions from the province of Lagash. It will be discussed that the debtors comprised certain professions, and systematically a large section of society may not have had easy access to the credit system. The correlation between occupations, income level, and credit amounts suggests that ancient Mesopotamian creditors methodically considered creditworthiness and the risk of default. In conclusion, the individual economic potential of business activity without liabilities was highly restricted, and the possibility of access to credit and the amount of credit was unequally distributed. Inequality in doing or starting business activity prevailed.

Session

Inequality: wealth, labor and income

Keywords

inequality; debt; 3rd millennium; private; institutional

Reid, J. Nicholas

Prisoners as in-betweeners of society: Imprisonment in the Middle Babylonian period



Monday 17 July, 17:00–17:30



Lipsius 003

Detention in the context of labor likely relates to the origin of imprisonment in the ancient Near East. Imprisonment developed into a multifunctional, flexible means to control and coerce persons of a variety of statuses, and detention was functionally used to both control and coerce mobility, depending on the reasons for imprisonment. By detaining the body, those in power could assert control over persons with the “prison” acting as a functional means of temporarily detaining and even creating persons of in-between status, through the suspension of normal privileges belonging to persons of a variety of statuses. After discussing the role of labor in the development and functional variation of imprisonment in the ancient Near East, this paper will consider the utilization of detention in the Middle Babylonian Period. While imprisonment occurred as responses to what is normally called a “crime” as part of the judicial process, numerous texts for the period deal with the detention of workers for the purpose of labor. Although many who ran away from work assignments were successful in escape, those captured were often detained and reassigned. The varied functions of imprisonment will be contextualized in their immediate context by considering the status of those detained and the context of their confinement. Evidence from the previous periods will also be drawn upon at various points to reveal the non-linear developments in practices related to imprisonment. By looking at both the entrances and exits of imprisonment, the liminal status of imprisoned persons will be highlighted. While not constituting a prison, according to classic definitions, controlling the body to coerce labor remains a prominent feature of imprisonment in the history of the world.

Session

Workshop 2: Beyond Slavery and Freedom in the Ancient Near East

Keywords

prison; labor; coercion; debt; status

Richardson, Seth

Babylon, Ešnunna, and the Fortress Archipelago, 17th–16th cs. BC



Wednesday 19 July, 12:00–12:30



Lipsius 028

This paper reconsiders evidence from the Tel Muḫammad texts published forty years ago by Iman Jamil Al-Ubaid in light of our evolving understanding of the Late Old Babylonian geopolitical situation. I will address two related topics. First, I will offer some new thoughts on the chronology of rule at Tel Muḫammad and Babylon and the implications for understanding the “resettlement” of Babylon after 1595 BC. Second, I will detail how the texts reveal a multi-lateral nature of military conflict, consistently with a regional political environment increasingly characterized by warlordism centered in fortresses rather than kingship rooted in city-states. Especially with new information available from Dūr-Abi-ešuḫ, the Tel Muḫammad texts arguably indicate more of what was typical than atypical of the fin-de-siècle Middle Bronze in most of northern Babylonia.

Session


Workshop 12: Connecting Babylon and Ešnunna: Textual and Archaeological Evidence of the First Half of the Second Millennium BCE


Keywords

settlement patterns; political life; militarism; Old Babylonian period

Rinderer, Maya

Symmetry and asymmetry in Maqlû incantations

 Wednesday 19 July, 10:30–11:00

 Lipsius 123

In my talk, I will present some research results from my dissertation project on analogical thinking, meaning construction, repetition and parallelism in the Babylonian anti-witchcraft ritual Maqlû, conducted under the auspices of the project REPAC. Taking inspiration from the theme of the 68th Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale, ‘Inequality in the Ancient Near East’, the corpus of Maqlû incantations will be investigated for examples of symmetry and asymmetry within single verses and across two (or more) verses. I will particularly focus on the (a)symmetry of two parallel verses, known as ‘couplets’, found in Maqlû incantations, discussing their interactive relationship, their role in the construction of meaning and how they serve to enhance the ‘magical’ properties of an incantation text.

Session

Workshop 15: Construction of Meaning in Ancient Mesopotamian Literature and Scholarship

Keywords

magic; witchcraft; parallelism

Rositani, Annunziata

Inequality in the *bīt asīrī*



Monday 17 July, 16:30–17:00



Lipsius 003

In this paper I will present an overview of the inequality in the *bīt asīrī*, the “house of prisoners”, in the Old Babylonian period. On the basis of the published documentation, especially from the time of Rīm–Anum, a rebel king who took power in Uruk during the reign of Samsu–iluna of Babylon, it is possible to highlight a considerable disparity in the treatment of the prisoners in the *bīt asīrī* based on gender and age: men vs. women, children vs. young people, and young women vs. older women. Inequalities are also evident within these groups, with assignments of different tasks likely based on prisoners’ capacities and attitudes. A particular focus will be offered on the practice of donating some prisoners to the city temples and the inequalities of status between these and the other prisoners. Thanks to the analysis of the *bīt asīrī* texts compared with other Old Babylonian sources, it is possible to identify the reasons for these inequalities of treatment and propose some suggestions on the usage of these prisoners, who often happened to be important people, such as high–ranking military officers or prominent persons connected with the reign of Ešnunna.

Session

Workshop 2: Beyond Slavery and Freedom in the Ancient Near East

Keywords

House of prisoners; war prisoners; Rīm–Anum; gifts to temples

Rositani, Annunziata

Some comparative observations on the textual sources: Tel Muḥammad, Babylon, Sippar, Ešnunna and the surroundings



Wednesday 19 July, 12:30–13:00



Lipsius 028

The beginning of the second millennium BCE represents a period of significant political transformations for Mesopotamia. It led to the emergence of new dynasties that created a complex geopolitical scenario. Babylon is only one of the pieces of this intricate puzzle in which other centres have also played a leading political and economic role, such as Sippar, Ešnunna, and probably Tel Muḥammad in the Diyala area. This paper will analyse in a comparative way the textual data from these different centres to contribute to the reconstruction of their mutual relations during the Old Babylonian Period (ca. 1850–1600 BCE) until the beginning of the Kassite period. In particular, I will present some comparative observations on the texts coming from Tel Muḥammad in today's New-Baghdad district with the documentation coming from other Old Babylonian cities. Out of the more than 300 texts found in this site, only about thirty have been studied by I.J. al-Ubaid in her MA thesis in Arabic discussed in 1983 at the University of Baghdad and not yet published. These tablets provide essential information not only for the historical reconstruction of the events but also on the economic reality of the whole Diyala region. My paper intends to offer an initial analysis of these economic texts, above all contracts likely from private contexts, comparing them to other Old Babylonian administrative texts to highlight eventual characteristics in common. A prosopographic analysis of the texts will also be carried out in comparison to the documentation of other centres. Finally, I will focus on the month names from a comparative point of view and on the topographic data, also with reference to the hypotheses that have been proposed on the ancient name of the centre.

Session

Workshop 12: Connecting Babylon and Ešnunna: Textual and Archaeological Evidence of the First Half of the Second Millennium BCE

Keywords

Old Babylonian texts; Tel Muḥammad; Diyala area

Rubin, Zachary

Unequal access to historical memory: The case of Ur in Babylonian and Judean traditions



Tuesday 18 July, 16:30–17:00



Lipsius 011

Since the beginning of Assyriology as a discipline, scholars have debated how much influence the cosmological traditions of Babylonia had over the development of the Hebrew Bible. This paper wishes to advance this discussion by exploring the means in which the composers of the Hebrew Bible may have received Babylonian knowledge. As a case study, it will explore the legacy of Ur in Babylonian and biblical traditions, and the ways thinkers of both traditions could have accessed the ancient city and its legacy. It puts forward the idea that the two traditions had unequal access to Mesopotamian historical memory. Babylonian scholars, after all, could read cuneiform inscriptions and had access to abundant historical sources pertaining to the former Ur III kingdom. Judean scholars, on the other hand, were probably limited to Aramaic texts, and may not have had much access to Ur or its history. Through oral tradition, however, they may still have encountered folkloric accounts of Ur and other elements of Babylonian foundational history and cosmology. The divergent access to Mesopotamian historical memory is demonstrated through the ways Babylonian, biblical, and post-biblical texts engage with Ur. Babylonian historiographic texts grapple with the fortunes of Ur and its specific kings, as a means of understanding the position of Babylon in world history. Biblical texts, meanwhile, understand Ur as an ancestral city and an ideal hometown for the patriarch Abraham, but do not explore the history of Ur in any depth. The fact that the location of Ur was unknown to Talmudic authors suggests that Judean writers may not have had the opportunity to engage with the ancient city, even when it was still inhabited.

Session

Social inequality

Keywords

Hebrew Bible; cuneiform literacy; social inequality;
Judeans in Babylonia; Babylonian historiography

Russo, Sergio Giuseppe; Alice Mendola

Washed out, worn away: Natural and human threats at Tell Muhammad, Baghdad, during the 20th century



Wednesday 19 July, 15:00–15:30



Lipsius 028

Archaeological sites, as we discover them, are just but the product of decay processes. Natural and human activities, such as floods, earthquakes, wars, urban expansion, or illegal diggings can consume them over time. Exploring the nature and modes of these threats is essential for a more accurate reconstruction of the history of the site. This research can shed light on its original extent and its relationship with the surrounding environment, as well as on the solutions implemented over time to minimise risks. Additionally, this investigation can guide archaeologists to plan targeted excavations of lost, ‘invisible’ sectors. This paper explores the role of warfare, urban expansion, and floods in shaping the site of Tell Muhammad, in Baghdad, during the 20th century. Through the analysis of historical and cartographic sources, this study argues that the ‘visible’ area is only a portion of the lost, larger site. Moreover, it suggests that, in the past, the site boundaries might have included other nearby settlements.

Session

Workshop 12: Connecting Babylon and Ešnunna: Textual and Archaeological Evidence of the First Half of the Second Millennium BCE

Keywords

urban archaeology; floods; WW1; urban expansion; resilience

Salgues, Emmanuelle

Mesag the Technocrat



Tuesday 18 July, 10:30–11:00



Lipsius 005

This talk locates the Mesag archive within its wider political structure and administrative landscape where it played a lively part. I discuss in detail the archive's multiple and layered relationships to imperial and regional partners and actors. Through this description we can see how such an agricultural exploitation constituted a kind of political-administrative entity that was imbricated into a larger imperial system. A detailed analysis of the archive and its contexts, moreover, shows how the archive and its positioning within the political economy of the state was a result of a historical process the indices of which are visible in several distinctive characteristics, including, perhaps most especially, a particular brand of multilingualism resulting from the incorporation and promotion of a local Sumerian bureaucrat into a wider administrative framework employing a different language and bureaucratic culture. The Mesag archive documents the activities of a Sargonic style estate in Sumer during Naramsin's reign. The corpus consists of some 600 texts, 400+ of which have not been published. These are mostly concerned with the exploitation and management of an agricultural estate headed by a scribe and land registrar named Mesag. The texts are classical Sargonic in style but are unique in that they are written in a particular mix of Sumerian and Akkadian. The imposition of this Akkadian style estate onto the Sumerian landscape resulted in the convergence of two distinct scribal cultures, one northern or "Akkadian," the other "Sumerian" and local, and the creation of a new type of bureaucrat.

Session

Workshop 6: Third Millennium Studies

Keywords

Sargonic bureaucracy; administration; Mesag archive; multilingualism

Sallaberger, Walther; Laurent Colonna d'Istria

Teaching Sumerian and the combination of text corpus, cuneiform script and grammar: comments on our textbook



Thursday 20 July, 10:30–11:00



Lipsius 028

Our textbook of Sumerian resulted from a lucky coincidence: the two authors discovered that they had worked on an introduction to Sumerian, Laurent starting with cuneiform and the texts, Walther with the grammar. We combined forces, and in the course of our work, we came across aspects we want to share and discuss, including the following ones: (a) Sumerian is only transmitted in specific kinds of texts written in a specific style, phraseology, and grammar. (b) Reading Sumerian texts can not be based on grammar and lexicon alone, but it includes knowledge of the cuneiform script. (c) Should we teach ancient languages in international English only or in different tongues (including German, French, and Arabic)?

Session

Workshop 14: Equality of Access to Mesopotamia: Public Outreach and Pedagogy

Keywords

Sumerian textbook; teaching Sumerian; language use; access to resources

Scarpa, Erica

The digitization of the spatial data on the epigraphic discoveries from the Central Archive L.2769 (Ebla, Syria): A data-based approach to archival-keeping



Tuesday 18 July 09:00–09:30



Lipsius 003

Between September 30 and October 8, 1975, the Italian Archaeological Expedition in Syria (MAIS) discovered the Central Archive L.2769, one of the very few cuneiform archives found in situ. During those nine days the archaeologists recovered more than 15,000 inscribed objects: hundreds of tablets, and thousands of fragments and chips. In order to preserve the information referring to their location within the archival room, the archaeologists established a set of coordinates to register the position of each item. Thanks to such a system, they gathered information referring to the location of almost all 15,000 items. The inventory of the material, which began in 1975, lasted until 1978. Thanks to the collaboration between the Ebla Digital Archives project (EbDA, Ca' Foscari University Venice and the CNR – ISMed) and the Italian Archaeological Expedition to Syria (MAIS, University of Rome 'La Sapienza'), all the field notes data referring to the findspots of the 15,000 objects have been digitized: the scouring of this archival material revealed a wealth of information on the distribution of the documents in Central Archive L.2769 as well as on the physical characteristics of most inventoried objects. This paper aims at offering for the first time a comprehensive overview of the findspots, as well as of the digitization process of this material: such process represented the opportunity to critically assess the transition from handwritten field notes to a digital data collection referring to thousands of items, with a particular focus on the integration of the data in EbDA's infrastructure and its importance for the philological and historical research on the Ebla tablets. The findspot dataset obtained from this archival survey covers all 15,000 tablets, fragments and chips found in L.2769: it is now possible to pursue a quantitative and statistical approach to the epigraphic findings of L.2769, as well as a qualitative investigation. The field notes data offer new avenues for the identification of joins and the tracing of past ones, but also constitutes a solid starting point for a comprehensive databased assessment of archive-keeping principles and methods adopted by the scribes of Central Archive L.2769.

Session

Digital methods in Ancient Near Eastern Studies

Keywords

Ebla; data-driven approach; archive-keeping

Schneider, Roey

Gutturals in Semitic: Akkadian as a case study



Thursday 20 July, 15:30–16:00



Lipsius 123

In my talk I will address the phenomenon of compensatory lengthening in place of a historical guttural in Akkadian and compare it to other guttural-specific phonological processes and phenomena in different Semitic languages. The Semitic languages are known to have a wide variety of guttural consonants, including two glottal ones and two pharyngeal ones. Akkadian lost its guttural consonants at an early stage of its attestation, but these consonants left their marks throughout the Akkadian lexicon, usually through /a/-raising to /e/ or compensatory lengthening, depending on the prosodic environment of the guttural. I argue that such phenomena of words shaping in a special way around some or all of the gutturals, many times through compensatory lengthening of vowels, are known from almost every branch of Modern Semitic, including Modern Ethio-Semitic, Modern South Arabian (especially Omani Mehri), Eastern Neo-Aramaic, and Modern Hebrew. The opacity that can sometimes be generated by this historical processes hinders a synchronic analysis from pinpointing the exact source of each vowel “coloring” or lengthening and ascribing it to the sole presence of a certain consonant, but figuring out quantitative tendencies may prove itself helpful.

Session

Linguistics: Sumerian and Akkadian

Keywords

comparative Semitics; linguistics; Akkadian; historical phonology

Schrakamp, Ingo; Gábor Zólyomi

Reevaluating the so-called Reform Texts of Urukagina



Tuesday 18 July, 11:30–12:00



Lipsius 005

Among the 3rd-millennium cuneiform sources addressing inequality, the so-called Reform Texts of Urukagina, often referred to as the first social reforms in history, feature most prominently. Despite their long history of research, a commonly-accepted interpretation is yet lacking. The present talk provides an up-to-date outline of their history of research and their historical background, discusses their key passages, relates selected sections to the contemporary archival documents and thus proposes a new overall interpretation of the so-called Reform Texts as a whole.

Session

Workshop 6: Third Millennium Studies

Keywords

Urukagina; cuneiform law; reform; restoration; edict

Søk, Olga I.

On aphaeresis in Akkadian



Wednesday 19 July, 15:30–16:00



Lipsius 123

Vowel aphaeresis in Neo-Assyrian was first noticed already at the dawn of the linguistic study of Akkadian, but during a century that passed since the same set of examples has been copied from grammar to grammar with few attempts at a deeper investigation. The present paper will bring together known and multiple new examples in order to offer a detailed analysis of this phenomenon. The discussion will concentrate around the conditions under which aphaeresis can occur: the position of the word in the phrase, the structure of the word (does aphaeresis only happen in trisyllabic bases?), the quality and quantity of the initial vowel (can a long vowel be subject to aphaeresis?), the type of syllable (can it happen in a closed syllable?) as well as the etymology of the word (does aphaeresis only happen in foreign words, as cautiously suggested by von Soden?). The statistics of the use of the etymological and the shorter forms of the same lexeme will help establish in which cases aphaeresis remained a sporadic speech phenomenon and in which the new form supplanted the old one. The paper will also offer a diachronic overview, showing that aphaeresis did not start in Neo-Assyrian, but has its roots deep in the second millennium. As a final touch it will hint at the possible existence of an opposite phenomenon, vowel prothesis, in Neo-Assyrian.

Session

Workshop 11: Akkadian Linguistics

Keywords

linguistics; aphaeresis; prothesis

Shibata, Daisuke

Royal inscriptions from the Land of Māri: contents and styles



Tuesday 18 July, 11:30–12:00



Lipsius 011

Commissioning royal inscriptions was never the exclusive prerogative of Assyrian kings, even in their sphere of influence. Local rulers also produced their own “royal” inscriptions by imitating the practice of the Assyrian kings. The Kingdom of the Land of Māri is one such case. This kingdom ruled the middle reaches of the Habur river from at least the thirteenth century to the beginning of the eleventh century BCE, and its rulers commissioned their own royal inscriptions. Those inscriptions have been found to originate from Tell Taban and its environs. Our paper reviews those inscriptions to clarify the types of texts and the sorts of media bearing them. We then examine the diachronic development and historical context of inscription-making in the Land of Māri, while considering the Assyrian influence on it.

Session

Workshop 5: Assyrian Royal Inscriptions in Honor of A.K. Grayson

Keywords

royal inscriptions; the land of Māri; Assyria; Middle Assyrian

Shippelhoute, Karlene

Tablet shape and wear patterns as an indicator of archival storage practices at Amarna



Wednesday 19 July 15:00–15:30



Lipsius 003

Ancient archivists used shelves, boxes, baskets, and ceramic vessels as storage solutions for cuneiform tablets. Space constraints, the protection of clay documents, and ease of accessing tablets for reference, are all factors that scribes must have considered when designing their tablet storage systems. The focus of this paper is to highlight how an in-depth analysis of cuneiform tablet shape can be used to potentially reconstruct tablet storage practices utilized by scribal communities in the ancient Near East. Using the diplomatic letters and inventories of the 14th century Amarna Correspondence as a case study, I will present a methodology for tablet shape classification, which takes into account categories not generally published such as tablet surface, profile, edge, and corner shape. When we take into consideration the material aspects of a tablet’s physical form we are better positioned to view a tablet as an active agent in diplomatic communication rather than a passive lump of clay sitting on a library shelf. The implications of this study are twofold. Tablet surfaces, sides, edges, and corners all cumulatively dictate how tablet makers and scribes can interact with a tablet, and can further shed light on how scribal networks considered the reception and storage of their tablets when dispatched to recipients. Secondly, when we examine physical characteristics of tablets such as edge and corner shape as well as wear patterns on tablet surfaces we can shed light on archival practices at Amarna, further allowing us to reconstruct potential storage solutions that the Egyptian administration used when curating their large influx of diplomatic correspondence.

Session

Varia (II)

Keywords

archives; scribal communities; materiality; storage; diplomatic communication

Simons, Frank

Riddled with errors or deceptively deep? Parallelism in a chain amulet incantation



Thursday 20 July, 11:30–12:00



Lipsius 123

This paper will examine a Kultmittelbeschwörung concerning the creation of a prophylactic necklace (ROM 910x209.531). Although short, the incantation has many grammatical and lexicographical peculiarities. A REPAC-focussed analysis shows that these peculiarities are better understood as intentional techniques, designed to add depth to the incantation, through graphical, and especially verbal, parallelism. These techniques represent a sophisticated method of enhancing the overall effectiveness of the text by subtly, and not so subtly exhorting the amulet chain to remain pure.

Session

Workshop 15: Construction of Meaning in Ancient
Mesopotamian Literature and Scholarship

Keywords

magic; parallelism; REPAC; Kultmittelbeschwörung; amulet

Sjörs, Ambjörn

The Non-Deictic Ventive of Motion Verbs in Old Babylonian



Wednesday 19 July, 11:30–12:00



Lipsius 123

The ventive in Akkadian is primarily an orientational morpheme that is used with verbs of movement and transfer to describe motion towards an observer. In the deictic register, the reference points are derived from the moment of speech and the deictic center is anchored to the speaker by default, or to the addressee by deictic projection. However, the ventive is also used with verbs of movement and transfer in the narrative register where there is no correlation between the sentence and the speech moment. The purpose of this presentation is to explain these non-deictic uses of the ventive. It will be argued that the non-deictic ventive of motion verbs can be used to focus on the change of state involved in the movement, and that this function is derived from the reflexive-benefactive ventive. In intransitive motion verbs, there is no affected object, no object participant that goes through a change of state as a result of the agent's force. On the other hand, if subject affectedness is a conventional implicature of reflexive-benefactive marking, the use of reflexive-benefactive marking with intransitive motion verbs suggests that the energy transfer can be conceptualized as the agent's own change of state. Thus, the non-deictic ventive of motion verbs can be interpreted as a marker of ingressive aspect.

Smidt, Gustav Ryberg; Katrien De Graef; Els Lefever

e-Pistels: towards an analysis of everyday language as expressed in Old Babylonian letters using Natural Language Processing



Tuesday 18 July, 10:00–10:30



Lipsius 003

As part of the interdisciplinary CUNE-IIIIF-ORM project Assyriologists and computational linguists from Ghent University (UGent) will explore new digital approaches to study, publish and enrich corpora of cuneiform texts. For this purpose, we have set up a pilot study to analyse the language used in Old Babylonian (OB) letters using Natural Language Processing (NLP) techniques. OB letters are particularly suited as a dataset because (1) they form an invaluable source for everyday vernacular, and (2) the corpus is rather large and varied. CDLI has almost 8,500 catalogued with a considerable variation of proveniences and content. Initially, we focused on Sippar, which has a large OB corpus and is a good starting point. We chose 121 letters from OB Sippar that we lemmatized in ORACC and supplemented by grammatical annotation. They are the platform for developing machine learning approaches to perform semi-automatic text analysis of all OB letters. Our first step is to investigate a machine learning approach to go from transliteration to grammatical annotation (including Part-of-Speech, lemma and morphological information). The result of this step can enlarge and enrich our corpus so that we can apply other language models, namely (1) automatic term extraction to detect the main keywords of the letters and (2) distributional semantic analysis to cluster semantically related terms in the letters. These research steps will allow us to answer questions about the everyday language used in OB letters and about Akkadian in general. Our initial Part-of-Speech tagging tests were done on a small corpus lacking complete annotations, but they still delivered promising results. In this talk, we will present our newest results of automatic Part-of-Speech tagging and morphological annotation. These results will showcase the functionality of machine learning models and how important they can be to enlarge and enrich the cuneiform corpora, thereby allowing us to answer sociocultural linguistic questions about the everyday language used in OB letters and in a later stage to discern between the language used in these letters and that used in other textual genres.

Session

Digital methods in Ancient Near Eastern Studies

Keywords

NLP; Old Babylonian period; letters; Akkadian

Sonik, Karen

Gender inequality in Mesopotamian literature



Wednesday 19 July, 14:30–15:00



Lipsius 019

Female characters in Mesopotamian literature often occupy minor roles, so that both the character spaces they occupy and the attention (scholarly and otherwise) that they have commanded are limited. But when we pay them the attention that they deserve, they are often revealed as unique and richly drawn personalities, who play distinct roles in the narratives that contain them and who have the capacity to shape both narrative structure and meaning. This paper takes up some of the remarkable women of Mesopotamian literature, examining their characterization, the nature of the character spaces they occupy, and their effects on the narratives in which they appear.

Session

Inequality: Literature

Keywords

gender; inequality; literature; characterization

Sonnevelt, Rieneke

Alphabetic bookkeeping in Babylonia? Aramaic epigraphs on cuneiform clay tablets from an accounting perspective



Wednesday 19 July, 15:30–16:00



Lipsius 005

The key for understanding the function of alphabetic epigraphs on cuneiform clay tablets from 1st millennium BCE Babylonia has been generally sought in diverging reading competence: Aramaic notes aided those who lacked the skill to read Babylonian Akkadian. They thus granted these individuals access to the cuneiform recordings of the economic transactions they were involved in. In extension, the epigraphs may have aided archival handling (filing and retrieval) of tablets.

Indeed, epigraphs could have functioned this way for individuals belonging to social groups other than the relatively segregated class of Babylonian urban (priestly) elites who appear as protagonists of most cuneiform archives from the Neo-Babylonian and early Persian periods (6th through first half of the 5th century BCE). However, this explanation does not always suffice. If, for instance, archive holders could write up a cuneiform promissory note, receipt, or contract themselves, they evidently did not need an Aramaic summary for accessing these documents.

In this presentation I will argue that, in certain contexts, Aramaic epigraphs may well have bridged the gap between the persistent practice of writing up cuneiform economic documents and a bookkeeping system in which the alphabet was used. Aramaic epigraphs found in the archive of Bēlšunu, son of Bēl-ušuršu (second half of the 5th century BCE) serve as a case study. Their contents and external qualities will be connected with the profile of Bēlšunu – a native Babylonian who served as governor of Babylon and satrap of Transpotamia and who simultaneously ran an impressive agricultural business that catered to the Persian nobility who possessed crown property in the Babylonian province. Aramaic had an important function in his milieu. For instance, documents of contemporary political peer prince Aršama highlight its use for top-down directives regarding public and private matters, as well as in processes such as estimating and reporting. The Aramaic epigraphs on Bēlšunu's tablets are best understood in contexts of surveyance: they facilitated the creation of accounting documents by alphabet scribes (sepiru), which could be consulted in Babylon's palace district by Bēlšunu and by representatives of the highest administrative levels interested in the control of crown property and its revenues.

Session

Workshop 10: Tracking and Managing Texts, Things and People in Cuneiform Cultures

Keywords

Aramaic epigraphs; Babylonian clay tablets; accounting

Sövegjarto, Szilvia

Enumeration in Sumerian literature: A literary approach to lexical lists



Thursday 20 July, 12:00–12:30



Lipsius 123

Based on a series of case studies, this paper investigates the connections between lexical lists and a few Old Babylonian literary compositions, presumably of didactic nature, each containing a substantial passage of enumeration. The focus is on the organization and contextualization of the lexical material in the literary lists, and especially on a few innovative organizing principles applied in literary compositions only. As the earliest known composition including a long enumeration, the Fields of Ninurta dates from the Ur III period, the identification of its potential lexical sources will be contemplated on. Finally, I will attempt to determine the didactic value of these literary works for scribal education.

Session

Workshop 15: Construction of Meaning in Ancient Mesopotamian Literature and Scholarship

Keywords

Sumerian literature; lexical lists; didactic compositions

Spunaugle, Adrienne

NAM.RA and *šallatu*: a social category of deportation



Tuesday 18 July, 15:00–15:30



Lipsius 011

Deportation studies of the ancient Near East traditionally paint these practices with the same broad brushstrokes, focusing primarily on the variation between empires rather than on variations within an empire. In fact, more attention has been paid to whether the term “forced migration” should be preferred to the traditional “exile” or “deportation” than to the lexicographical variation within the Akkadian. One of these variants, NAM.RA or *šallatu*, is used quite consistently from the Hittite through the Neo-Assyrian periods to refer to a particular type of deportee. However, although Sedat Alp established in 1951 that NAM.RA was used in Hittite sources in connection to a particular socio-economic status, this has not been considered in either the CAD or treatments of the Akkadian *šallatu*. Oded (1979) did not distinguish between the terms used but instead focused his approach on accumulating all mentions of deportation events rather than distinguishing between them. Close investigation of the royal inscriptions, letters, and administrative texts of the Neo-Assyrian period show that the use of *šallatu* ceased to be in reference to a particular class as it was in Hittite and Hurrian texts. However, it maintained a connection to a category of elite persons who were deported in opposition to those of lesser status, who are referred to as *hubtu* in the first millennium. While the social categories present in Hurrian and Hittite sources are not reflected in later Assyrian texts, the term *šallatu* maintains socio-economic significance in relation to other forms of deportation.

Session

Social inequality

Keywords

Neo-Assyrian; deportation; socio-economic status



Staubli, Thomas

Plants in the symbol system of compositions on stamp seal amulets of the Southern Levant: four case studies



Tuesday 18 July, 12:30–13:00



Lipsius 028

Stamp seal amulets are currently the most common archaeologically documented image carriers from the Southern Levant in the Bronze and Iron Ages. They are usually in the form of scarabs, whose flat undersides were used for significant compositions. How were plants or plant parts staged on these intimate media? What functions did they assume in compositional and ideational terms? Can regional and epochal differences be documented? Based on the corpus of stamp seal amulets from Palestine/Israel by Othmar Keel, the Fribourg based Bible and Orient Database Online (BODO), and my earlier studies on the iconography of vegetation in the southern Levant these questions will be discussed using the samples of four sites: Ghaza (Tell el-Adjul), Gezer (Tell el-Jezar), Jerusalem and Jericho (Tell el-Sultān).

Session

Workshop 7: Trees and Shrubs in the Ancient Near East.
Investigating the Plurality of Practices and Meanings in the Human-Arboreal Relationship

Keywords

stamp seal amulets; plants; Southern Levant; iconography; iconology

Steinberger, Clemens

Interrelations between Akkadian and Ugaritic poetry in the Late Bronze Age



Wednesday 19 July, 11:30–12:00



Lipsius 003

In Late Bronze Age Ugarit, both Ugaritic and Akkadian poetic texts were recorded. Although there are clear differences between the local Northwest Semitic tradition and the Babylonian tradition that originated in southern Mesopotamia, Babylonian poetry unmistakably influenced a number of motifs and verse patterns found in Ugaritic poems. At the same time, the Northwest Semitic poetic tradition left its mark on some Akkadian texts that were reworked in Ugarit. The interrelations between Ugaritic and Babylonian poetry testify to far-reaching globalization processes during the Late Bronze Age. In my lecture, I will illustrate the intercultural and intertextual relations between the two traditions based on a number of case studies, considering the historical context in which the texts were written down. The focus will be on the motifs and verse structure of the two corpora.

Session

Workshop 8: Intertextuality in Cuneiform Literature: Latest Research and the Issues of Methodology

Keywords

Ugaritic poetry; Akkadian poetry; intertextuality; motifs; verse structure

Tadmor, Eli

Cultural cannibalism: Intertextuality as a weapon of war



Wednesday 19 July, 10:00–10:30



Lipsius 003

The attitudes of the Sargonid kings towards Babylonia evinced both love and aggression, mixing beneficence and sadism, reverence and envy. Sargon II (721–705) showed great favor towards Babylonia. His son, Sennacherib (704–681), besieged Babylon and levelled it. Sennacherib’s own son, Esarhaddon (680–669), reversed his father’s policy in turn, rebuilding Babylon. Ashurbanipal (668–c.631), Esarhaddon’s younger son and chosen heir, went to war against his brother, whom Esarhaddon had appointed king of Babylon, conquered the city—though he punished it less severely than Sennacherib had—and his hated sibling died a fiery death. This talk proposes that despite the differences between the approaches taken by the latter three kings—Sennacherib, Esarhaddon, and Ashurbanipal—all used intertextuality as a weapon against Babylonia. As described by Elnathan Weissert, Sennacherib, in the Taylor Prism, used allusions to *Enūma eliš* to portray the Babylonians as similar to the army of primeval Tiamat, and himself as playing the part of Marduk, Tiamat’s vanquisher. As Johannes Bach details, Esarhaddon, in his Babylonian inscriptions, described the destruction inflicted by his father upon Babylon as just deserts for Babylonian misdeeds, all while alluding to a different Babylonian composition, *Erra*. And, in his description of the siege of Babylon in 648 and the torment of its besieged inhabitants, Ashurbanipal alluded to several Babylonian compositions. This talk argues that in making such allusions to Babylonian works within accounts of Assyrian triumphs over Babylonia, the scribes who authored these accounts marshalled Babylonia’s own literature against it while appropriating it for Assyria. Such appropriation attests not to a benign wish to copy and emulate, but an envious desire to subsume Babylonian civilization within that of Assyria. As such, it may be termed not only cultural appropriation, but cultural cannibalism.

Session

Workshop 8: Intertextuality in Cuneiform Literature: Latest Research and the Issues of Methodology

Keywords

intertextuality

Tarhan, Zozan

The Assyrian ideological motif of the unrivalled king



Wednesday 19 July, 09:30–10:00



Lipsius 019

The present paper deals with the Assyrian ideological motif of the unrivalled king, as it developed in the Neo-Assyrian period. The various personalities and roles of the Assyrian king (political actor, builder, priest, conqueror, warrior and hunter) attested in Assyrian sources speak of a complex conception of the royal ideology in which the figure of the ruler was not limited purely to the political dimensions like the average kings. In terms of the fact that the Assyrian ruler is perceived as the earthly king chosen by the great gods, the thesis about his superiority over the others is quite reasonable. The concept of the uniqueness of the Assyrian king is represented in the royal ideology in various forms and occasions. To the greatest extent the motif of the unrivalled king is developed in the introduction of the royal inscriptions in the form of messages, which list all the qualities and capabilities of the ruler. Some of them are also presented in the accounts of the military campaigns. Other textual and visual sources describing the various functions and roles that the king combined under his authority also affirm the idea of uniqueness. These specific cases, as well as various formulaic expressions where this idea is clearly and unambiguously stated, will be presented and analyzed.

Session

Inequality: Neo-Assyrian king and court

Keywords

royal ideology; superiority; uniqueness; Neo-Assyrian Empire

Taylor, Jonathan

The Thin End of the Wedge



Thursday 20 July, 9:00–9:30



Lipsius 028

This presentation reflects on two different projects aimed at increasing public engagement with assyriology (broadly defined). The first project was designed as a popular publication offering a friendly introduction to the world of cuneiform. The book, *Cuneiform*, will soon appear in an Arabic edition. The second project is a podcast that aims to share new and interesting work about the ancient Middle East. It offers a platform to colleagues who do not hold high-profile permanent positions, alongside established figures who do. Secondly, it aims to offer opportunities for colleagues based in the Middle East to share their work and thoughts more widely. And it seeks to make more of the work undertaken on the ancient Middle East available to the people who live in the region today.

Session

Workshop 14: Equality of Access to Mesopotamia: Public Outreach and Pedagogy

Keywords

access; equity; engagement

Tchaplyghine, Anastasia

Plants as agents of cult in ancient Mesopotamia



Tuesday 18 July, 11:30–12:00



Lipsius 028

The recent scholarly turn towards New Materialism, which seeks to re-unite the humanistic and scientific disciplines, and critique both as essentially human-centric approaches, has opened up new avenues for understanding ancient cultures—where many of such dualities that we have become accustomed to in the modern western world, did not exist. In this paper, I consider the ontological status of plants (including trees) in ancient Mesopotamia as agents, and explore how their agencies and affordances changed over the course of their lives—e.g., trees vs. wood, and subsequently, crafted wooden objects; live plants vs. dried, preserved, and processed plants transformed into tinctures, etc. Looking to visual, material, and textual sources, as well as cross-cultural comparanda with Hindu South Asia, I argue that plants were fragments of the greater divine, material world, whose power could be harnessed by humans for various purposes. Arguing against human exceptionalism, however, a central question that this talk asks is: What were the desires and resistances (to human actions) of plants in ancient Mesopotamia? Special attention will be given to the use of wood in the construction of cult statues (especially in the first millennium BCE) and the symbolic function of the association of wood with various types of metals—as they occur in various contexts. More broadly, the talk will address the ritual function of plants in magico-medical practices—including both official and unofficial cults, looking at plant types (including age, live or preserved status, etc) that were available to various social spheres across Mesopotamia.

Session

Workshop 7: Trees and Shrubs in the Ancient Near East.
Investigating the Plurality of Practices and Meanings in the
Human-Arboreal Relationship

Keywords

new materialism; non-human agency; cult practice;
ontologies; ecocriticism

Trameri, Andrea

Catching birds – and cats – for the Hittite king: remarks on fauna in a Middle Hittite letter from Tapikka (Maşat Höyük)



Wednesday 19 July, 15:00–15:30



Lipsius 011

Among the texts found in the mid-70s at the ancient site of Tapikka, some 100 km east of Hattusa, a Middle Hittite letter sent by two “servants” of the king deals with the capture of certain animals along their journey (HKM 48, early 14th c. BC). We learn from the letter that the king had entrusted the two, Maṛiya and Ḫabiri, with the capture of certain birds. However, since they had not been able to capture some of them yet during this safari, they write back to their lord asking for additional instructions as to where they might find these animals. While the content of the letter is relatively straightforward, there are some difficulties in understanding its key passages and the identification of the animals mentioned. Some of their names seem to be transparent, as the scribe used known Sumerian logograms, but the names spelled syllabographically in Hittite are not attested elsewhere. Additionally, while the king asked that “birds” should be captured for him, big cats such as a lion and a leopard were being tracked down as well, and this information is somewhat at odds with the letter’s wording and the overall logic of the epistolary exchange. The unusual content of this document generates some other questions: for what purpose was the king collecting such animals, apparently not to be hunted, but captured alive? The article discusses a possible global interpretation of the passage of interest, with some suggestions on the identification of these animals. The internal logic of the letter and the broader correspondence exchange will be analyzed as well. The study derives from a new text edition of this letter, in preparation along with the complete corpus of Hittite oracular texts, for the DFG Project “The Hittite Corpus of Divinatory Texts: Digital Edition and Cultural Historical Analysis (HDivT)” (LMU München, Univ. Würzburg). Previous editions of the letter in S. Alp 1991, 206–211; H. Hoffner 1997, 5–21; H. Hoffner 2009, 181–184.

Session

Hittite oracles and prayers

Keywords

Hittite; animals; divination; oracles

Tulaikov, Julia

Emesal liturgy: Intertextual connections beyond and within the genre



Tuesday 18 July, 17:30–18:00



Lipsius 003

Balag compositions are one of the genres within Sumerian lamentations written in the Emesal register. According to external sources, the Balag genre may have appeared during the third millennium BCE. In that period Emesal lamentations were probably composed in their primary form, and have been redacted until at least the middle of the first millennium BCE. It is suggested that from the very beginning, these texts, performed orally, were an integral part of the larger verbal and cultural contexts. Along with a properly “lamentational” level, one can recognize in these texts echoes of myths, reminiscents from oral literary passages, proverbs, and probably even incantations. Balags also demonstrate intertextual connections with Sumerian city laments from the school curriculum: borrowings from balags can be traced in a number of cases. The discussion about the intertextuality of Balags can continue also within the genre. Balag compositions typically include passages that recur in several different Balag compositions. Both in cases of “outdoor” and “indoor” intertextuality one can suggest that a certain part of these intertextual connections can serve as functional “hyperlinks”, that contribute to the goals of the composers and to our understanding of their views.

Session

Workshop 8: Intertextuality in Cuneiform Literature: Latest Research and the Issues of Methodology

Keywords

Balags; intertextuality

Tushingham, Poppy

Countering hierarchy in Neo-Assyrian law



Wednesday 19 July, 10:00–10:30



Lipsius 019

The Neo-Assyrian state was highly stratified. In particular, those connected to the military and civil administration of the empire existed within hierarchical structures. Nonetheless, the extant legal documentation from the Neo-Assyrian period repeatedly contains clauses that served to subvert these chains of command. On the one hand, treaties imposed by Assyrian monarchs on their subjects identify high-ranking members of the imperial administration, and members of the royal family itself, as targets for suspicion. Subjects were encouraged to monitor these groups for signs of deviant activity and, when they observed it, to react against them. In Esarhaddon's Succession Treaty, the subject is expected to report such instances to the king's designated successor, and, in the most extreme circumstances, is instructed to "seize" the perpetrators and even to "put them to death". On a smaller scale, meanwhile, private conveyance documents warned the seller against attempts to contravene the terms of the contract. Frequently, the seller is not the only person mentioned in such clauses. Rather, other members of his network are listed, generally members of his family. Beyond his relations, however, these clauses sometimes cite other individuals, most typically high-ranking members of the local administration. Thus, these documents too point up the social ladder to identify potential bad actors. This paper examines these two sets of legal clauses together, suggesting that they can both be viewed as attempts to mitigate the dangers posed by Assyrian state hierarchy.

Session

Inequality: Neo-Assyrian king and court

Keywords

hierarchy; Neo-Assyrian; law; officials; inequality

Tychon, Ofelia

Breaking the ‘Glass Walls’: Babylonian women’s mobility and independence, 626–484 BCE



Thursday 20 July, 15:00–15:30



Lipsius 011

The Neo-Babylonian and early Achaemenid periods, 626–484 BCE, are rich in available textual sources, including thousands of private archival documents. Even though women are consistently underrepresented in these texts, the existence of legal records of private transactions where women participated as the principal parties supports the notion that, in a relatively rare instance of gender equality, women appeared to have full legal capacity to participate in business activities during the period in question. The legal document format required recording not only the full names of the parties and witnesses to the contract, but also the date and place of writing, and thus it is possible to identify the geographical locations in which specific individuals were present. Past scholarship has traced the travels of male Babylonian entrepreneurs using this information, but there has been no systematic treatment of women’s geographic mobility in studies focused on Babylonian women and their family and business activities. This paper examines thirty-one women who appear in extant legal documents written in more than one geographic site. Traveling outside of one’s home location to be present at the recording of a legal transaction can potentially corroborate the assertion that women participating in business activities were exhibiting agency and acting independently in at least some instances. By examining the likelihood of the women’s actual presence in the locations where the documents were written, the types of transactions involved, as well as the other parties present and their potential influence on these women’s decision making, this paper seeks to assess the level of women’s independence during the period, and, more broadly, the degree of gender (in)equality.

Session

Inequality: Families in society, economy and law

Keywords

women; mobility; gender; Babylon; legal documents

Uotila, Repekka

Searching for Arameans: a case study on the Ma'lānā archive



Monday 17 July, 15:30–16:00



Lipsius O11

The increase in frequency of Aramaic names in the Neo-Assyrian period has traditionally been associated with Arameans and persons of West Semitic backgrounds. This has led researchers to associate persons bearing Aramaic names with positions of lesser status than those with Akkadian names. However, recent research has focused on separating the use of onomastics from identity formations or ethnicity. In keeping with this separation of identity, economic status, and language use, this paper investigates the distribution of onomastics within a bilingual, Assyro-Aramaic archive to ascertain social significance within the network. In this test case, I explore the structure of a social network reconstructed from the Ma'lānā archive (700–620 BCE), paying close attention to the measure of homophily. I evaluate whether the linguistic origin of name correlates with the relationships of the three generations of central figures in the archive. Homophily is a social phenomenon which refers to the tendency to form relationships with others who share similar characteristics or traits such as age, gender, or ethnicity. Homophily can reinforce inequality when people form distinctive groups based on similar backgrounds and share information and resources with their group. By measuring the dyadicity (likelihood of forming social ties with others who share the same socially significant trait) and heterophilicity (likelihood of forming social ties with others who have a different socially significant trait), I evaluate whether possession of an Akkadian or an Aramaic name has a socially significant correlation with forming relationships. Akkadian and Aramaic names are distributed equally in the network, indicating that the people attested in the archive do not form distinct groups based on linguistic origin of name. The results suggest that the possession of Akkadian or Aramaic names were not necessarily seen as socially significant traits.

Session

Inequality & digital methods: social network analysis, prosopography, onomastics

Keywords

Neo-Assyrian; Arameans; Social Network Analysis; homophily; onomastics

Vacín, Luděk

Materiality, intertextuality, authenticity? The case of “Šulgi and Ninlil’s Barge” (Šulgi R)



Tuesday 18 July, 15:30–16:00



Lipsius 003

Following up on the on-going discussion about the supposed original format of Ur III royal hymns, their intertextual relations to other texts, the aspects of their language and orthography, or their date of composition, the talk will address these issues from the example of a text that appears to be particularly suitable for such an inquiry: “Šulgi and Ninlil’s Barge” (Šulgi R). It is attested in merely two manuscripts, one of which is written in the Kurzzeilen format. It has been suggested that this text division may point to the “original” format of the given text as a monumental inscription. This claim will be tested against the evidence of Šulgi R and related texts, touching upon the issue of their Sitz im Leben in the Old Babylonian period. After reiterating that Šulgi R contains striking structural and thematic parallels to earlier (Gudea Cylinders) as well as later (Išme-Dagān I) building and dedication hymns, including at least one direct borrowing from the Gudea Cylinders, the discussion of its intertextuality will focus on the enumeration of nautical terms in Šulgi R. Taking up the recently developed methodology of “(interlingual) analogical hermeneutics”, preliminary results of the comparison of the relevant expressions with corresponding lexical entries will be offered and discussed. In conclusion, the issue of the date of composition will be addressed in connection with the orthographic peculiarities and specific phrases in Šulgi R and other literature pertaining to Ur III kings, as well as with the generally overlooked catchline at the end of the Langzeilen manuscript of Šulgi R.

Session

Workshop 8: Intertextuality in Cuneiform Literature: Latest Research and the Issues of Methodology

Keywords

materiality; intertextuality; authenticity; Ur III and OB literature; Sumerian royal hymnography

Van Buylaere, Greta; Jacob Jan de Ridder

The cuneiform documents in the Babylon collection of the Istanbul Archaeological Museums (Eski Şark Eserleri Müzesi)



Monday 17 July, 15:30–16:00



Lipsius 028

In this talk, we will present the Babylon (B) collection in the Istanbul Archaeological Museums. As expected, most of these tablets come from the Babylon excavations, but several tablets from other sites (mainly Assyria) have also been mistakenly assigned a B-siglum. The majority of the Babylonian tablets are from the Middle and Neo/Late Babylonian periods, with a smaller number from the Old Babylonian period. We will discuss the content of these texts, their archival context, and their state of preservation in comparison to the time of their initial excavation. This presentation is the result of research carried out as part of the DFG-funded project “Die Keilschrifttexte in der Babylon-Sammlung der Archäologischen Museen zu Istanbul (Eski Şark Eserleri Müzesi)” (Würzburg/Marburg).

Session

Workshop 3: New Research on the City of Babylon

Keywords

Babylon; Istanbul; B-siglum; Assyria

Van de Peut, Lidewij

Duty before devotion? Why a scribe prays for the well-being of the Hittite royal family



Wednesday 19 July, 15:30–16:00



Lipsius 011

This paper examines the unique status of the prayer to Telipinu for Muršili II and his family (CTH 377) within the corpus of Hittite prayers. It will be argued that in the Hittite empire scribes were obliged to perform a prayer for the royal family every day. CTH 377 is the only extant exemplar of such a daily prayer of a scribe that has come down to us. The obligation to pray explains the unique features of this prayer. Moreover, it benefits the Hittite king and his family. By making his subordinate scribes pray to one of the gods of the Hittite pantheon, there is higher chance that the gods will support him and that he, his family, and the land of Hatti will be well. Simultaneously, by pronouncing the prayer the scribe is expressing his own allegiance to the king and is reminded of the existing hierarchy: scribe – king – deity.

Session

Hittite oracles and prayers

Keywords

Hittite; religion; prayer; scribe; king

Van Driel–Murray, Carol

Old data, new opportunities: the Uruk period settlement on Jebel Aruda



Wednesday 19 July, 10:30–11:00



Lipsius 028

The Uruk period settlement surrounding two temples on Jebel Aruda, Northern Syria ,was excavated between 1972 and 1982. Most of the find material was brought to Leiden, where it was sorted, reconstructed and analysed. Following a long delay, publication is imminent. Here, I will explore the challenge of bringing a project virtually camera-ready in 2002 to final publication in 2023. This transformation from the era of scissors-and-paste to the possibilities offered by digital presentation, brought not only technical problems but also the realisation that choices made 40 years ago influence the potential for using the data to approach new avenues of enquiry. Are we stuck with the research concerns of the past, or can this site continue to contribute to the discussion of issues not even considered in the 1970's when the excavation proposal was written? Though the passage of time exposes limitations, it also creates opportunities for innovation. With reference to the current theme of 'Inequality in the ancient Near East' I will attempt to show the potential of this assemblage to pursue concepts beyond the original intent.

Session

Fieldwork

Keywords

Uruk period; Syria; excavation, inequality

Válek, František

The Epics of Aqhat and Kirta: Constructing royal ideology in times of crisis?



Tuesday 18 July, 10:00–10:30



Lipsius 019

The Ugaritic narrative texts Aqhat and Kirta have gained various interpretations throughout the years, from simple works of ancient literature to satiric critique of Late Bronze Age social systems to royal propaganda. The latter will be the focus of this paper, which aims to explore the possibility of interpreting these tales as “social myths”. This concept, developed by Gérard Bouchard to grasp the role of myths in present-day societies, may help us better understand the roles of myths in ANE societies for constructing and supporting royal ideologies. The paper will be centred around three core topics that will be interpreted in the archaeological, historical, literary, and political contexts of the nearing end of the Late Bronze Age Ugarit. It will be argued that the epics may intentionally react to deepening environmental, economic, political, and social crises. The latter is reflected in literalized motives of social inequalities – a problem it carefully masks and turns into the favour of royal ideology. First, we will explore whether the author of these epics, Ilimilku, might have been in a position to construct royal ideologies at Ugarit. The concept of social myths invites an emphasis on the roles of actors who promote certain messages. In this light, some ancient scribes are not seen as mere copyists but as active producers and inventors of tradition. Second, this process of formation of tradition will be set into the context of the existing practice. Comparison with other forms of royal propaganda, namely those belonging to the genre of “royal epics”, may prove especially fruitful. The tradition is seldom invented in its entirety but is instead constructed upon established grounds, including whole stories, episodes, or simple catchphrases. However, the comparison reveals not only similarities but also significant differences. The contrasts lead us to the third topic – how can royal propaganda productively incorporate motives of crisis and grandiose failure? What means does it employ to be persuasive and reach its goals? Here, the theory of social myths provides valuable references to “myths of defeat”. As counterintuitive as this may seem, the commemoration of failures may prove fruitful in the state propaganda, raising emotions which are then transformed into an ethos of resilience in support of royalty.

Session

Inequality: politics

Keywords

Ugarit; epic; myth; politics; crisis

Valk, Jonathan

“For to those who have, more will be given”: Pledges and predatory lending in Middle Assyrian society



Tuesday 18 July, 14:30–15:00



Lipsius 019

Many loans in Middle Assyrian society were secured with pledges (šapartu). In return for access to credit, borrowers pledged whatever was available to them, from lands and property to labor and loved ones. The terms of such loans reveal a deeply unequal economic landscape. The less a borrower had, the greater their cost of obtaining credit. Lenders exploited the desperation of the distressed to maximize their own profit, often inflicting profound misery on borrowers. And this was a game lenders couldn't really lose: in case of failure to repay, pledges tended to offer ample compensation for the initial loans. There were also other means available to lenders to pressure borrowers to pay, some of them protected in law. This system handsomely rewarded the wealthy, who had access to liquid capital that they could make available for lending. But it made things even more difficult for the less fortunate. When those who had less needed credit, the cost of accessing it was so great that it could propel them into penury and unfreedom. Such predatory lending was at the heart of the Middle Assyrian state's unequal economic order.

Session

Inequality: wealth, labor and income

Keywords

pledges; loans; credit; Middle Assyrian; exploitation

Verderame, Lorenzo

The Bedouin and the “Unchanging Orient”



Monday 17 July, 16:30–17:00



Lipsius 005

The “discovery” of the Near East in the nineteenth century by Western travelers is dominated by the idea of an “Orient” suspended in time and by the character of the nomad, the Bedouin. This romantic image of an immutable Orient and a nomadic culture opposite to the progressive industrial Occident has haunted the historical debate on the Near East pivoting on the dichotomy nomadism/sedentism and an evolutionary pattern from the former to the latter. This paper investigates the origin of the idea of the nomadic Bedouin in Victorian narratives and its reverberation and perpetuation in the Near Eastern scholarly discourse. It discusses the idea of ancient Semitic nomadic pastoralists created by an uncritical ethnohistorical comparative, from Robertson Smith’s identification of Bedouins with Old Testament Hebrews to the nowadays use of the term Bedouin for non-urban communities of the ancient Near East. In the conclusion, the paper argues that this model has hampered a correct understanding of the early historical phases and dynamics of pastoralism.

Session

Workshop 1: The Impact of Victorian Evolutionism on Ancient Near Eastern Studies (late 19th–early 20th centuries)

Keywords

historiography; pastoralism; nomadism; reception; theoretical approaches

Verhelst, Nicolaas

Local agency under foreign rule: the use of uncommon Greek personal names in Hellenistic Babylonia



Monday 17 July, 16:30–17:00



Lipsius 011

Despite multiple studies on the presence of Greek names in Hellenistic Babylonia, one phenomenon has remained unexplored. The presence of a large group of uncommon Greek names, constituting over half the known names and being used by one-third of all name bearers, is significant not only for the onomastic, but also the cultural, social and political study of Babylonia. To satisfy the complexity of this subject, this research project had two goals. Firstly, it sought to provide a definition of uncommon Greek personal names and a solid methodology for their study. Through comparative study of the LGPN and Trismegistos-databases and through methodologies from medieval studies, it therefore introduces a completely novel methodology for the recognition of uncommon names. Secondly, it tried to explain their meanings and significance through a study of their cultural ties to the Greek world, the social position of their bearers, and their etymological structure and meaning, before synthesizing these approaches and contextualizing the uncommon names in this Greek onomastic corpus. It concludes that these uncommon names have ties to unexpected parts of the Greek world, are born mainly by members of the lower urban elite (though with a presence amongst the upper, traditional elite), and are in form fully Greek, betraying no hint of Babylonian influence. These conclusions are significant since Macedonian names make up another third and more common Greek names the final third. For the past few decades, the field of Assyriology has been post-colonial in its view of the Hellenistic period, connecting a decline in temple power to the end of cuneiform culture. This view was an important reaction to the colonial perspective, which saw the Greeks bringing “civilization” to the Orient and being corrupted by it. Yet by tying Hellenistic and 19th–20th century western colonialism together, it reinforced the view of a separation between “East” and “West”, only the latter being an inheritor of Greek “civilization”. This research project hopes to be part of a larger argument in favour of a post-post-colonial view of the history of empire. It argues that the adoption of a Greek name was far more than a proskynesis to foreign rulers or a thin coat, easily discarded, but rather a sign of the malleability and the layeredness of Babylonian culture, especially at the end of cuneiform history.

Session

Inequality & digital methods: social network analysis, prosopography, onomastics

Keywords

onomastics; Hellenistic; social network analysis; social history

Wagensonner, Klaus

The King of Names: A new early compendium of personal names



Tuesday 18 July, 14:30–15:00



Lipsius 005

Collecting personal names, organizing them into lists according to shared elements, sounds, and themes, starts around the mid-third millennium BCE. Some of these lists, such as several examples from the site of Fara, continue to be copied into the second millennium BCE. The talk will address a new compendium of personal names, which has been mainly known through short extracts from sites outside of Nippur. All the extracts share in common that the names start with the element lugal, “king”. Thanks to a full and well-preserved version of the text, which probably dates to the Ur III period, the shorter extracts used for scribal training in the early second millennium BCE can now be placed within the composition, and new examples continue to be identified in collections worldwide. Apart from the sources available to us, the talk will also deal with the content of the list, how its entries are organized, and its place within the larger body of early personal name lists.

Session

Workshop 6: Third Millennium Studies

Keywords

personal name lists; lexical lists; curriculum; third millennium

Walton, Jason

Memory and permanence: An insight into anthro–arboreal relations during the Late Neolithic of Northern Mesopotamia



Tuesday 18 July, 16:30–17:00



Lipsius 028

Throughout time and throughout cultures, trees have played an important role in the life of humans and this is especially the case in Northern Mesopotamia during the Late Neolithic. Trees offer an incomparable environmental niche to humans, that of multiple generations spanning security, subsistence, shade and shelter. They are also some of the only flora to bridge the gap between the past, present and the future. Provided that a tree survives, past and future generations will utilise the tree in very similar manners. As such, trees lend themselves easily to ideas and depictions of longevity and memory. Once a tree, or trees, has been ascribed a position of social relevance they must be protected and well cared for generations. This considerable downside means that any destruction of trees (whether accidental or intentional) would be seen as significant. The importance of trees as shelter within settlements became more apparent throughout the Late Neolithic due to sedentarism, which no longer saw humans moving around the landscape (and possibly congregating under trees) and instead saw them curate trees within these permanent and semi-permanent settlements. Archaeologists tend to (wrongly) assume the idea that houses are the only setting for community interactions. Instead, during this period trees became important shaded social areas, especially for large communal events. All trees offer some combination of security, shade, subsistence and shelter, and inhabitants of a settlement could curate the trees to suit their individual (and community) needs. Due to their longevity, and growth times, trees can be often linked with themes of longevity and permanence; two themes also symbolically linked to acts of deposition. Like trees, ancestral graves remain attuned to the landscape until they are forgotten (destroyed) and act as a marker of remembrance for future generations. It is therefore no surprise that some of earliest pottery decoration seen throughout the Late Neolithic of Northern Mesopotamia notably features naturalistic motifs, in particular trees. However, arboreal depictions are rarely seen in isolation and are instead seen alongside depictions of shelter (houses) or subsistence (fauna). As we know from archaeological studies in pottery decoration, early art is not done for art's sake, but rather as a way to reinforce, or alter, worldviews.

Session

Workshop 7: Trees and Shrubs in the Ancient Near East.
Investigating the Plurality of Practices and Meanings in the Human–Arboreal Relationship

Keywords

Neolithic; Northern Mesopotamia; anthro–arboreal; Halaf pottery; Domuztepe

Wasserman, Nathan; Michael P. Streck

New light on Papulegara: A duplicate of the Papulegara Hymns Collection



Thursday 20 July, 15:30–16:00



Lipsius 005

Recently, the Louvre-tablet AO 6161 was identified as a duplicate of the long-known Papulegara hymns collection (BM 139964). In our paper, we present the edition of the newly identified duplicate, discuss the new information it provides (notably, the equivalence of Papulegara and Ninurta), and conclude with preliminary thoughts on the process of duplication of Akkadian literary texts in the early 2nd millennium.

Session

Varia (III)

Keywords

Papulegara; Ninurta; OB literature; hymns; duplicates

Wells, Bruce

Religious and legal restrictions among temple personnel in Neo-Babylonian and biblical texts



Wednesday 19 July, 10:00–10:30



Lipsius 011

In ancient Mesopotamia and Israel, access to the divine was manifestly unequal. Only properly qualified priests had access to the most sacred areas of a temple. According to biblical texts, entry into the adytum of the tabernacle/temple was restricted to one person, the high priest. In Babylonia, only those with a temple-enterer's prebend could cross into a temple's holiest space. Some cultic functionaries, such as the oblates (*širkū*) in Babylonia and the Levites in Israel, were severely restricted in this regard. This paper argues that the restrictions on the Babylonian oblates and the Israelite Levites followed a similar rationale. Both groups could not enter specific areas of their respective temples and were also prohibited from touching sacred objects. Moreover, both enjoyed fewer legal privileges than their religious superiors. In fact, the cultic hierarchy in each place depended on the existence of lower-level personnel who were barred from the full range of space and activity afforded to others. The differences were based to some extent on legal status, but lineage may have been the most important factor. The evidence is found in archival documents from the Ebabbar and Eanna temples in southern Mesopotamia and from the biblical books of Numbers and Ezekiel. The paper will examine the relevant documentation and show how the records from each region are able to shed light on the system observed in the other.

Session

Workshop 9: Religion, Ritual, and Inequality in the Ancient Near East

Keywords

Neo-Babylonian; temples; Levites; priests; prebends

Wisnom, Selenia

Intertextuality in Enūma eliš: the case of ritual lamentation



Tuesday 18 July, 17:00–17:30



Lipsius 003

The influence of the Sumerian lamentation tradition on Akkadian texts is increasingly recognised in modern scholarship. Chen (2013) and Wasserman (2020:142–143) have shown that the Akkadian flood poem Atrahasis owes much to Sumerian lamentations, not only using them as a source for the imagery of flood destruction but transforming the motifs to create new meaning from them, while allusions to Sumerian ritual laments have also been found in Assyrian royal inscriptions (e.g. Baruchi–Unna 2013 on Ashurbanipal L4). I have recently argued that Anzû, Enūma eliš, and Erra and Ishum all allude to the BALAGĜ-genre in various ways; for example, in Enūma eliš Marduk’s use of the net to capture Ti’āmtu echoes the motif of Enlil the Fowler, the terrifying Hunter who sets traps for innocent people (Wisnom 2020, 2021). This paper will demonstrate that this is not an isolated moment in the poem, but rather allusions to the lamentation tradition are woven in throughout. Ti’āmtu is consistently portrayed as an angry God in need of pacification, with language that specifically evokes the Mesopotamian strategy of appeasing these deities: ritual lament. Focusing on a passage where lamentation resonances cluster, I will give a close reading of Enūma eliš IV: 59–72, a key moment leading up to the battle between Marduk and Ti’āmtu. In this densely allusive passage elements of the style, language, and specific vocabulary work together to evoke ritual lamentation. By doing so the poem creates expectations in the reader familiar with these traditions and, in a manner typical of Enūma eliš, surprises us by overturning them.

Session

Workshop 8: Intertextuality in Cuneiform Literature: Latest Research and the Issues of Methodology

Keywords

literature; intertextuality; lamentation; ritual

Worthington, Martin

Assyrianisms in Assyrian royal inscriptions: a literary history



Tuesday 18 July, 12:00–12:30



Lipsius 011

Assyrian kings vary in how their inscriptions deploy Assyrianisms: a few use them pervasively, a few sporadically, some not at all. This paper will outline some such trends, and investigate what they tell us about the relationship between language and identity, and the conscious fashioning of a literary tradition.

Session

Workshop 5: Assyrian Royal Inscriptions in Honor of A.K. Grayson

Keywords

Assyrian royal inscriptions; assyrianisms; code switching; identity

Worthington, Martin

On the logic of cuneiform



Wednesday 19 July, 14:30–15:00



Lipsius 003

We all know the tables that show how cuneiform signs go back to pictures of a human head, a fish, a reed, or whatever. But the signs one sees in such lists tend to be the same dozen or so. What about the other eight hundred? And, beyond the way they look, how did the signs acquire their dizzying plethoras of readings? It is a long time since such issues were discussed systematically (though many brilliant ideas have been put forward for individual signs). This paper arises from a book project which, undergirded by the advice of numerous colleagues, tries to relate signs to their original shapes, and to explain the origins of readings. The highlights presented in the paper make for a kaleidoscopic window onto ancient symbolism and association, and onto the interpretation of visual culture.

Session

Varia (II)

Keywords

origin of writing; cuneiform script; writing systems;
pictography; ideography

Wunsch, Cornelia

The hoax of semi-freedom



Monday 17 July, 15:00–15:30



Lipsius 003

Personal status, one's place in society and the encumbrances attached cannot be described in clear-cut ways. Seen from this perspective, there is more than just slavery and freedom and a multitude of dependencies exist. On the other hand, soaking, mudding and blending legal categories that clearly determine a person's standing in the world is not helpful. Recently, several authors have come up with the idea of semi or qualified freedom. This paper argues that features that have been used to define semi freedom derive from diverse sources and their mingling does not add to our understanding of status. It will be argued that every free person faces encumbrances and is restricted in his or her rights. Whether free householder or temple dependant (to take the two extremes of the free spectrum): they are to be juxtaposed against the slave who does not own him or herself, who is not entitled to lineage and inheritance and often subjected to brutal force, and to whom different legal rules in society apply.

Session

Workshop 2: Beyond Slavery and Freedom in the Ancient Near East

Keywords

slavery; freedom; emancipation

Yamada, Shigeo

Royal hunt and acquisition of wild beasts in Assyrian royal inscriptions



Tuesday 18 July, 12:30–13:00



Lipsius 011

Literary motifs of royal hunts and the capture and acquisition of animals are attested particularly often in Assyrian royal inscriptions and monumental art. The accounts of hunting and related topics were included in the inscriptions of the late Middle Assyrian and early Neo-Assyrian periods. Then, after an interruption, the royal lion hunt was taken up as significant subject in several inscriptions and epigraphs of the palace reliefs during the reign of Assurbanipal. In this paper I will discuss the passages describing royal hunts either in the open field or in an urban zone, as well as the capture and import of exotic animals, their subsequent breeding, exhibition to the people, dedication to the gods, and treatment in triumphal rituals. While focusing on the royal inscriptions, I will consider the actual circumstances and aims of hunting and related phenomena, and analyze the literary and ideological aspects of those accounts embedded in the larger texts. The following are the major questions I will pose: 1. When and how did the episodes of hunting and related issues appear in the royal inscriptions? 2. What were the kinds of animals hunted, and how is the hunting described? 3. Where did the hunting take place? 4. How did Assyrian rulers acquire, breed, consume and display wild and exotic animals? 5. What sorts of literary motifs appear in the hunting accounts, and how were those accounts literarily composed and embedded in the larger inscriptions?

Session

Workshop 5: Assyrian Royal Inscriptions in Honor of A.K. Grayson

Keywords

royal inscriptions; royal hunt; wild animal breeding; Assyria

Yeranin, Sasha

People of the Kingdom of Larsa: a prosopographical study of the texts YOS V 119, YOS VIII 4 and YOS VIII 7 (REMOTE)



Monday 17 July, 16:30–17:00



Lipsius 011

Following the steps of I. M. Diakonoff’s study of the Old Babylonian society presented in his book “People of the City of Ur” (1990), this paper aims to analyze the lives of a group of people that lived in the Kingdom of Larsa during the reign of Warad-Sîn and Rīm-Sîn I (1834–1763 BC). The main object of this analysis consists of 47 names of individuals that are mentioned as transactors/witnesses in three documents from the so-called “Archive of Balmunamhe” — YOS V 119, YOS VIII 4 and YOS VIII 7 — which record real estate transactions of the high official Balmunamhe in 1826, 1821 and 1820 BC. A search for these individuals and also other people with the same names in other legal and administrative texts from the cities under the rule of the Larsean kings at that time—span (Larsa, Ur, Kutalla, Nippur, etc.) has resulted in a database consisting of a group of 856 entities that can be discerned by attributes of profession or family connections. In order to represent the gathered information, the database was reorganized in two formats: first, in a prosopographical catalogue that assimilates the structure of the “Prosopography of the Neo-Assyrian Empire” with some modifications; secondly, in a network diagram made using the program Gephi that displays graphically the various types of relationships that existed between the individuals, thus partially recreating the society of the Kingdom of Larsa.

Session

Inequality & digital methods: social network analysis, prosopography, onomastics

Keywords

Kingdom of Larsa; Old Babylonian period; onomastics; prosopography; social network analysis

Yousefi Zoshk, Rouhollah; Donya Etemadi; Saeed Baghizadeh

The evaluation of child labor during the Proto Elamite Period in late 4th millennium Iran (REMOTE)



Tuesday 18 July, 11:30–12:00



Lipsius 019

Children are a big part of any society. But the meaning of childhood is different from one community to another. This leads to specific child-rearing habits, legal status, and general living conditions. Childhood is more than a biological stage in human development, but is a social and political concept, and Iran in the late 4th millennium was no exception to this rule. Children's status has been largely understudied in Proto-literate texts both in ancient Iran and Mesopotamia. According to my preliminary estimates, about 65 proto-Elamite texts in a collection of about 1650 written records from all across Iran dating back to about 3300–2800 BC, provide insights into the lives of children. But information about them is unevenly distributed across different textual genres and is made more difficult by the lexicon and semantic complexities of the Proto-Elamite writing system. Furthermore, despite the abundance of archaeological data and somehow written texts, we still do not understand many details of how Proto-Elamite societies in Iran were organized. Many of the Proto-Elamite tablets from ancient Iran are economic and legal records that are unfairly considered “dull” by some. They originate in the administrative archives of pastoral nomads' households of Khans or elites ruling over the community, where they were complex estates, centers of production, and redistribution run by bureaucrats trained in writing and accounting. Much of our data comes from the “administration building”, which shapes the information about children that we can extract. The Proto-Elamite texts tell us how elites managed human resources, land, animals, and other goods. For this reason, we see the children and everything that the high-ranking managers were concerned about from their point of view. Our challenge is to reconstruct children's status in this way by relying on biased pieces of information spread thinly across a limited number of texts concerning workers' rations and work in which children are included. This research examines a significant children's status during the Proto-Elamite period that is mentioned in some tablets from ancient Iran. It seems that Proto-Elamite elites and bureaucrats supported children from low-ranking classes and subsequently employed them. We aim to tell where this practice originates, its forms, and its implications for the larger society.

Session Inequality: wealth, labor and income

Keywords inequality; children; labor; Proto-Elamite; 4th mill. BC

Zeran, Emily

The scribes also plow: Real vs. fabled scribal professionals at Šuruppak



Tuesday 18 July, 12:30–13:00



Lipsius 005

The majority of the “Fāra texts,” the c. 1300 tablets from the ancient city of Šuruppak in Mesopotamia, date between c. 2600–2500 BC. Recently, a discrete archive of 152 texts has been isolated from amongst the mass of Fāra materials on the basis of archaeological provenance. Known as the “Tablet House” archive, it included both administrative and scholarly texts. While there are many questions regarding the reality of life in the mid-third millennium which these tablets may be able to illuminate, there appears to be a curious problem regarding the personal names of a certain professional group that appears within the Tablet House archive. The problem is that most of the names of dub-sar professionals present in administrative texts of the Tablet House archive do not match those of the scribes named in the colophons of lexical and literary tablets once housed in the same building. What can account for this divergence? This paper will survey the dub-sar that can be confirmed as working at Šuruppak during the few years covered by the Tablet House archive, and what their role likely entailed. The names of the scribes present in scholarly colophons will be examined for patterns in their appearance, and in comparison with the pre-ED IIIa onomasticon. It may be, that in the scribal colophons of Šuruppak/Fāra we are not dealing with contemporary, living persons, but rather, it is possible that we are being provided a glimpse into the manuscript history of certain early compositions.

Session
Keywords

Workshop 6: Third Millennium Studies
Early Dynastic; Fara; scribes; onomastics

Ziemann, Marcus

Local responses to wealth inequality in global empires



Tuesday 18 July, 15:30–16:00



Lipsius 019

This paper uses recent scholarship on globalization and economic inequality to investigate how areas on the peripheries of large Mesopotamian empires responded to widening wealth gaps. Recent archaeological work has suggested that wealth inequality increased with the appearance of durable empires in Mesopotamia. There has also been work on Solon’s debt-slavery reforms in Athens (6th cent.) and Biblical reforms on the topic (7th–6th cent.); scholars have also compared these two sets of reforms but have not connected them. My intervention is to unite these streams: I argue that Solonian and Biblical debt-slavery reforms were roughly contemporary similar local responses to a crisis in debt-slavery levels brought on by a “global” increase in wealth inequality. Recent archaeological work has recognized that the Iron Age was a period of regional globalization between the Near East and Mediterranean. If poorly managed by governments, globalization provides opportunities for elites to increase wealth disparity through their better connections to lucrative global flows of trade and capital. Growing inequality results in political backlashes calling for extreme changes that protect the in-group. Similar dynamics are at play in the Iron Age Near East: the Neo-Assyrian and Neo-Babylonian Empires monopolized resources for imperial ventures and used resource distribution to win local elites’ loyalty. Consequently, local elites’ connections to imperial (or globalizing) networks allowed them to enrich themselves as resources in general were flowing towards imperial centers. Furthermore, archaeological evidence seems to confirm growing inequality in the Near East starting in the 8th century. Growing economic inequality resulted in lower-classes selling themselves into debt-slavery in Attica and Israel. These reactions are local responses to larger global pressures that helped to protect the in-group (debt-slavery protections applied only to Athenians and Israelites). Both sets of texts have been shown to have connections to debt jubilees announced by Mesopotamian rulers at the beginning of their reigns. However, they innovate on the Mesopotamian models by not just canceling debt but also by attempting to protect in-group members from the exigencies of debt-slavery. In short, this paper explores how local concerns were negotiated in relationship to wider global processes.

Session

Inequality: wealth, labor and income

Keywords

global-local; wealth inequality; Solon; Jeremiah;
Mesopotamian empires

Zilberg, Peter; Kathleen Abraham

The south Babylonian countryside in the 5th century BCE: a view from Šāṭir



Tuesday 18 July, 15:30–16:00



Lipsius 011

This paper aims to discuss the socio-economic reality in the south Babylonian countryside during the 5th century BCE. Šāṭir, a small city located in the tribal environment of Bīt-Amukānu, near the major urban center of Uruk, will serve as a micro-historic example for a deeper investigation into the complex social and religious environment of the region. The study will discuss the agrarian landscape of the city, highlighting available economic opportunities, challenges, and instances of local resilience. Furthermore, we will investigate the linguistic, cultural, and religious interactions between Babylonians and West-Semites residing in the city. The study is based on a corpus of published and unpublished texts pertaining to the city and its environs.

Session

Social inequality

Keywords

center and periphery; Aramaic and Arameans; south Babylonian countryside; Achaemenid Babylonia

Zólyomi, Gábor

Sumerian verbal classes and verb alternations



Thursday 20 July, 15:00–15:30



Lipsius 123

Lexicographical works on Sumerian use primarily the textual context and the ancient lexicographical material for establishing the meaning of a lemma. Much less emphasis is paid to the grammatical behaviour of the lemmas, partly because there exists no generally accepted grammatical description of the language. The absence of a common frame of reference is particularly painful in the case of the Sumerian finite verb which is capable to code information related to all verbal participants even on its own in a clause. Recent linguistic theories have put great focus on verb classes and verb alternations and these studies have become indispensable in any lexicographic research. The project “A Dictionary of the Sumerian Royal inscriptions of the Third Millennium” pays particular attention to the valency frames of the Sumerian verbs in establishing their senses, using the grammatical description of the principal investigator, the present speaker. The aim of this talk is to demonstrate how the research on verb classes and verb alternations may contribute to a better understanding of the Sumerian lexicon, using a selection of verbs.

Session

Linguistics: Sumerian and Akkadian

Keywords

Sumerian; verb; lexicography

Zomer, Elyze

Eyes Wide Shut: behind the logic of dreams



Thursday 20 July, 12:30–13:00



Lipsius 123

This paper presents the long-awaited reconstruction of the dream omen series Zaqīqu II–IX elaborating on its intricate structure and content reflecting the primary concepts of the Mesopotamian dream reality. Furthermore, examples of the main organizational principles behind dream omens such as semantic, acrographical, phonological, and apodotic attraction are provided and discussed, followed by an extensive investigation of the various interpretation strategies such as variations of worldplay (paranomasia, antanacsis, and lexical transitivity) and symbolic association (similarity, antithesis, characteristics, cause–effect, and synecdoche) applied by the ancient scholars in the intriguing corpus of Mesopotamian dream omens.

Session

Workshop 15: Construction of Meaning in Ancient Mesopotamian Literature and Scholarship

Keywords

dreams; divination; oneiromancy

Brief project presentations



Lipsius 019

Cammarosano, Michele

On the trail of the neverending manuscript



Thursday 20 July, 17:00–17:10

Ancient Mesopotamia invented both the most beautiful script and the most clever and green writing supports: clay tablets and wax boards. The initiative “On the trail of the neverending manuscript” aims to explore their role in the history of writing technologies in a comparative perspective.

Christiansen, Birgit; Andrea Trameri

The Hittite Corpus of Divinatory Texts: Digital Edition and Cultural Historical Analysis



Thursday 20 July, 17:10–17:20

The project, funded by the DFG and led by Birgit Christiansen, Enrique Jiménez, and Daniel Schwemer, aims to provide an open-access, fully annotated digital edition of Hittite divinatory texts. In addition, it will contribute to the analysis of these texts from a cultural-historical perspective.

Garcia-Ventura, Agnès; Jordi Vidal

Assyriology and Biblical Archaeology in Spain during the francoist period (AsABEF)



Thursday 20 July, 17:20–17:30

The project deals with: 1) Spanish archaeology in the ANE and influence of Spanish politics in its development; 2) plaster cast collections. We work with archival materials, often unpublished, allowing to shed light on pioneers of study, research and dissemination of the ANE in Spain.

Jaques, Margaret; Dieter Koch

Babylonian Sumerian Verb Conjugators: a software demonstration



Thursday 20 July, 17:30–17:40

We have already presented our project at the 67th RAI. In the meantime, it has made significant progress. This time we want to present the Babylonian Verb Conjugator in detail. It can now conjugate all (approx. 1350) Akkadian verbs for which finite verb forms are attested.

Pallavidini, Marta

Making, speaking, changing the law: actors, institutions and procedures of law in Hittite Anatolia



Thursday 20 July, 17:40–17:50

The project, which is in its initial phase, aims to reconsider law in Hittite Anatolia, in particular the actors, the procedures and the institutions involved in the making of the law. The study of lawmaking processes is based on the most recent theories in anthropology and sociology of law.

Pappi, Cinzia; Costanza Coppini

Ancient Synchroneworlds



Thursday 20 July, 17:50–18:00

The talk will provide an overview of the project Synchroneworlds developed within the research agenda of the Einstein Center Chronoi Berlin, investigating temporal intersections of material production and epigraphic data of the cultural landscape of northern Mesopotamia in the 2nd millennium BCE.

Posters



Thursday 20 July, 16:30–17:00



Poster hall



Cecilia, Ludovica

The Ilia A archive

This poster summarizes the results of a four-year PhD project (08.2019–07.2023) funded by the Dutch Research Council (NWO) and conducted at the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam. The project provides the scholarly edition and the study of the “Ilia A archive” (c. 300 texts), a private archive from Borsippa, dated to the “long sixth-century BCE”. The archive belonged to the Ilia A family, which owned prebends in Ezida and properties in the city and its countryside. The research contributes to the existing body of published material by making available new texts that advance our understanding of the Neo-Babylonian period and reconstructs the history and property portfolio of the family, including their social and business activities. In Neo-Babylonian studies, a major obstacle faced by scholars to study inequality is the biased nature of the sources, that is the documents of the affluent urban families that reflect only their perspective on the economy and the Babylonian society as a whole. Yet, without first reconstructing the identities of the people mentioned in the texts whose behaviors shaped social, economic and cultural factors, it is impossible to investigate the nuances of inequality and power dynamics underpinning society. The Borsippean Ilia A archive, while biased towards the upper echelons of society, nonetheless provides a valuable source of information also about individuals from different social backgrounds, as the archive records various types of relationships, sometimes involving people of different social statuses, which highlights the interconnectedness of various social strata in specific contexts. Accordingly, the poster presents these findings by adopting the dossier on agricultural matters as a case study. The texts pertaining to this context illuminate the people involved in these matters, namely landowners of different social backgrounds, tenants of plots and houses of the family, gardeners, royal officials and others. All in all, presenting the results of the study conducted on the Ilia A archive, by paying special attention to the above-mentioned material, is relevant for the aims of the Rencontre. The findings from this archive demonstrate once again the critical role that publishing and studying archives in their own right play in expanding our knowledge and understanding of social phenomena in past societies.

Keywords

Neo-Babylonian period; archive; social network; text edition; socio-economic landscape



Chen, Yi Samuel

Social conditioning for building projects in Ancient Mesopotamia

Previous research, especially Steinkeller's seminal work (2015), has shown that ancient Mesopotamian building projects, as early as the Ur III period, were preceded, punctuated, and concluded by a series of socio-economic, political, and religious and ritual activities. The current study seeks to further explore the practice of such social conditioning for various types of building projects, especially temples and cities, from different periods of ancient Mesopotamian history. By combing through and analysing relevant textual sources such as royal inscriptions from the third millennium B.C. to the first millennium B.C., this paper will examine some of the standard procedures (e.g., exemption of debts and obligations) and changes involved in Mesopotamian building projects across time, whilst endeavouring to propound ideas concerning the rationales behind such conditioning. It seeks to demonstrate that though textual sources such as royal inscription often give an impression that the planning and implementation processes of state or national building projects in ancient Mesopotamia were controlled by the ruling elite to serve their objectives and interests, the needs of different social groups and the society as a whole were attended to in the process of what Creekmore (2014) observes as the social co-production and co-construction of space.

Keywords

urban planning and development, social production and construction of space, building projects, social conditioning



Eertink, Mark; Kiki Freriks

Unidentified Objects in the Böhl Collection

The Netherlands Institute for the Near East (NINO) holds the De Liagre Böhl Collection. Next to about 3000 clay tablets, it contains many other portable objects that were collected by Böhl in the 1930s. These had remained unstudied and uncatalogued until recently, when this work was done in order to prepare the objects for their move to the National Museum of Antiquities. The 614 objects include a large number of pottery sherds (mostly Neolithic and early Islamic), Old Babylonian figurines and terracottas, mosaic cones from Uruk, 'Luristan' bronzes, a wide variety of Egyptica, and many other miscellaneous items. Also included in this number is a separate collection of ceramic vessels and Hellenistic/Roman oil lamps from Anatolia, which were donated by Struwe in 2017. The catalogue which resulted from this project was conducted as a dual student assistantship. It will be supplemented by a newsletter article for the NINO and a planned public project on the Things That Talk web platform. However, not all objects were able to be identified or still lack a detailed description. This poster presents a small number of 'mystery objects' that have remained elusive thus far. Are they jar stoppers? Is it a weight? What strange animal does this depict? Attendees who are specialised in material culture are invited to lend their opinions and support.

Keywords

NINO; Böhl Collection; objects; material culture



Klöker, Jonas

(ša): Syntactic variation in the possessive construction in Babylonian letters

My research investigates syntactic variation in the nominal possessive construction in the Babylonian variety of Akkadian. This variation is two-fold. Akkadian indicates nominal possession either through an analytical construction, in which the possessum shows increased syncretism (*bīt bēl-i* house.SC.NOM.SG lord-GEN.SG „house of the lord”), or a synthetic one, using the marker *ša* (*bīt-u ša bēl-i* house-NOM.SG lord-GEN.SG). The distribution of these constructions has been recently briefly studied for Old Babylonian by Arkhipov and Loesov (2019). In the present investigation, all variation will be viewed through a diachronic lens: the corpus consists of published and accessible Babylonian letters, starting from Old Babylonian all the way to Achaemenid Late Babylonian. Starting with a statistical overview, possible aspects conditioning variation in question will be analyzed. These include semantic factors (i.e., the semantic relationship between elements of a possessive construction) as well as syntactic variables, such as the occurrence of possessive pronouns, the position in the argument structure and the function as the head of a relative clause.

Bibliography

Arkhipov, I./Loesov, S. (2019). 'Two Genitive Constructions of Old Babylonian.' *Bulletin of SOAS* 82.3, 395–403.

Keywords

Babylonian; Akkadian linguistics; diachronic linguistics; letters

Lundeen-Kaulfus, Nicole

The Lizard Omens of Šumma Ālu

Tablet 32, a section from Mesopotamia's longest divinatory series, *šumma ālu ina mēlê šakin* 'If a city is set on a height', collects omens on the behaviors and characteristics of lizards. It is one of several sections that collect omens about non-human animals. The creation of the vast omen lists of the first millennium was long thought to be empirical at its core, based on millennia of recording observed phenomena. Scholars have since recognized that omen texts combine semantic and symbolic associations along with phonetic and graphic elements to create, based on similitude, connections between the ominous phenomenon in an omen's protasis and the associated outcome in its apodosis. Further, animal omens have stubbornly been seen as a direct reflection of actual animal behavior, but this interpretation is changing to see animal omens as descriptors of animals from an anthropocentric perspective. My research on the lizard omens, carried out as part of the FWF-funded project "Bestiarium Mesopotamicum" led by Dr. Nicla De Zorzi in Vienna, supports this interpretive shift. The analysis further indicates that Tablet 32's omens, like many of its counterparts, exploit the polyvalency of cuneiform writing to display an abundant amount of "word play." Examining the Tablet's omen sequence reveals common structural elements such as oppositional binary pairs and schematic relationships based on commonly known sequences such as color, but also lesser known ones such as lists of household furnishings. The text uses phonetic repetition and graphic doubling to mirror an omen's semantic context of twins and duality. The poster will showcase some of the results of this research.

Keywords

divination; animal-human relations; omen sequencing; hermeneutics



Urbani, Bernardo; Dionisios Youlatos

An exploration into the representations of nonhuman primates in Assyria

Although several studies have explored the relationship of Assyrians with exotic and domestic animals, none has dealt with a thorough investigation regarding primates in this Near Eastern society. The present study aims to fill this gap by examining the depiction of primates in Assyrian material culture. For these purposes, we extensively surveyed the literature on the material culture of Assyria (Old, Middle, and Neo-Assyrian periods) as well as institutional collections and online sources to identify any primate representations. Our analysis shows that both African monkeys, such as vervets (genus *Chlorocebus*) and baboons (genus *Papio*), and Asian monkeys, such as macaques (genus *Macaca*) were depicted in a wide variety of media, such as furniture elements, statuettes, seals, sealings, pendants, panels, and bas-reliefs. This rich iconography, spanning from the Old Assyrian to the Neo-Assyrian period, underscores the importance of primates among Assyrians. Primates are related to the underworld and are allowed to roam into this realm, but at the same time, they are able to sit at the top of sacred plants, approximating the sky. Thus, they act as mediators of the supernatural world with deep symbolic meanings. Future research will require additional comparative investigations of the Near Eastern glyptic repertoire and other cultural evidence from Mesopotamian societies to expand the knowledge of one of the oldest recorded evidence of the human-primate interface in antiquity.

Keywords

archaeoprimatology; baboons; Egypt; first-second
millennia BCE; macaques



Westenholz, Aage; Inger Jentoft

Nippur–Digitized

“Und mit solchen Kerls muss ich, ein deutscher Gelehrter,
zusammenarbeiten!” — H. V. Hilprecht.

The project “Nippur Digitized” (<https://nippur-digitized.com>) aims to publish in digitally searchable form all extant records of the great Pennsylvania excavations at Nippur during the years 1889–1900 and the various activities connected with them. These records consist of diaries, catalogues of finds, letters reporting on the progress of excavations, photographs, paper squeezes, lists of expenses, vouchers, etc. We expect that the publication of this almost entirely unpublished material will find many uses. The obvious one – that the archeology of Nippur will be much clearer than hitherto assumed – will be interesting in itself and may provide guidelines for future excavations at the site. Further, it supplies primary sources to the history of archeology, Iraqi ethnography, and the pursuit of knowledge for its own sake. This project is still in progress.

Keywords

Nippur; Near Eastern archaeology; history of scholarship;
usefulness for related studies