2025 ASOR ANNUAL MEETING ABSTRACT BOOK

Boston, November 19-22, 2025

Sessions, presentations, times, and locations are subject to change.

Please check the Program Addendum posted at the ASOR help desk or view the online program for the latest schedule.

ABSTRACT BOOK

Times and dates are subject to change. Updated October 3, 2025

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 19, 2025

2:00–8:30pm (EST) **ASOR Registration Tables and Help Desk Open** (Mezzanine Level)
The ASOR registration tables and help desk will be open for longer hours on Wednesday to avoid crowding before the Plenary Address. Please stop by to pick up your name badge any time between 2:00pm to 8:30pm.

7:00–8:30pm (EST) Welcome to the Annual Meeting and Plenary Address (Grand Ballroom A)
The Middle East Cultural Heritage Crisis and Why It Matters
Dr. Timothy P. Harrison | Director of the Institute for the Study of Ancient Cultures (ISAC) and Professor of Near Eastern Archaeology at the University of Chicago

8:30–9:30pm (EST) Welcome Reception (Grand Ballroom B)

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 20, 2025

8:15–10:20am (EST)	**SESSION BLOCK 1**	**LOCATION**
1A.	Jerusalem and the Archaeology of a Sacred City I	Grand Ballroom A
1B.	Recent Excavations at the Phoenician Colony of Cerro del Villar, Malaga, Spain	Grand Ballroom B
1C.	Cultural Heritage: Preservation, Presentation, and Management I	Georgian
1D.	Archaeology and Biblical Studies I	Arlington
1E.	Archaeology of Jordan I	Berkeley & Clarendon
1F.	The Robot at the Back of the Classroom: Student Engagement and Assessment under the Shadow of Generative AI (Workshop)	Studio 1
1G.	Landscapes of Settlement in the Ancient Near East	Studio 2
1H.	Gender in the Ancient Near East I	The Loft
1I.	New Perspectives on Hellenistic Maresha in Idumea	Whittier
1J.	Africa in the Ancient World I	White Hill
1K.	Eastern Mediterranean Connections: A Session in Memory of Jacqueline Balensi	Tremont

10:40am–12:45pm (EST)	**SESSION BLOCK 2**	**LOCATION**
2A.	Jerusalem and the Archaeology of a Sacred City II	Grand Ballroom A
2B.	Archaeology of Mesopotamia I	Grand Ballroom B
2C.	Cultural Heritage: Preservation, Presentation, and Management II	Georgian
2D.	Archaeology and Biblical Studies II	Arlington
2E.	Archaeology of Jordan II	Berkeley & Clarendon
2F.	And the Land had Rest? The Aftermath of Destruction and the Development of Memory I	Studio 1
2G.	Megiddo at 100: Exploring the Layers and Legacy of ISAC's Expedition at Armageddon	Studio 2
2H.	Gender in the Ancient Near East II	The Loft
2I.	Recent Work in the Archaeological Sciences	Whittier
2J.	Africa in the Ancient World II	White Hill
2K.	Glyptic Databases: Collaboration and Integration in the Digital Humanities Transition (Workshop)	Tremont

12:45–2:00pm (EST) Early Career Scholars Brown Bag Lunch and Panel (Georgian)

12:45–2:00pm (EST) Roundtable Discussions (The Square)

2:00–4:05pm (EST)	SESSION BLOCK 3	LOCATION
3A.	Jerusalem and the Archaeology of a Sacred City III	Grand Ballroom A
3B.	Archaeology of Mesopotamia II	Grand Ballroom B
3C.	Cultural Heritage: Preservation, Presentation, and Management III	Georgian
3D.	Violence in the Ancient Near East and Hebrew Bible I	Arlington
3E.	Digital Archaeology and History I	Berkeley & Clarendon
3F.	And the Land had Rest? The Aftermath of Destruction and the Development of Memory II	Studio 1
3G.	Archaeology of Religion in the Levant during the Second and First Millennia B.C.E.	Studio 2
3H.	Archaeology of Syria I	The Loft
3I.	Archaeology of the Southern Levant	Whittier
3J.	The Samaria Ostraca: A Twenty-First-Century Reappraisal (Workshop)	White Hill
3K.	Archaeology of the Black Sea and the Caucasus	Tremont

4:25–6:30pm (EST)	SESSION BLOCK 4	LOCATION
4A.	Community Archaeology: Decolonizing Field Research (Workshop)	Grand Ballroom A
4B.	Archaeology of Mesopotamia III	Grand Ballroom B
4C.	Archaeology of Israel I	Georgian
4D.	Prehistoric Archaeology	Arlington
4E.	Digital Archaeology and History II	Berkeley & Clarendon
4F.	And the Land had Rest? The Aftermath of Destruction and the Development of Memory III	Studio 1
4G.	Rethinking the Amarna Letters: Cuneiform and Cultures in Contact	Studio 2
4H.	Archaeology of Syria II	The Loft
4I.	Economies of Scale among Emerging Complex Societies of the Old World: A Celebration of the Career of Haskel Greenfield (Workshop)	Whittier
4J.	Isotopic Investigations in the Ancient Near East and Caucasus	White Hill
4K.	Life and Tradition around Sacred Mountains (Southwest Asia)	Tremont

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 21, 2025

8:15–10:20am (EST)	SESSION BLOCK 5	LOCATION
5A.	Archaeology of Egypt I	Grand Ballroom A
5B.	Biblical Texts in Cultural Context I	Grand Ballroom B
5C.	Archaeology of Israel II	Georgian
5D.	Archaeology and History of Feasting and Foodways I	Arlington
5E.	Digital Archaeology and History III	Berkeley & Clarendon
5F.	Ritual, Power, and the Power of Ritual in the Ancient Near East: Ritual and Kingship I	Studio 1
5G.	Once More With Feeling: Reading Emotions in Archaeological Objects (Workshop)	Studio 2
5H.	New Approaches to Ancient Animals I	The Loft
5I.	Crossing Eurasia: Bronze and Iron Age Human Mobility between Arabian Sea and Eastern Mediterranean (Workshop)	Whittier
5J.	Archaeology of Islamic Society I	White Hill

10:40am–12:45pm (EST)	SESSION BLOCK 6	LOCATION
6A.	Archaeology of Egypt II	Grand Ballroom A
6B.	Biblical Texts in Cultural Context II	Grand Ballroom B
6C.	Archaeology of Israel III	Georgian
6D.	Archaeology and History of Feasting and Foodways II	Arlington
6E.	Archaeology of Cyprus I	Berkeley & Clarendon
6F.	Ritual, Power, and the Power of Ritual in the Ancient Near East: Ritual and Kingship II	Studio 1
6G.	Archaeology of Anatolia I	Studio 2
6H.	New Approaches to Ancient Animals II	The Loft
6I.	Archaeology of Arabia	Whittier
6J.	Archaeology of Islamic Society II	White Hill
6K.	Archaeology of Iran	Tremont

12:45–2:00pm (EST) ASOR Members' Meeting (Georgian)

2:00–4:05pm (EST)	SESSION BLOCK 7	LOCATION
7A.	Archaeology of Egypt III	Grand Ballroom A
7B.	Art, Archaeology, and History of Central Asia I	Grand Ballroom B
7C.	What's Up With That?: Museum Objects that Defy Interpretation (Workshop)	Georgian
7D.	Experiments in Critical Reading: Ancient Literature and Modern Theory I	Arlington
7E.	Archaeology of Cyprus II	Berkeley & Clarendon
7F.	Interdisciplinary Approaches to Seals, Sealing Practices, and Administration I	Studio 1
7G.	Archaeology of Anatolia II	Studio 2
7H.	New Approaches to Ancient Animals III	The Loft
7I.	Archaeology of the Near East: Bronze and Iron Ages	Whittier
7J.	Urbanism and Polities in the Bronze and Iron Age Levant	White Hill
7K.	Bioarchaeology in the Near East	Tremont

4:25–6:30pm (EST)	SESSION BLOCK 8	LOCATION
8A.	Cultural Heritage in Crisis: People Oriented (Workshop)	Grand Ballroom A
8B.	Art, Archaeology, and History of Central Asia II	Grand Ballroom B
8C.	Ancient Aliens in Modern Times: The Politics and Ethics of Pseudoarchaeology	Georgian
8D.	Experiments in Critical Reading: Ancient Literature and Modern Theory II	Arlington
8E.	Archaeology of Cyprus III	Berkeley & Clarendon
8F.	Interdisciplinary Approaches to Seals, Sealing Practices, and Administration II	Studio 1
8G.	Archaeology of Anatolia III	Studio 2
8H.	Approaches to Dress and the Body	The Loft
8I.	Rebuilding Antioch: Collaborative Approaches to the Ancient City (Workshop)	Whittier
8J.	Archaeology of Petra and Nabataea	White Hill

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 22, 2025

8:15–10:20am (EST)	SESSION BLOCK 9	LOCATION
9A.	Violence in the Ancient Near East and Hebrew Bible II	Grand Ballroom A
9B.	Archaeology of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq I	Grand Ballroom B
9C.	Towards a Working Ancient Economy: The Bronze Age I	Georgian
9D.	Art Historical Approaches to the Near East I	Arlington
9E.	Dwelling in the Past: Scales of Settlement, Time, and Society in Anatolia I	Berkeley & Clarendon
9F.	History of Archaeology I	Studio 1
9G.	Ancient Inscriptions I	Studio 2
9H.	Interconnectivity and Exchange with Northeast Africa I	The Loft
9I.	Digging Up Data: A Showcase of Ongoing Digital Scholarship Projects (Workshop)	Whittier
9J.	Ancient Climate and Environmental Archaeology I	White Hill
9K.	The LCP Handbook Series: The Late Roman Amphora 1	Tremont

10:40am–12:45pm (EST)	SESSION BLOCK 10	LOCATION
10A.	Islamic Archaeology and ASOR: A Session in Memory of Don Whitcomb	Grand Ballroom A
10B.	Archaeology of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq II	Grand Ballroom B
10C.	Towards a Working Ancient Economy: The Bronze Age II	Georgian
10D.	Art Historical Approaches to the Near East II	Arlington
10E.	Dwelling in the Past: Scales of Settlement, Time, and Society in Anatolia II	Berkeley & Clarendon
10F.	History of Archaeology II	Studio 1
10G.	Ancient Inscriptions II	Studio 2
10H.	Interconnectivity and Exchange with Northeast Africa II	The Loft
10I.	Archaeology of Lebanon	Whittier
10J.	Ancient Climate and Environmental Archaeology II	White Hill
10K.	From Artifact to History	

12:45–2:00pm (EST) ASOR Poster Session (Statler)

2:00–4:05pm (EST)	SESSION BLOCK 11	LOCATION
11A.	Nothing Scheduled – Room Hold for 125 Anniversary Celebration at 6:45pm	Grand Ballroom A
11B.	Archaeology of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq III	Grand Ballroom B
11C.	Towards a Working Ancient Economy: The Bronze Age III	Georgian
11D.	Archaeologies of Memory I	Arlington
11E.	Alterity in the Ancient Near East I	Berkeley & Clarendon
11F.	Home Away from Home: Disciplinary Migrations and Scholarly Identities I	Studio 1
11G.	Ancient Inscriptions III	Studio 2
11H.	Interconnectivity and Exchange with Northeast Africa III	The Loft
11I.	(Re)excavating Karanis 100 Years Later: New Research on the Legacy Collections and Archival Records I	Whittier
11J.	Archaeology of the Near East: The Classical Periods	White Hill
11K.	Rural Communities: Social and Spiritual Rites	Tremont

4:25–6:30pm (EST)	SESSION BLOCK 12	LOCATION
12A.	Nothing Scheduled – Room Hold for 125 Anniversary Celebration at 6:45pm	Grand Ballroom A
12B.	Nothing Scheduled – Room Hold for 125th Anniversary Celebration at 6:45pm	Grand Ballroom B
12C.	Nothing Scheduled	Georgian
12D.	Archaeologies of Memory II	Arlington
12E.	Alterity in the Ancient Near East II	Berkeley & Clarendon
12F.	Home Away from Home: Disciplinary Migrations and Scholarly Identities II	Studio 1
12G.	The Future of Ancient West Asia Collections in Museums (Workshop)	Studio 2
12H.	Orientalism in Biblical Archaeology and Scholarship: A Legacy or a Prevailing Methodological Obstacle? (Workshop)	The Loft
12I.	(Re)excavating Karanis 100 Years Later: New Research on the Legacy Collections and Archival Records II	Whittier
12J.	Ancient Languages and Linguistics	White Hill
12K.	Theoretical and Anthropological Approaches to the Near East	Tremont

6:45–11:00pm (EST) **ASOR 125th Anniversary Celebration (Grand Ballroom)**

After the academic program ends, we invite you to a celebratory evening of exceptional dining, entertainment, and ASOR-themed activities—all in honor of our 125th anniversary. Enjoy inspiring remarks from speakers who have been integral in shaping ASOR's mission.

Tickets are $100 and may be purchased here. **Discounted tickets** are available—please email info@asor.org for details.

Your presence will help make this milestone truly meaningful!

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Updated October 3, 2025

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 19, 2025 | 2:00-8:30pm (EST)

ASOR Registration Tables and Help Desk Open (Mezzanine Level)

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WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 19, 2025 | 7:00-8:30pm (EST)

Welcome to the Annual Meeting and Plenary Address (Grand Ballroom A)

The Middle East Cultural Heritage Crisis and Why It Matters

Timothy P. Harrison
Director of the Institute for the Study of Ancient Cultures (ISAC) and Professor of Near Eastern Archaeology at the University of Chicago

Cultural heritage is at risk now more than at any time in human history. More immediately, the cultural heritages of Middle Eastern communities are undergoing widespread devastation and destruction. The conflicts that have engulfed the Middle East have precipitated a scale of human suffering and dislocation that we have not witnessed since World War II, and the destruction of cultural heritage has played a devastating role in this tragedy, obliterating the cultural identities that have given meaning and a sense of place to communities, in many instances for millennia. This ongoing catastrophe has captivated global attention, galvanizing calls for the documentation and preservation of this threatened and disappearing heritage, perceived by many to represent a collective, global patrimony. Archaeological exploration, meanwhile, and more specifically, European and North American involvement in the archaeological exploration of the Middle East, is undergoing a profound and long overdue change. More specifically, traditional western scholarly involvement in the exploration and study of the archaeology and history of the Ancient Near East faces an existential crisis. Navigating this crisis will require a fundamental change in how we approach and conduct field research, if we are to participate meaningfully, constructively, and productively, in the transformation that is under way. This paper will appeal to the critical importance of this transformation, to the nature of our western participation and engagement with it, and to the prospects for a vibrant and fruitful east-west collaboration in the preservation, study, and celebration of this vital legacy of human history and culture.

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 19, 2025 | 7:00-8:30pm (EST)

Welcome Reception (Grand Ballroom B)

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 20, 2025 | 8:15am–10:20am (EST)

SESSION: 1A. Jerusalem and the Archaeology of a Sacred City I (Grand Ballroom A)

Chairs(s): Prof. Yuval Gadot, Department of Archaeology and Ancient Near Eastern Cultures, Tel-Aviv University; Dr. Yiftah Shalev, Israel Antiquities Authority

The Earliest Structures in Jerusalem: Insights from Recent Excavations at Khirbet es-Sauma's from the Early Chalcolithic Period

Ronit Lupu[1], Zinovi E. Matskeviz[1], Anna Eirikh-Rose[1]
[1] Israel Antiquities Authority

Recent excavations at Khirbet es-Sauma'a, northern Jerusalem have uncovered architectural remains of a single-period Early Chalcolithic settlement of exceptional preservation and significance. Two seasons of excavations were conducted by the authors, on behalf of the Israel Antiquities Authority in 2015-16 and 2024-25. During the first season two distinct structures were uncovered- one with substantial walls, preserved up to five courses high, and another featuring a pebble floor with integrated depressions, possibly designed for storage. In the second season, a well-defined structure with three adjacent rooms was identified, alongside walls that likely belong to an additional building. The walls were preserved up to four courses high. The structure exhibits a complex layout: one room features a stone-paved floor, another has a compacted earth floor, and the third one contains a small stones floor with a complete basalt bowl on it, and an installation adjacent to a partition wall. A special find within this installation consists of fragments of at least five perforated bone spatulas, with additional fragments recovered from other rooms. Typical Early Chalcolithic pottery vessels, lithic and grinding tools were found in situ on the floors of all rooms and adjacent to the structure, including storage jars embedded within living surfaces. This site is significant both for the exceptional preservation of its remains and the nature of its finds. The Early Chalcolithic period is a relatively recent addition to the archaeological records of the Jerusalem Highlands. This site and others provide a unique glance to numerous aspects of this timespan in this geographical area and in the Southern Levant as a whole.

A Unique Early Chalcolithic (5 millennium BC) Structure at Motza: Reconstructing a Sanctuary and Its Social Implication

Anna Eirikh-Rose[1], Roy Albag[2], Ronit Lupu[1], Zonivi E. Matskeviz[1]
[1] Israel Antiquities Authority, [2] Roy Albag Architecture

During the excavation at the site of Motza, near Jerusalem, a massive structure dating to the Early Chalcolithic period (5200-4500 BC) was discovered. The nature of the building's construction and the associated finds suggest its possible use as a sanctuary. This rectangular colonnaded structure features massive walls and is accessed from a courtyard with several installations. The construction plan includes pillars at the entrance, rows of columns, and benches. At least two stages of rebuilding can be identified, and a reconstruction proposal for the structure's different construction

phases will be presented during the conference. The assemblage linked to the structure includes unique finds such as a violin figurine (likely archaic type), a phallic figurine, a stone macehead, and an oil lamp, highlighting the structure's public and ritualistic significance. The building's architectural conception resembles contemporary structures but stands out due to its size, unique attributes, and an accumulation of special finds. Additionally, its design strongly resembles cultic buildings of subsequent periods (Late Chalcolithic-Ghassulian and Early Bronze Age). Based on the structural plan, the finds, and the incorporated installations, we argue that the structure at Motza functioned as a sanctuary and represents early evidence of the emerging "broad room" temples in the Southern Levant.

The Emergence and Development of the Oasis of En-Gedi during the Late Iron Age

Abraham Mashiach[1]
[1] The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

The expansion of the Kingdom of Judah into the arid regions of the Judean Desert during the late Iron Age (seventh–sixth centuries BCE) marks a significant turning point in the region's history, profoundly influencing the trajectory of human activity. Excavations at the En-Gedi oasis, on the western shore of the Dead Sea, indicate that this process began in the first half of the seventh century BCE with the construction of a platform site in a strategic location within the oasis. During this period, the Jerusalem-based Kingdom of Judah gained its initial foothold in the Judean Desert and initiated early activities in En-Gedi, likely driven by economic motives. This activity reached its peak in the second half of the seventh century BCE, with the establishment of a large administrative-industrial center in Stratum V at Tel Goren and increased activity in other oases of the Dead Sea Valley. This lecture will explore the interplay between Judah and the Judean Desert during the late Iron Age by presenting recent innovations in archaeological research of the oasis. It will suggest that En-Gedi was established during this period as a hub for the production of cash crops, in alignment with broader economic trends in Judah and the environs of Jerusalem during this period that indicate a transition toward a specialized regional economy.

The "Gibeon" Storage-Jar Handle Phenomenon: A New View from Jerusalem

David S. Vanderhooft[1]
[1] Boston College

The Incised "Gibeon" Jar Handles: A New View from Jerusalem Between 1956 and 1959, J.B. Pritchard excavated 61 jar handles incised with Hebrew characters, mostly from the water system at Gibeon/el-Jib. Another was accidentally recovered in 1973. In addition, 92 lmlk stamped-handles were recovered at the site. Excavations also demonstrated that Gibeon was a major wine production center in the 8th-7th centuries. Now, a new incised jar handle of the Gibeon type was published from excavations in Jerusalem. The handle was incised before firing with Hebrew characters, seven of which are preserved. The Jerusalem handle clearly preserves the name [גב]עון, "Gibeon," and originated at that site. The handle came from a Persian period fill whose latest pottery dates to the fourth century B.C.E. The present paper offers a reading of the new inscription with philological and paleographic analysis comparing it to the other 62 Gibeon jar inscriptions. It concludes with reflections on viticulture in the region to the north of Jerusalem during the seventh century, and a tentative reconstruction of the regional economic framework in which the jar circulated.

Branching Out: The Extension of Imperial Cultural Influence and Symbolism in Iron and Persian Period Jerusalem through the Lens of the Wood Economy

Dr. Yael Hochma[1]
[1] Tel Aviv University

The aim of this paper is to shed new light on the natural and cultural arboreal environs of Jerusalem and its surroundings during the Iron–Hellenistic periods (9th–2nd centuries BCE). The wood economy was an important part of the ancient world, as wood was used for virtually all aspects of daily life (e.g., fuel, construction, tool-making, and furniture) and at the same time was symbolically charged and a status marker. At the same time, we know very little about wood use as it rarely preserves or collected systematically during excavations. The study is based on over 5,000 wood charcoal samples from archaeological sites in and around Jerusalem including IAA sites (e.g., Area U in the City of David) and the renewed excavations at Ramat Rahel. Taxonomic identification was conducted using microscopic analysis. This study also integrates data from published and newly excavated materials from salvage excavations in Jerusalem, as well as previous periods in Jerusalem and Judah, allowing for long-term comparisons of environmental and economic trends in the region. The lecture will focus on symbolic choices made by the residents of Jerusalem and Ramat Rahel and discuss how they reflect cultural interactions with the Egyptian, Assyrian and Persian cultures.

SESSION: 1B. Recent Excavations at the Phoenician Colony of Cerro del Villar, Malaga, Spain (Grand Ballroom B)

Chairs(s): David Schloen, University of Chicago

Investigating the Phoenician Settlement of Cerro del Villar (Malaga, Spain): Research History and the Objectives and the Significance of Phoenician Presence in the Bay of Malaga in the Context of the Far Western Mediterranean

Jose Suárez Padilla[1]
[1] University of Malaga

The Phoenician settlement of Cerro del Villar was located on an ancient islet in the mouth of the Guadalhorce River, which flows into the Bay of Málaga on the south coast of Spain. The site was discovered in 1964 and a survey was carried out by Profs. Arribas and Arteaga of the University of Granada in 1966. Subsequently, Prof. María Eugenia Aubet of the Autonomous University of Barcelona conducted seven excavation campaigns at Cerro del Villar between1986 and 2003. She identified a previously unknown foundational horizon from the 8th century BCE and showed that the settlement lost prominence to the emerging walled city of Malaka (modern Málaga), which was founded on the mainland nearby in the 6th century BCE. Prof. Aubet confirmed the existence of a dense urban layout and studied a few dwellings and their internal organization in detail. In 2022 a new international research project was initiated at the site, partly funded by the Junta de Andalucía and led by the University of Málaga and the University of Chicago. The main objectives of this project are: (1) to understand the nature of the Phoenician colonial project in the Bay of Málaga; (2) to compare Cerro del Villar to other Phoenician colonies in the Iberian Peninsula and the western Mediterranean; and (3) to expand our knowledge of the chronology and phases of occupation of the settlement. The founding of Phoenician settlements in the Bay of Málaga from the 9th to 6th centuries BCE makes the research at Cerro del Villar an exceptional opportunity to answer these questions.

The Iron Age Pottery from Sector 13 at Cerro del Villar

Charles Wilson[1]
[1] University of Chicago

This presentation shares an overview of the Iron Age pottery and other significant artifacts recovered from the first three seasons of excavations of Sector 13 at Cerro del Villar (2022–2024) from an ongoing multi-year project conducted in the sector by the University of Chicago in collaboration with the University of Malaga. An eight-week study season will be conducted during the summer of 2025 to restore and document several storage jars from in-situ contexts, in addition to preparing plates of the diagnostic pottery and other significant artifacts from another 900 pottery pails. The documentation of these assemblages will be aided by an Artec 2 Spider 3D scanner, which will provide high tolerance scans of the artifacts for remote study. The presentation will focus, in the main, on a typological division of the attested pottery forms in addition to identifying parallel types found elsewhere at Cerro del Villar and throughout the western Mediterranean more generally. The overall goals of this study will be to situate the chronological horizon of the pottery assemblage—presently thought to be dominated by late 8th/7th century BCE forms—and to suggest contacts with other sites and regions throughout the Mediterranean.

Examining the Architectural Developments at Cerro del Villar with Digital Tools

Andrew Wright[1]
[1] University of Chicago

This paper examines the architectural developments of previous and current excavations at Cerro del Villar using digital archaeological tools. The renewed campaign conducted by the University of Malaga and University of Chicago uses cutting-edge digital methods, enhancing the ability to record and analyze spatial data together with recovered materials. The methods include GIS, magnetometry, RTK mapping, high-resolution photogrammetry, 3D modeling, and data management using the OCHRE research platform. With these tools, new and old data are integrated, resulting in a more complete picture of the ancient settlement. The results of the first three seasons of excavations in Sector 13 (2022–2024) are presented as a case study. The sector features multiple architectural phases and a destruction horizon, with distinct changes to the stone and adobe construction techniques and architectural layout over time.

Architecture and Space Use in the Western Phoenician World: Insights from Cerro del Villar

Samantha Suppes[1]
[1] University of Chicago

Recent discoveries at Cerro del Villar (Malaga, Spain) have shed new light on the Phoenician presence in the Western Mediterranean in the first millennium BCE. This presentation will analyze selected buildings and activity areas at the site in light of comparative data from sites in other parts of the western and central Mediterranean, examining architecture and construction techniques, spatial organization and assignment of functional spaces, and the role of various features and material culture. Data from the Eastern Mediterranean will also be examined to understand the continuity of traditions in the west and local adaptations. This examination will help us reconstruct daily life at Cerro del Villar and illuminate the site's role in the Phoenician diaspora.

SESSION: 1C. Cultural Heritage: Preservation, Presentation, and Management I (Georgian)

Chairs(s): Nour Munawar, University of Amsterdam

Introduction

Nour Munawar[1]
[1] University of Amsterdam

Community Engagement is the Key for Sustainable Cultural Heritage Preservation

Andy G. Vaughn[1], Darren Ashby[1], Ahmad Emrage[1], Jared Koller[1], Hanan Mullins[1]
[1] American Society of Overseas Research

While there is no one set of best practices, this paper highlights elements of successful community involvement and case studies of their successful implementation using ASOR Cultural Heritage Initiatives's experience in North Africa. Each case study (one each from Libya, Tunisia, and Mali) stresses how the scientific data—the outputs—would not be sustainable without community engagement—the key ingredient that leads to sustainable outcomes and lasting impacts. When communities are engaged, the heritage projects can move beyond the scientific production of data and move towards understanding of peoples and toward social cohesion. Those goals produce lasting impacts.

Heritage at Work for Living Together: The Case of the Temple of Baalshamin

Patrick M. Michel[1]
[1] University of Lausanne

In this lecture, we will present the past and current work of the "Collart-Palmyra" Project from the University of Lausanne - Switzerland. The latter enables the 3D restitution of the destroyed temple of Baalshamin and the dissemination of cultural and historical knowledge about Palmyra. Through workshops combining historical knowledge, new technologies and intangible heritage, the project strives to preserve and transmit the historical memory of a destroyed heritage. Working for and with local communities, mainly in the Azraq camp in Jordan, we include participants in the content creation process. In addition, and with a view to sustainability, we have developed a PET bottle recycling system for the Azraq camp FabLab, to produce filaments for 3D printing elements of this lost heritage. All these initiatives are aimed at preserving heritage and cultural memory, and building for the future by cultivating recognition of the value of other people's heritage, in a spirit of participation in the creation of an environment conducive to living together and peace. In this way, we hope to share our practices in the field around Syrian heritage and enrich our practice with the experiences shared during the session.

Ileret Footprint Project: Insights into Community Engagement in the Preservation of Prehistoric Heritage

Betty Karanja[1]
[1] National Museums of Kenya

The Ileret Footprint site, located in the northwestern region of Kenya, is a prehistoric site on a track of hominin fossil footprints preserved in the sediments. The project focused on the long-term preservation of the footprints dating back to approximately 1.5 million years ago. Its primary objective was to raise local awareness, engage the community, promote research, and develop tourism opportunities at this significant heritage site. Through scientific research, including excavations, 3D mapping, and comparative analysis with modern local inhabitants, the prints provided evidence for early human locomotion as well as group dynamics. This is a big contribution to the ongoing debates on the evolution of bipedalism in Homo erectus and a great addition to the story of Turkana Boy, who was also discovered in the Turkana Basin, sans his phalanges. The Ileret Footprint project was able to integrate a strong

community engagement component, recognizing the need for local participation in heritage preservation. Efforts focused on the development of an on-site interpretation center and in situ preservation of the footprints for access to both researchers, schoolchildren, and the broader public. Local youth were trained on skills in digital site monitoring, while local women groups were supported in adding value to their traditional cultural crafts, such as beadwork for economic empowerment. This presentation will highlight the project's innovative approach to nurturing local stewardship of prehistoric heritage.

From the Archaeological Evidence to the Local Community: (Re) building a Bridge

Marco Iamoni[1]
[1] University of Udine

The promotion and enhancement of cultural heritage are increasingly supported by archaeological projects due to their crucial role for the development of "good economic policies" as well as for their positive impact on the improvement of social life of local communities. This aspect is particularly relevant when archaeological investigations take place in regions where knowledge and awareness of local cultural and archaeological heritage are particularly low, often as a consequence of recent or historical instability, due to conflicts or events that have undermined the presence of institutions responsible for the care of the cultural heritage in the field. These situations have also resulted frequently in a fracture between the local communities and the surrounding local cultural environment. This paper discusses possible intervention methods through case studies in Southwest Asia, where archaeological research has been strongly committed to disseminating information about the ancient landscape and promoting archaeological heritage as key tools for fostering sustainable green economy practices. At the same time, this paper also examines the potential benefits of this intervention policy for the protection of archaeological heritage. In this way, the goal is to demonstrate that such activities are not merely ancillary components of an archaeological project but should instead be regarded as core elements of any archaeological research.

SESSION: 1D. Archaeology and Biblical Studies I (Arlington)

Chairs(s): Stephen Cook, Virginia Theological Seminary; Alison Acker Gruseke, Williams College

The Neo-Assyrian Empire and the Jerusalem Elite c.740-640 BCE: Emulation and Resistance

Shawn Zelig Aster[1]
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The recent discovery in Jerusalem of an Assyrian-period seal inscribed with the name "Joezer son of Hosaiah," and illustrated with an Assyrian apkallu figure, has raised questions of Assyrian influence among the Jerusalem elite. Together with this particular seal, other evidence for emulation of Assyrian art forms among the Jerusalem elite of this period, can be found in Winderbaum, "The Iconic Seals and Bullae of the Iron Age," 2015. The seals in question date to the period when Judah was an Assyrian vassal state (c. 734-640 BCE). The Assyrian illustrations on seals of office suggest that the holders of these seals were aware of the political meaning of these art forms in an Assyrian context. The use of Assyrian imagery on these seals might best be studied in the context of the typologies developed by anthropologists to categorize the behaviours of local elites under imperial domination, ranging from bolstering and complicity to resistance (Stark and Chance, "The Strategies of Provincials in Empires," 2012). Elsewhere (Aster, Reflections of Empire in Isaiah 1-39, 2017), I have argued that the Assyrians made great efforts to develop a sort of complicity among the elite of Judah, as they did among the elite of other kingdoms. This talk will build on the questions engaged by Lipschits, "The Changing Faces of Kingship in Judah," 2018 and Faust, The Neo-Assyrian Empire in the South-West., 2022, and will explore the extent to which the Assyrians were successful in this regard.

New Light: Interpreting the Louvre Codex Hammurabi Relief Based on Exodus 34:29–35

Takayoshi M. Oshima[1]
[1] Northeast Normal University

Exodus 34: 29–35 recounts how Moses's face shines when he is carrying the second set of stone tablets containing the Ten Commandments. The Hebrew Bible explains that his face emits light because he is speaking with YHWH, and his face continues radiating light while he repeats God's laws to the people of Israel. Generally speaking, insights from Assyriology are used to untangle problems in the Hebrew Bible. This paper proposes the opposite: using the Bible to interpret the Hammurabi stele. Since its discovery at Susa by the French Mission in the winter of 1901–1902, the Codex Hammurabi stele has drawn attention for its similarity with the Covenant Code (Ex 20:23–23:19). The relief the stele includes two male figures: an enthroned deity and a human worshipper, plus a set of laws inscribed underneath. The figures are conventionally identified as Shamash, the sun god and protector of justice, and Hammurabi. Iconographically speaking, however, the identity of Shamash is not unproblematic. Although his multi-horned headdress and rays of light emitting from each shoulder hint that he is the solar deity, his robe's surface lacks the woolen texture characteristic of divinity Mesopotamian glyptics. As a result, his garment has a human-like appearance. This paper first asks whether the well-accepted identifications of Shamash and Hammurabi are really secure, then argues that the enthroned male figure on the Louvre Stele could, like Moses in Exodus 34: 29– show only Hammurabi as the mediator of laws.

The World's First Murders: A Babylonian Background for the Biblical Story of Cain and Abel

Eckart Frahm[1]
[1] Yale University

The Primeval History, the Hebrew Bible's historical "prologue" in Genesis 1–11, is set in Mesopotamia; and the stories it tells, from the creation to the flood to the Tower of Babel, seem to draw on Mesopotamian literary texts such as the Babylonian Epic of Creation, the Gilgamesh Epic, and the epics of Adapa and Atrahasis. But there is one narrative in the Primeval History for which (except for the relatively unspecific motif of a conflict between farmers and shepherds) no Mesopotamian parallels have yet been found: the famous story of Cain and Abel in Genesis 4, which features the world's first murder(s). In my paper, I will tentatively suggest a Babylonian archetype for this story, set among some rather obscure Mesopotamian deities and undetected so far because the Biblical author(s) heavily transformed it. To support my argument, I will also deal with the question of what the Bible and Mesopotamian tradition, respectively, considered the world's first city and other aspects of the historical geography of the ancient Near East.

Tiglath-Pileser III at Haifa: A Neo-Assyrian Rock Relief Niche and Camp above Tell Abu Hawam

Stephen Compton [1]
[1] University of South Africa

In 1906, Count Eberhard von Mülinen documented a shallow quadrilateral niche 130 cm tall and 80 cm wide across its base (then tapering upward) carved into a rock cliff above Haifa. He theorized that it had been designed to store an object. However, its dimensions and site selection resemble Neo-Assyrian rock-relief niches and especially the 135 cm tall by 82 cm across its base (then tapering upward) Mila Mergi relief, the only known rock relief from Tiglath-Pileser III. This king's conquest and deportation of Galilee places him near or at Haifa (2 Kings 15:29; RINAP 1, nos. 21–22). Adjacent to the niche, Tell Abu Mudawwar, a potential Assyrian royal camp (Compton 2024), overlooked the ancient port city of Tell Abu Hawam. There, R. W. Hamilton found a destruction layer at the end of stratum III, attributed it to Shishak, and dated it 925 BCE. New excavations at the site under Jacqueline Balensi and an accompanying reevaluation of stratum III by María D. Herrera (1990; Herrera and Gomez 2004) redated its end to 750–725 BCE. Although the city's destruction was then attributed to a 759 BCE earthquake (Aznar, Balensi, and Herrera 2005), Tiglath-Pileser III's 732 BCE campaign better fits the dating, destruction, and subsequent depopulation. When von Mülinen later revisited the niche, he found that it had been attacked and a small piece freshly hacked from its panel. A local tradition of abusing the niche could have originated in response to an image of the invader and would explain its loss.

The Image of God as an Emblem of the Neo-Assyrian Empire

John T. Strong[1]
[1] Missouri State University

In this paper, I will argue that the ancient Near Eastern background for humankind as the image of God (Gen 1:26–28; 5:1–3; 9:6) is Neo-Assyrian stelae. This argument is a narrowing of the oft proposed thesis that the image motif was in some way a democratization of Mesopotamian royal ideology. The specifying of Neo-Assyrian stelae as the referent of the image of God will be justified on the basis of the following: 1) arguments for pairing of the image of God motif in Gen 1 with the Babel Story (Gen 11:1–9), which would have alerted the ancient reader to the memory of Assyrian-Babylonian imperial authority. 2) The language of Gen 1:26–28, certainly ṣelem, a cognate of Akkadian ṣalmu, but especially the apparent intentional pairing of ṣelem with demûṯ by the ancient priestly authors, which I will claim was written as a subversive allusion to Neo-Assyrian stelae (cf., Ashurnasirpal II's "Nimrud Monolith"). A discussion of the commands to "have dominion" and "subdue" the earth will also be taken up under this second point. The paper will conclude with several significant implications of this narrower view of the image of God, most significant of which is that the priestly authors intended neither to define the nature of humankind nor assign them a particular role in creation, but rather to identify united humankind as an emblem of empire, for the very purpose of having it destroyed in the Babel Story.

SESSION: 1E. Archaeology of Jordan I: 2025 Field Season Reports and Excavation Analysis (Berkeley & Clarendon)

Chairs(s): Monique Roddy, Walla Walla University; Craig Tyson, Deyouville; and Stephanie Selover, University of Washington

THS, Here We Go Again : Renewed Work at Early Bronze Age Tall al Handaquq South

Natalia M. Handziuk[1], Hannah Erftenbeck[1], Meredith S. Chesson[1]
[1] University of Notre Dame

As one of the largest known Early Bronze Age (EBA, 3800-2000 BCE) sites in the southern Levant, Tall al-Handaquq South (THS) plays a key role in our understanding of the emergence, resilience, and ultimate demise of the earliest cities in the region. THS sits at the mouth of Wadi Zarqa, at the nexus of the Jordan Valley and the eastern highlands. Extensive architectural remains visible on the surface, including substantial fortification walls, attest to the size and scale of this large EBA settlement. Excavations in the 1990's exposed a well-preserved residential complex, contributing significantly to our understanding of people's everyday lives during the EB III period. We present the ongoing publication effort of the 1993-1996 campaigns, and renewed work at the THS. During the 2025 season we conducted a 'catch and release' survey, mapped new threats to and development on the site and documented the visible architecture. The primary aim of our season was to assess the extent of and preservation of surface architecture and artifacts in preparation for renewed excavations.

Layers on the Landscape: New Insights from the 2025 Season of the Khirbat al-Mukhayyat Archaeological Project

Andrew J. Danielson[1], Debra Foran[2], Grant Ginson[3], Vera Dolezalkova[4], Stanley G. Klassen[5], Roselyn A. "Rose" Campbell[6], Heidi Fessler[7], Nadia Ben-Marzouk[7]
[1] Harvard University, [2] Wilfrid Laurier University, [3] Trent University, [5] University of Toronto, [6] University of California, Los Angeles, [7] Loyola Marymount University

The Town of Nebo/Khirbat al-Mukhayyat Archaeological Project investigates the site of Khirbat al-Mukhayyat and its surrounding landscape to explore long-term patterns of settlement, economy, and ritual activity in west-central Jordan. This site and region are located approximately 6 km northwest and west of Madaba, in a region connecting the highland plateau to the Jordan Valley. This region evidences significant activity during the Early Bronze Age, Iron Age, Hellenistic, and Byzantine and Islamic periods. This presentation highlights the results of the 2025 field season of the Khirbat al-Mukhayyat Archaeological Project, specifically focusing on the Iron Age remains at Mukhayyat, and the Early Bronze and Iron Age remains from the surrounding landscape. Through this overview of the preliminary results of the season's fieldwork, the current state of archaeological work in this region for these periods is presented, together with prospects for future research.

The 2025 Survey Season at Humayma, Jordan (Nabataean Hawara, Roman Hauarra)

Craig A. Harvey[1], Sarah E. Wenner[2], Amanda Hardman[1]
[1] University of Alberta, [2] Cincinnati Art Museum

The archaeological site of Humayma is located in southern Jordan, approximately equidistant between Petra and Aqaba. Over the past four decades, excavations and surveys at the site by teams from the University of Victoria and Queen's University have revealed much about the history and character of Humayma, which was founded by the Nabataeans and thrived into the early Islamic Period. Summer 2025 marked the renewal of intensive archaeological investigation at Humayma after a 10-year hiatus as well as the first season of survey work at the site by a team from the University of Alberta. The focus of this renewed work included the digital documentation of the site, the mapping of its features, a detailed assessment of damage and risks to its remains, and the analysis of previously excavated material. Medium-term project goals include the creation of a high-resolution map of Humayma, as well as a more comprehensive understanding of how inhabitants of this ancient site and its environs exploited local resources and contributed to the regional economy. This paper presents the initial results of the 2025 season while also outlining the plans and goals of future work at the site in the coming years.

Communities in Transition: Exploring the Relationship between Secular and Religious Settlements at Khirbat al-Mukhayyat during the Byzantine Period

Debra Foran[1], Andrew Danielson[2], Grant Ginson[3], Vera Dolezalkova[4], Stanley G. Klassen[5], Roselyn A. "Rose" Campbell[6], Heidi Fessler[7], Nadia Ben-Marzouk[7]

[1] Wilfrid Laurier University, [2] Harvard University, [3] Trent University, [4] Charles University, [5] University of Toronto, [6] University of California, Los Angeles, [7] Loyola Marymount University

From the 5th through the 8th centuries, the Mount Nebo region became the home of numerous religious and secular communities. The region surrounding the Memorial of Moses on Mount Nebo was dotted with both ascetic and communal monasteries that were interspersed with larger urban centres and smaller rural villages. By focusing on the results of the 2025 field season of the Town of Nebo/Khirbat al-Mukhayyat Archaeological Project, this paper will explore how these different communities may have interacted with and benefitted from each other. The Byzantine village at Mukhayyat is located on the eastern slopes of the site and not on the tell itself. The Church of Amos and Kasiseus, located within the village, likely served as the community's primary place of worship. On a ridge immediately to the east, overlooking the Byzantine village, is a small monastery (now called the Monastery of al-Kanisah) that was probably used by a number of hermit monks living in the surrounding valleys. The Byzantine inhabitants of Mukhayyat chose to settle in an area that was physically close to the local monastery. Was the location of the monastery a factor in this decision? An examination of Mukhayyat's Byzantine village and other installations in the surrounding area will hopefully shed light on the relationship between communities.

SESSION: 1F. The Robot at the Back of the Classroom: Student Engagement and Assessment under the Shadow of Generative AI (Workshop) (Studio 1)

Chairs(s): M. Wilis Monroe, University of New Brunswick; Emily Hammer, University of Pennsylvania

Beyond Generative AI: Strategies for Cultivating Authentic Student Engagement in the Classroom

Oya Topçuoğlu[1]

[1] Northwestern University

Feedback from students and educators, along with initiatives like NextGenAI, OpenAI's $50M investment "dedicated to using AI to transform education" have made it clear that Generative AI (GAI) is not only here to stay but also on the way to becoming an integral part of higher education. As educators, we face a critical decision: Should we ban the use of GAI tools entirely in our courses (and likely see such efforts fail), allow students to use it in limited and controlled ways, or find ways to work around it rather than against it? This brief presentation focuses on the latter approach and showcases the changes I have made to my assessment strategies and assignments for two courses at Northwestern's Middle East and North African Studies Program, one on the city of Babylon and its modern legacy, and the other on looting and trafficking of antiquities in the Middle East. This paper will walk us through the midterm and final assignments in these undergraduate courses and show how moving away from traditional assignment types and assessment methods in favor of projects that are relevant, engaging, and flexible like group work, presentations, and mini-exhibits can reduce the appeal of GAI as an easy shortcut for students, and encourage them to be more invested and engaged in our courses.

Playing the Prisoner's Dilemma with a Robot: Prompt-injection and Maintaining Honesty in Assessment Design

M. Willis Monroe[1]

[1] University of New Brunswick

As of 2025 there is no objective way to detect whether a piece of writing has been created by generative AI (LLMs, e.g. ChatGPT etc...). There are of course subjective hints and tells that incline an instructor to suspecting student writing, however there is no objective method of proof. However, by modifying the materials that students use to write their assignments, erroneous details can be added to content that are invisible to the normal eye but attract the attention of generative AIs. This technique exists in a moral grey-zone but is effective at catching lazy students who use generative AI to write their assignments and never proofread. This talk will go into the method, ethics, and wider questions about how we incentive the real work of the classroom when expecting students to do critical writing assignments in courses focused on the Ancient Near East.

The Old is New Again: Incorporating Oral Assessments into Introductory Archaeology and History Classes in the Age of Generative AI

Emily Hammer[1]

[1] University of Pennsylvania

Since the introduction and improvement of generative AI tools, humanities and humanistic social science instructors have universally struggled with 1) how to accurately assess student skills and engagement (rather than ability to prompt generative AI tools) and 2) how to maintain the centrality of writing in university courses. In my contribution to this workshop, I hope to initiate discussion of how oral assessment can support these goals in introductory archaeology and history classes and even increase student investment in such courses. Once common in academia, oral assessments fell out of fashion in North America, but they should once again take a central place in our pedagogical toolkit. I will share my own recent experiences with oral assessment of undergraduate students in archaeology and ancient history classes at the University of Pennsylvania, including design of these assessments, grading considerations, and ways of overcoming the logistical challenges of carrying them out with larger class sizes.

Archaeogaming Education to Increase Undergraduate Student Engagement

David Danzig[1], Paige E. Brevick[2]

[1] New York University, [2] University College London

Ancient studies examines humanity's deep roots in the global past, helping students and the general public understand ourselves in the context of the rich long history of human societies. However, ancient studies courses seem increasingly unappealing to students, as they mainly only take such courses toward requirements, while pursuing other, employment-focused degrees. The challenge of student engagement is compounded by a lack of exciting teaching materials. Save Ancient Studies Alliance's (SASA) "Archaeogaming Education Program" utilizes the concept of "archaeogaming," the use of exciting recreational video games for educational purposes, to create Open Educational Resources that help educators at underserved institutions engage their students. Building off successes of SASA's Archaeogaming Education Modules (AEMs) for middle school education, SASA is working to produce two AEMs for undergraduate introductory courses in World History I, Western Civilization I, and Art History I, with funding from the National Endowment for the Humanities. This work is undertaken in partnership with professors at California State University - Stanislaus, Cisco College, and Salish Kootenai College, who advise on and will trial the AEMs in their courses in Fall 2025. AEMs are co-curricular bundles that support single classes, centered around topical videos crafted with commercial video game footage, with supporting materials. Intended for use in synchronous and

asynchronous courses, the AEMs are sympatico with major textbooks and are supplied as digital packages compatible with common learning management systems. This presentation will describe our progress to date and discuss the untapped value of culling from popular entertainment for historical education.

Humanist Learning and Artificial Intelligences: Critical Literacies for Digital Worlds (Virtual)

Christine Johnston[1]
[1] Western Washington University

Shifting technological landscapes have been shaping the epistemologies, methods, and workflows of historians and archaeologists for more than a century. From the introduction of the camera to the digital and digitizing turns of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, new technologies have impacted on our documentation, knowledge production, and knowledge sharing practices. Yet these technologies and their impacts have not always been subject to reflexive interrogation within our disciplines, particularly outside of digital humanities-focused scholarship and classrooms. As AI technologies—especially generative AI—have become accessible to a wider public, there has been a wave of concern among educators around student learning outcomes and academic honesty. However, this moment also offers an opportunity. As with the introduction of the personal computer and the internet before it, our rapidly reforming digital reality invites reflexive dialogue around data and methods from humanist and social scientist perspectives that can serve to foster critical learning outcomes. Using case studies drawn from history, archaeology, and anthropology, this paper will outline three AI literacy-focused learning objectives for humanities and social sciences students: understand the development of computational models and algorithmic reasoning and their applications in the study of the past; identify and analyze the impact of taxonomic frameworks and data training inputs on algorithmic outputs; and critically evaluate the ethical and environmental impacts of algorithmic reasoning and AI technologies, especially in relation to AI bias, data sovereignty, and cultural heritage. These learning objectives aim to cultivate core disciplinary competencies while fostering critical thinking and AI literacy.

How Does Artificial Intelligence (AI) Shape the Archaeologists' Community? Digging Deeper with AI

Yaroub Al Obaidi[1]
[1] Duquesne University

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is transforming archaeology, sparking both enthusiasm and skepticism. While some scholars embrace AI for automation, data analysis, and predictive modeling, others express ethical concerns, citing biases and the risks of over-reliance on computational interpretations. This paper investigates how AI is perceived within the archaeological community, examining the factors influencing acceptance or resistance. Methodologically, this study employs comparative discourse analysis, synthesizing perspectives from scholarly publications, conference proceedings, and professional forums. It evaluates case studies where AI has been integrated into archaeological research, assessing its impact on data interpretation, fieldwork efficiency, and epistemological debates. Additionally, this study applies Davis's argument on semantic consistency in AI discourse and considers McLuhan's concept that "the medium is the message" to analyze how AI is introduced and communicated within the field. By identifying shared concerns and contrasting viewpoints, this research develops a framework for engaging AI in a way that respects both technological advancement and ethical considerations. The findings contribute to ongoing discussions on AI's role in archaeology, advocating for interdisciplinary dialogue and policy recommendations that acknowledge diverse perspectives. This study highlights the necessity of methodological reflexivity in AI adoption, ensuring that its integration enhances, rather than disrupts, archaeological inquiry. As a case study I will examine the exhibition (A Dog Walked into A Tavern) at Duquesne University, A visual interpretation of Sumerian Joke. Using Artist's practice and Artificial Intelligence applications to prompt a deeper understanding.

SESSION: 1G. Landscapes of Settlement in the Ancient Near East (Studio 2)

Chairs(s): George Pierce, Brigham Young University

Comparing the Early Bronze Age Land Use Patterns: An Agent-based Modeling Approach from Anatolia

Bulent Arikan[1]
[1] Istanbul Technical University

Land use patterns of archaeological societies vary significantly for a whole host of reasons. Under paleoclimatic changes, land use patterns may shift in order to adapt to new conditions. However, these newly adapted land use methods may cause problems on their own, leading to unique anthropogenic impacts. Early Bronze Age in Anatolia (ca. 3200-2000 BC) represents a critical phase when regional polities formed and land use patterns began to intensify. This was also the time when the environmental conditions of the Middle Holocene (ca. 6200-2200 BC) went through episodic oscillations (e.g., 8.2, 5.9, and 4.2 ka events). Against this dynamic socio-ecological context, this presentation will compare Early Bronze Age societies at various regions of Anatolia through agent-based modeling. MedLanD Modeling Library (MML) is an agent-based modeling (ABM) platform that is integrated with the geographical information systems (GIS). This high resolution ABM allows to test various scenarios related to environmental and climatic conditions, population density, and land use intensity. Scenarios will be tested at archaeological sites across Anatolia to assess how the inhabitants responded to local conditions and how these responses led to unique environmental changes (i.e., changes in biodiversity and erosion-deposition patterns) through time. Understanding human decision making under environmental stress and assessing the long-term implications of these adaptive behaviors carry significance in anthropological archaeology as ABM has the potential to reveal processes for the end results that we observe in archaeological record.

Past the Kızılırmak: Settlement Patterns in Middle Bronze Age South Central Anatolia

Anna Berlekamp[1]
[1] University of Chicago

The early second millennium on Anatolia's central plateau is best known as the time of the Old Assyrian Trade Network. Accordingly, scholarly understanding of the central plateau has focused, both textually and archaeologically, on the area within the Kızılırmak river that was part of this trade network, particularly at the site of Kanesh, modern Kültepe. But this domination of sources pertaining to the Old Assyrian Trade network has excluded the southwestern half of the central plateau from larger narratives about socio-political organization and increasing territorialization by creating an artificial boundary dividing the two regions. This paper utilizes the numerous surveys conducted over the last seventy years throughout South Central Anatolia to begin to address these questions by exploring settlement patterns on the central plateau west of the Kızılırmak and, through this, building an understanding of socio-political organization on the plateau as a whole. By expanding the narrative geographically, this study has important implications for discussions regarding the major shift in socio-political organization at the end of the Middle Bronze Age due to the emergence of the

Hittite state with an emphasis of political integration over larger territorial areas than previously seen in Anatolia.

Beyond the Walls: Extramural Urban Activities in the Bronze and Iron Age Southern Levant

Daniel Finn[1], Yosef Garfinkel[1]
[1] Hebrew University

Urban centers in the Southern Levant have long been studied for their political, administrative, and economic functions. This focus has reinforced a rigid urban-rural dichotomy, often treating walled centers as isolated entities distinct from their surrounding landscapes. Consequently, the lack of systematic excavation beyond city walls has left a significant gap in our understanding of past urban life. This study challenges the traditional urban-rural dichotomy by demonstrating that extramural zones functioned not as marginal spaces but as extensions of economic, ritual, and social life. Drawing on previously overlooked archival documentation and a long history of excavations, we use Tel Lachish as a case study to categorize extramural activities and illustrate their broader implications. By applying this model to other urban centers, we reveal the complex interactions between urban cores and their peripheries, blurring conventional boundaries between city and countryside. These findings underscore the essential role of peripheral spaces in sustaining urban life, offering a revised framework for understanding the spatial organization of fortified cities in the Ancient Near East.

The Chronology of Gaza in the Amarna Letters

Francesco Ignazio De Magistris[1]
[1] University of Lausanne

The internal chronology of the corpus of letters from Tell el-Amarna remains a subject of debate. These texts offer an unparalleled window into the history and politics of the Near East in the fourteenth century BC, while also shedding light on the structure of Egyptian governance in the Levant. The Pharaonic centres of Gaza, Beth-Shean, Kumidi, and Sumur played a crucial role in maintaining the Egyptian influence, and oversaw the local city-states through a long line of commissioners looking after Egyptian interests. Among these administrative hubs, Gaza emerge sas the most extensively documented: twenty-two letters were written in the city, and twenty-six reference one of its five commissioners. Despite this prominence, however, the chronology of the Gaza-related letters – and, by extension, the sequence of events they record – remains poorly defined. Without a clear framework for dating these texts, our understanding of Egypt's administrative policies, regional control strategies, and interactions with local rulers remains incomplete. This presentation will undertake a systematic analysis of the letters linked to Gaza, reconstructing their internal chronology and refining the historical context surrounding the centre's role in the Amarna system. By reassessing textual, diplomatic, and prosopographical evidence, this study aims to clarify Gaza's function within the broader framework of Egyptian administration in the Levant, offering fresh insights into how Egypt exercised and adapted its imperial authority.

Crowds or Crickets? Urban Density in Tel en-Naṣbeh and the Southern Levant

Michael I. Leff[1]
[1] University of Texas, Austin

This study presents a refined methodological framework for assessing urban density in Southern Levantine urban centers during the Iron Age and Persian Period, using Tel en-Naṣbeh—a prominent regional administrative and economic center—as a case study. Reconstructing population density in ancient Near Eastern urban centers poses significant challenges, including accounting for household composition, habitation patterns, and the limited scope of archaeological excavations. This challenge is particularly pronounced for Southern Levantine sites, which are often bereft of textual data. Additionally, the existing methodological framework for Southern Levantine sites remains largely isolated from innovations in Mesopotamian urban landscape analysis. Drawing on comparative Mesopotamian data, including the Harran Census, alongside additional demographic datasets, this research demonstrates significant diachronic and synchronic variations in urban density that necessitate moving beyond simplistic density coefficients. The study offers robust insights into Southern Levantine demographic reconstruction in urban centers. Moreover, it establishes a broadly applicable framework to guide future investigations into the multifaceted nature of ancient Near Eastern urban density patterns and their implications for the study of ancient Near Eastern history and demography.

SESSION: 1H. Gender in the Ancient Near East I (The Loft)

Chairs(s): Avary Taylor, Yale University; Kelsie Ehalt, University of Michigan

I Knead to Know: An Analysis of Anthropomorphic New Kingdom Vessels

Morgan Moroney[1]
[1] Brooklyn Museum of Art

During the Egyptian New Kingdom several types of anthropomorphic vases and flasks appeared in the material record. These vessels took several forms, including ceramic kneeling women, flasks with human heads, and calcite containers in the shape of pregnant women. Most of these pots, particularly "breast milk" jars, are often interpreted as depicting Egyptians. However, many if not most of these anthropomorphic vessels seem to portray an individual who is "other" within the typical artistic framework of Egyptian human figural forms, including foreign, semi-divine, and androgynous individuals. These vessels are also often siloed as having solely magico-medical functions related to women's health. This talk aims to reinvestigate these various vessels' iconography and functions and to question the binary that is often imposed on interpretations of figures in Egyptian art. This will include cross-comparisons of types and mediums, analyses of the limited excavated corpus, and the tracing of possible artistic and production systems. It will look to complicate the functions and identities of these figural vessels and ask further inquiries about their makers and manufacturing location(s). It will also consider what roles gender and identity might have played when Egyptians created versions of themselves and the other in their material culture.

Seth, Intimidator of the Womb? Revisiting the Spells against Miscarriages in P. London 10059

Lingxin Zhang[1]
[1] Georgetown University

This talk examines the claim that Seth is the intimidator and regulator of the womb via a close reading of the chapter on miscarriages in P. London 10059—a hieratic medical treatise from New Kingdom, Egypt. Contrary to previous scholarship, I contextualize this chapter within the tradition of knot amulets, ivory wands, and New Kingdom textual evidence of birth magic. My investigation demonstrates that Seth/Sethian animals may play a positive role in birth magic, but not through intimidation. Previously, R. Ritner connected the chapter on miscarriage in P. London 10059 with the Roman "uterine amulets" to contend that Seth's association with rape, abortions, and general harm towards pregnant women, makes him a suitable candidate to threaten the disobedient womb into compliance so as to cure any womb-related diseases. The proposed modus operandi presents Seth as the regulator of the womb, commanding its opening and closing. Should the womb

disobey, Seth will attack. Recently, E. Tsatsou has revisited an earlier argument that deems the "uterine amulets" part of erotic magic. Tsatsou supports her interpretation by proposing new readings for the voces magicae and highlighting the solar aspect of the amulets' iconography. Following Tsatsou's suggestion, Seth's presence on the "uterine amulets" is best understood as evoking the deity's unrestrained sexuality as opposed to showing him as the "Master of the Womb." My research complements Tsatsou's investigation to further dispel this misidentification.

Jesus and Prostitutes in Luke's Gospel: A Christian Innovation or an Established Social Convention?

Rebecca Denova[1]
[1] University of Pittsburgh

Beginning with Mark 2, we have the Pharisees' criticism that Jesus "ate with sinners and tax-collectors," although neither group was defined. Luke's gospel added to the story by specifically including prostitutes and objections to these women by Pharisees at these meals. This resulted in the Christian claim that Jesus instituted "table-fellowship," an innovation that upended traditional social conventions and elimination of the purity/impurity concepts in the book of Leviticus. The concept of "table fellowship" misreads the purity/impurity concepts of Leviticus. Prostitution per se, eating with prostitutes, eating with Gentiles (who may have been the "tax collectors") and eating with women in general did not involve the risk of impure contamination from proximity to women, prostitutes, or Gentiles. We have evidence that Jews and Gentiles (men and women) consistently shared meals and living space throughout antiquity. In relation to Judaism, however, prostitutes, women, and Gentiles were polemically portrayed at the lower end of class structures utilizing cultural stereotypes. What Luke emphasized was the elimination of ethnic identity differences that included gender roles and class structures in his views of "eschatological Israel." But this was not a Christian innovation. The prophets of Israel had predicted that when God manifested his kingdom on earth, all believers, men and women, Jews, and some Gentiles would constitute the kingdom.

Defining Models of Female Agency in the Mortuary Complex of Mentuhotep II (Deir el-Bahari, Thebes) (Virtual)

Antonio J. Morales[1]
[1] University of Alcala

The excavations of Édouard Naville (1903-1907) and Herbert Winlock (1920-1931) at Deir el-Bahari revealed the presence of an exceptional assemblage of female burials in the funerary temple of Mentuhotep II. They were disposed in four clusters: rear area of the upper colonnaded hall, western and northern areas of the main hall, and northern triangular court. Altogether, the royal complex sheltered a group of thirty women whose interments denote different origins and status. In the Egyptological literature, two women were accurately presented as "royal wives" (Neferu, Tem), while scholars did not agree in the raison-d'etrê for the privilege of the other women to be buried therein. The existence of multiple titles related to these women has encouraged Egyptologists to propose numerous interpretations and translations, including "concubine", "musician", "priestess", "cultic wife", and even "(unchosen) candidate for royal marriage". After summarising previous investigations on the groups (i.a. Winlock, Ward, Gillen, Sabbahy, Roehrig), I shall focus on new avenues of research by reassessing the role of these female members of the elite. Thus, it aims at presenting an elaborated interpretation that takes into consideration not only the complex dynamics of court politics and religion, but also the history of the local cults in the area, especially the patronage of Hathor therein. The existence of a revered worship to the goddess in this particular quarter of Western Thebes and the incorporation of traditional aspects of this cult into Mentuhotep's ideological apparatus should contribute to the clarification of the various models of agency attested here.

Performing Gender and Status in the Hittite Court: Differentiating between the King and Queen in Festivals (Virtual)

Michael Moore[1]
[1] Brevard College

This paper takes as its point of departure a discussion of the Fraktin relief and the reliefs from Alaça Höyük within the context of the Hittite festival corpus. Hittite kings and queens were the primary participants in many of the major festivals pertaining to the state cult. These festivals were a stage for the performance of identity and status, displayed and reinforced through spatial positioning, dress, gestures and behavior, and the quantity, quality, and distribution of food and drink. Actions of the king and queen in festivals, such as breaking bread, washing hands, and drinking to the gods, were often virtually identical. There are, however, subtle but significant behavioral differences. Variations include but are not limited to the ritual items and implements used in ceremonies, such as a spear given to the king but not the queen, and the order in which the king and queen perform actions, with the king almost invariably performing an action first. Though the Fraktin relief depicts the king and queen performing identical acts of libation, for example, the king bears a bow while the queen does not. Through a differentiation of the ritual dress, gestures, and behavior of the Hittite king and queen, particularly as reflected in monumental and glyptic art, I seek to provide a fuller understanding of the means by which gender and status were displayed, reinforced, and contested in state-sponsored ceremonies.

SESSION: 1I. New Perspectives on Hellenistic Idumea (Whittier)

Chairs(s): Adi Erlich, University of Haifa; Ian Stern, University of Haifa

Niches, Altars, and Betyls Carved in Stone: Liminality, Protection, and Devotion in the Subterranean Complexes of Maresha

Ian Stern[1]
[1] University of Haifa

Among the 152 complexes identified at Maresha, 40 feature symbolic elements intricately carved into the chalk bedrock walls. The analysis uncovers 47 cultic niches, 25 reliefs, 23 betyls, 12 altars, and a single herm. Notably, the most intriguing engravings consist of box-like frames containing dots and lines, referred to as betyls. Although the significance of these framed symbols remains unclear, they closely resemble aniconic designs found on stones, steles, and reliefs throughout the Levant. The intentional placement of these symbols, particularly at entrances, corridors, and staircases, suggests a strategic purpose. The deities associated with the Mareshan betyls remain unidentified, highlighting similar challenges encountered in recognizing betyls within the archaeological context of Petra. Additionally, there is considerable uncertainty regarding the identification of Idumean religious practices, particularly concerning the representation of their principal deity, Qos. Furthermore, archaeological findings at Maresha indicate the presence of anthropomorphic and semi-anthropomorphic forms; however, reliance on aniconic cult images underscores a broader trend of aniconism in the ancient Near East. Despite the challenges of associating specific deities with distinct aniconic representations, the widespread occurrence of enigmatic betyls within the subterranean complexes of Maresha suggests a shared symbolic language.

New Insights on the Development of Maresha from the Tel to the Lower City

Adi Erlich[1], Vladimir Lehem[1]
[1] University of Haifa

Maresha, the main city of Idumea in the Judean Shephelah, flourished in the Persian and Hellenistic periods until its destruction by the end of the 2nd century BCE. The site comprises Tel Maresha, also called the upper city, and the lower city surrounding the Tel and surrounded by clusters of burial caves. Kloner's excavations of Maresha in the years 1985-2000 are currently being processed for publication, and new data is now available on the expansion process of the city and its chronology. The Northwestern tower of the upper city in upper area 100 can now be dated by the pottery in its foundations to the first quarter of the 2nd century. The commercial insula in Lower Area 100, at the foot of the tower, was established according to the pottery and coins in the first half of the 2nd century BCE, probably slightly after constructing the fortification. South of the Tell, the shrine at area 800 and its surroundings show activity already in the 3rd century BCE; the nearby houses of area 53 were erected no earlier than the 2nd century BCE. Seven subterranean complexes in the lower city cut through or replaced earlier tombs. The evidence from different parts of the city points to a significant city growth in the early 2nd century BCE, under the Seleucid rule. We shall examine the evidence and draw a complex picture of the city's development.

Divination in Maresha

Peter Zilberg[1], Esther Eshel[1]
[1] Bar Ilan University

The divinatory texts from Maresha are a unique corpus of 127 Aramaic ostraca dated to Third and Second centuries BCE. The corpus provides a glimpse into various divinatory practices in Idumea, allowing scholars to better understand the local process of extispicy, augury and cleromancy. The supranatural world which is presented in the ostraca comprises of local deities such as Qôs, West-Semitic deities such as Ba'alshamin and Mesopotamian deities such as Nanāya, together with various mentions of demons and protective spirits. Furthermore, the language and content of the Maresha divinatory corpus displays a close affinity with Mesopotamian omen literature and later magical corpora, such as the Aramaic Incantation Bowls. The lecture wishes to concentrate on the language and content of the corpus and present an analysis of the divinatory elements and techniques used in Maresha during this period, in light of the broader Ancient Near Eastern context. The lecture will closely examine magical and divinatory formulas in the corpus from Maresha, which have parallels in Cuneiform texts and Incantation bowls.

Newcomers in Maresha: Epigraphic Evidence of Greek Settlement in Maresha

Avner Ecker[1]
[1] The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

Maresha, a prominent urban center in the Hellenistic southern Levant, presents a bilingual Greek and Aramaic epigraphic corpus of over 1,000 inscriptions, including ostraca, epitaphs, graffiti, and formal inscriptions on stone. This study examines the linguistic and onomastic patterns within this corpus to identify traces of Greek immigration and cultural interaction. While local naming traditions, particularly those incorporating the theophoric element Qos, reveal indigenous identities, some Greek names—though widely adopted by locals—stand out as rare and geographically specific to certain regions of the Aegean and the Greek world. These names strongly suggest the presence of newcomers, likely Greek immigrants, who were part of the broader phenomenon of Hellenistic migration. Further supporting this interpretation, Greek religious formulae inscribed on altars indicate the introduction of imported cultic practices. This epigraphic evidence aligns with the broader dichotomy observed in Maresha's art and architecture, reflecting the coexistence of local and foreign traditions. By examining these inscriptions in the context of cultural exchange, this research sheds light on the processes of acculturation and urban transformation in Maresha during the second and third centuries BCE.

The Maresha Archive of Hellenistic Sealings

Boris Chrubasik[1], Donald T. Ariel[2]
[1] University of Toronto, [2] Israel Antiquities Authority

In 2018, a private archive was discovered during excavations at the site of Hellenistic Maresha, the most cosmopolitan city of Idumea. Maresha had especially thrived in the second century BCE, until it was overrun by Judean forces, towards the end of that century. This archive was located in a small room on the hewn basement level of a spacious residence. Perhaps a few hundred documents were stored there. After Maresha's abandonment, over time, the papyrus documents disintegrated. What remained were over 1,026 sealings, products of the application of the personal seals of the proprietor (upstairs) and the of the sealings of the individuals who contracted with him—to protect the documents from tampering. Despite their small size, the iconographic depictions, the choices of iconography, and the inscriptions provide significant insight into the social and economic life at Maresha, and the inhabitants' interactions with the world around them. This paper will introduce the unpublished Maresha archive, place the surviving seal impressions within their archaeological context and offer thoughtful interpretations. More broadly, the impressions will be discussed in relation to sealings from other archives from the Levantine coast and to other iconographic expressions elsewhere in Maresha. We shall offer tentative reflections on the cultural choices made by the purchasers of the seals and trace the impact of empire on those whose sealed documents were deposited in this local archive and—by extension—other residents of the town who were also impacted by the contents of the archive's records.

SESSION: 1J. Africa in the Ancient World I (White Hill)

Chairs(s): Brenda J. Baker, Arizona State University; Michele R. Buzon, Purdue University

60 Years of Sudan Archaeology: Modern Readings, Ancient Roots (Virtual)

Abdelmonim Babiker[1]
[1] International University of Africa

This topic will present selected readings on Sudan Archaeology. The topics chosen for this presentation are of pioneering works and writings on Sudan Archaeology in different periods of time(1960s-2020s), aiming to help readers be close to those pioneering authors and to their works written in different languages and in different periods of the Archaeological Research in both fields of Archaeology of Sudan (theory and practice). The paper will highlight examples reviewing some of these pioneering articles to present their highly esteemed contributions in representing the Sudanese Identity. Among those will be the articles of both Sudanese and non-Sudanese writers.

Middle Kingdom Seal Impressions from Elephantine Island

Katherine Consola[1]
[1] University of California, Santa Barbara

Though seals in ancient Egypt could be used in a variety of administrative and religious contexts, there is a significant expansion of the administrative sealing system during the Middle Kingdom. This study examines sealing practices from the late Middle Kingdom in a domestic environment. This corpus of previously unpublished seal impressions was excavated on Elephantine Island by the German Archaeological Institute (DAI) project "Realities of Life"

(RoL). My analysis focuses on the iconography and texts of the seal impressions themselves, as potential dating criteria, and on diagnostic back types as a record of objects sealed on site. My analysis of the present corpus suggests that Elephantine had some form of direct contact with some of the highest administrative offices in Egypt, with seal impressions bearing titles including the National Treasurer, the Great One of the Tens of Upper Egypt, and officials in the Vizier's office. Three royal names are also included in this corpus. The presence of these sealings may indicate that Elephantine held a place of prominence in the late Middle Kingdom administrative state, especially given its location by the Nubian border. Additionally, as a supplement to my upcoming publication on this seal impression corpus, Drs. Johanna Sigl and Peter Kopp of the RoL team have created and published a searchable database of the seal impressions and other materials excavated by RoL, which will ideally become an important tool for the study of Egyptian seals and seal impressions going forward.

Urbanism in the Napatan Region: Remote Sensing Survey of Settlement Patterns in Northern Sudan

Katherine E. Rose[1]
[1] Institute for Field Research

This paper explores settlement patterns of urban sites in Northern Sudan, through remote sensing methods. The site of Jebel Barkal is located 400 km from Khartoum, near the Nile in the Napatan region. The site served as the royal capital of Napata from the 8th century BCE and remained a major urban and religious center throughout the Meroitic Period. Since 2018 the Jebel Barkal Archaeological Project, in collaboration with the National Corporation for Antiquities and Museums of Sudan, has been excavating and surveying areas of the East Mound where a dense settlement was identified. However, little is known about the relationship of the settlement at Jebel Barkal to surrounding urban sites. This is due to a lack of broader, regional surveys of the landscape. This research attempts to address this lacuna through remote sensing methods. Satellite imagery, including declassified US spy images, is employed to identify possible settlement sites in the region. Preliminary spatial analysis is conducted to determine settlement patterns, such as distribution of sites and their relationship to landscape features. This work contributes to our understanding of urbanism in the Napatan region and considers these findings within a comparative discussion of North African urbanism. Lastly, this paper also situates remote archaeological work in Sudan within the context of the current civil war. It reflects on how to effectively centers Sudanese voices amidst threats to local communities and cultural heritage.

Deconstructing the Amanishakheto Treasure

Peter Lacovara[1]
[1] Ancient Egyptian Heritage and Archaeology Fund

In 1835 Giuseppi Ferlini journeyed to the Sudan with the Egyptian army in search of ancient treasure. After a series of failed starts, he found it – a remarkable trove of royal jewelry and objects belonging to the Meroitic Nubian Queen Amanishakheto (early First Century B.C.E.). The hoard was beyond his wildest dreams, however, it proved a dangerous and difficult discovery. Threatened by robbers, he had to flee, making an arduous trip down the Nile to Egypt and then to Europe. Finally home, he attempted to sell his loot and published in 1837 a brief account of his adventures, Cenno Sugli Operati Nella Nubia, (1837) with a catalogs in French and Italian. A new translation and concordance of these catalogs gives us a fresh perspective on the extent and importance of this material and allows us to put it in perspective of what we now know of Meroitic culture, its relations with the wider ancient world and Nubian burial customs

The Bestiary of Ancient Nubia, an ISAC Exhibition

Marc E. Maillot[1]
[1] University of Chicago

Ancient Nubia lived in symbiosis with animals. Throughout West Asia and North Africa, Kushites were renowned as suppliers of animals or animal by-products (skins, ivory, etc.). They were also represented as such (whether in the context of tributes or diplomatic gifts). Wild or fantastic, domesticated, hunted or feared, we find animals depicted in temples and tombs, on the walls of palaces, on ceramics and in the niches of houses. Companions of daily life, sources of artistic and religious inspiration, subjects of trade in the ancient world, familiar even in the afterlife, animals have their place at the top of society and power. ISAC Museum proposes, with a special exhibition that will open in spring 2026, to provide a fascinating synthesis on animals in ancient Nubia, from the A-Group to the end of the Meroitic period (3800 BCE-340 CE). From the lion to the hippopotamus and crocodile, from the ibis to the griffin, from cattle to insects, the exhibition and its companion catalog will be an original take on the history of the Nubian civilization, with unparalleled information and a keen sense of storytelling. The objects displayed in the exhibition will be mainly coming from ISAC excavations in the 1960's at Ballana and Qustul, so as to offer a comprehensive anthology of Nubian animal art. A world first, the “Bestiary of Ancient Nubia” will become a reference exhibition and catalog for scholars and amateurs alike on Nubian civilization.

SESSION: 1K. East Mediterranean Connections: A Session in Memory of Jacqueline Balensi (Tremont)

Chairs(s): Carolina A. Aznar, Saint Louis University- Madrid Campus; Michal Artzy, University of Haifa

The Lower Settlement of Tell Abu Hawam, as Envisioned by Jacqueline Balensi

Michal Artzy[1]
[1] University of Haifa, School of Archaeology, RIMS, Hatter Laboratory

In the 1980s, during Dr. Jacqueline Balensi’s excavation at Tell Abu Hawam, she espoused a map produced by Joseph Treidel in 1924-25 of the site and its environs. It was during that period that she was allowed into the confines of the then Shell Oil company, where some work was carried out using a backhoe. The archaeological remains she noted and shared with us were mainly of the Persian Period. She assumed that the area was part of a lower city of Tell Abu Hawam, excavated by W.W. Hamilton in the 1930s, of which the Late Bronze was an important component. The actual tell is very small, and while the remains included Cultic areas and likely storage areas, limited space for habitational remains was noted. Only in the years following the 2020s did we return to the Tell Abu Hawam site. While the Treidel map was very useful for our work, the results of the excavations substantiated the Persian period settlement there. Still, they did not do the same for the Late Bronze period.

Tell Abu Hawam and the Southern Plain of Akko Trade Networks in the Iron Age II

Carolina A. Aznar[1]
[1] Saint Louis University in Spain

The 1985-86 excavations of the Mission Archéologique de Tell Abou Hawam (MATAH) clarified and provided new data on the stratigraphy of the 1930s excavations by R.W. Hamilton’s at the site. The new excavations revealed Hamilton’s Stratum III, which he dated to 1100-925 (?) BCE, had six phases, and made the chronology of the Stratum be revised to 1025/1000 -750/725 BCE. During the Iron Age II Tell Abu Hawam seems to have been a small port of trade in the estuary of the Qishon River supplying some bigger inland

site/s. This paper will examine the trade networks of the Southern Plain of Akko during the Iron Age II and the role of Tell Abu Hawam in that trade on the basis of the evidence found in a regional survey conducted in 2010 and on some of the results of the 2011-2014, 2018 excavations at Tel Regev (Tell Harbaj in Arabic) by The Southern Plain of Akko Project (SPAP), a joint project of Saint Louis University and the University of Haifa in collaboration with the Universidad Internacional SEK-Ecuador and the Instituto Español Bíblico y Arqueológico en Jerusalén.

The Earliest Phoenician Presence in the Bay of Cadiz (Spain)
(Virtual)
Ester López-Rosendo[1], Mariano Torres-Ortiz[2]
[1] Centro de Estudios Fenicios y Púnicos (CEFYP), [2] Universidad Complutense de Madrid

This paper aims to present the current understanding of the earliest Phoenician presence in Cadiz and its surrounding areas. Notable evidence of Phoenician activity includes ceramics and urban layout unearthed beneath the former Teatro Cómico, located at what was ancient Gadir on the island of Erytheia. Additionally, various sites nearby demonstrate early Phoenician presence dating from the late 9th to late 8th century BCE. Phoenician colonization is also substantiated on the mainland in several locations around the bay of Cadiz, including areas inhabited by local populations known as Tartessian in the regions of El Puerto de Santa María and Jerez de la Frontera. The material culture found at these sites illustrates the interaction between Phoenicians and local populations, evidenced by the coexistence of handmade local pottery alongside Levantine and colonial Phoenician pottery within Phoenician settlements. This indicates the integration of local populations into the Phoenician colony, as well as the presence of Levantine and colonial ceramic Phoenician imports, such as storage jars and tableware, in local sites.

Jacqueline Balensi, Tell Abu Hawam Strata I and II and I
Gerald Finkielsztejn[1]
[1] Israel Antiquities Authority

I met Jacqueline Balensi of the French CNRS at the Ecole Biblique et Archéologique de Jérusalem where I was writing my BA Thesis with a Fellowship of the French Académie des Inscriptions et Belles Lettres on an Hellenistic period topic in 1985-6. She offered me to write my MA Thesis on the late Persian and Hellenistic strata on the top of Tell Abu Hawam, my first ever (and challenging) field report, funded by a renewal of my fellowship for the year 1986-7. Of the N. Makhouly and L.A. Mayer sondage (1929) and surface excavations (1930), administrative letters, pictures and the two block plans without levels were recorded, the latter retrieved in the archives of the Palestine Archaeological (Rockefeller) Museum in Jerusalem two weeks before I had to send my MA to Paris! Of his 1932-3 excavations R. W. Hamilton published an interim report including six plans with levels with more kept in the archives, as well as pictures. However, his field notes had been blown with the wind ("hawam") on the site. A significant part of the relevant finds was stolen in 1967. My inquiery was heavily based on the pictures and the plans. I succeeded in connecting both types of documents to restore decent, if not perfect, stratigraphy and architecture, even in connections with the finds, including a hoard of Tyrian coins ending with Alexandre's army conquest. I hope it will be published with the analyses and excavations of the much richer early strata by Jacqueline Balensi, Maria Dolores Herrera and Michal Artzy.

A Persian Period Rampart on the Western Outskirts of Tell Abu Hawam
Amani Abu Hamid[1]
[1] Israel Antiquities Authority

During the 2002 salvage excavation in the environs of Tell Abu Hawam, a low rampart was noted on the western outskirts of the tell. The rampart was constructed of packed mud with an approximated 30 degrees angle. It could not have been constructed as defense against human aggression. It was likely placed there to avoid seawater to reach the constructed defenses. The ceramic remains associated with it belonged to the Persian Period, ca. 5 th to the 4 th centuries BCE.

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 19, 2025 | 10:40am–12:45pm (EST)

SESSION: 2A. Jerusalem and the Archaeology of a Sacred City II (Grand Ballroom A)

Chairs(s): Prof. Yuval Gadot, Department of Archaeology and Ancient Near Eastern Cultures, Tel-Aviv University; Dr. Yiftah Shalev, Israel Antiquities Authority

The Upper Aqueduct to Jerusalem from the Perspective of the Development of Sacred Sites in the city During the Roman and Byzantine Periods
Rotem Cohen[1], Ofer Sion[1]
[1] Israel Antiquities Authority

The Jerusalem aqueduct system comprises four aqueducts, two south of Solomon's Pools and two to the north. The Upper Aqueduct conveyed water over 14 km from Solomon's Pools to Hezekiah's Pool in the Upper City. This study presents findings from excavations of the Upper Aqueduct along 300 m on the northwestern and northern slopes of Givat HaMatos, exploring how Jerusalem's intensification as a sacred centre during the Roman and Byzantine Periods influenced the establishment and reinvestment in its construction, considering regime changes through the years. Three construction phases were identified: Gray Aqueduct I (earliest), Gray Aqueduct II, and the U-Aqueduct (latest). The aqueduct was originally rock-cut, following a winding route with a moderate slope, and plastered. In areas with low rock, additional construction completed the structure. In the second phase, Gray Aqueduct II elevated the flow channel over the earlier structure, reusing and integrating existing plaster. The U-Aqueduct, built over Gray Aqueduct II, featured stone roofing in some sections and raised foundations where destruction had occurred. Numismatic evidence of 32 uncovered coins within plaster layers, suggesting "foundation offerings," plaster analysis, and construction techniques date Gray Aqueduct I to Herod's reign, Gray Aqueduct II to Agrippa I, and the U-Aqueduct to post-132–136 CE, during Aelia Capitolina. The aqueduct remained in use until the Roman legion's departure in 284 CE and continued through the fourth, fifth, and sixth centuries as Jerusalem grew as a pilgrimage centre.

Archaeology at the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem: Problem, Data and Hypothesis
Francesca Romana Stasolla[1]
[1] University of Roma Sapienza

Since 2022 the Department of Antiquities of the University of Rome Sapienza has been conducting archaeological investigations in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem. The work is still in progress, but some preliminary data can be presented.The excavation has returned a wide stratigraphic sequence, from the Iron Age to the beginning of the 20th century. These data are important for the history of Jerusalem, for the knowledge of its urban development in the Roman and post-Roman age. Based on the first excavation results, I can advance some considerations that I would like to present to the scientific community.

A Roman Spatha Sword and Scabbard from Excavations on Mount Zion in Jerusalem

Yarden Pagelson[1], Rafael Y. Lewis[2], David Mevorah[3], Hadas Seri[3], Shimon Gibson[4]

[1] Ben-Gurion Univeristy of the Negev, [2] Bar-Ilan University, [3] The Israel Museum, Jerusalem, [4] University of North Carolina at Charlotte

Excavations in the early 1970s by Magen Broshi in the courtyard of the Armenian St Saviour's property (Sometimes referred to as the House of Caiaphas) uncovered, amongst other finds, an iron sword sheathed in a scabbard. The sword was moved to the Israel Museum in Jerusalem and underwent conservation treatment but was never published. Recently, a renewed effort to publish this rare artifact has resulted in an interdisciplinary study, re-examining its find context, typology, and analysis using non-destructive techniques such as x-ray radiography and portable x-ray fluorescence (pXRF). X-ray images allowed us to observe the original dimensions and shape of the sword underneath the corrosion and the scabbard. Based on these, we suggest it should be identified as a Roman Spatha sword, likely of the Starbing/Nydam type. A combination of the data from Broshi's excavation and typological considerations of the sword and scabbard suggests a pre-2nd century CE date for the sword. Chemical analysis of the copper alloy scabbard fittings indicates bronze compositions possibly coated by lead. This spatha was originally used by auxiliary cavalry fighting from horseback in the first century CE and by legionary infantry in the second century CE. Its discovery at such an evocative location elicits challenging thoughts on how it was used and by whom.

How Vernacular Buildings Shape the Spatial Presence of Sacred Monuments

Catherine Toulouse[1], Dominick Lengyel[2]

[1] Independent Researcher, [2] Brandenburg University of Technology Cottbus-Senftenberg

The Square of the Rock is more semantically and iconically charged than almost any other. Even if the former presence of Herod's palace is not immediately apparent, the shape of the square, its topography and the rock itself are suspiciously reminiscent of its history. In the shadow of this monument, but no less significant in terms of spatial impact, is the peripheral development, which, although it does not have a completely uniform structure, still has a visual identity. As part of vibrant Jerusalem, however, the buildings change over the centuries, and like many other buildings, the changes in recent times are particularly striking. Recreating an earlier appearance is associated with great uncertainties, and without precise information, photographs and other evidence, it will probably never be possible to faithfully reconstruct the actual appearance, as in most other cases of historical conditions. The usual attempts of the entertainment industry may lead to attractive images, but their scientific content is usually overlaid and concealed by a disproportionately larger amount of purely speculative fantasy. The selection of geometry as just one aspect of the archaeological hypotheses is a way out here, because, when projected in such a way as if the abstract virtual model were built architecture, it intuitively appears as architecture, which can then be archaeologically interpreted. The basis for the present case study is a historical ink drawing of the frontal views of the facades in conjunction with contemporary digital measurements of the basements. It was created in cooperation with the Museum of Islamic Art, State Museums Berlin.

2B. Archaeology of Mesopotamia I (Grand Ballroom B)

Chair(s): Lucas Proctor, J.W. Goethe University Frankfurt; Glynnis Maynard, Cambridge University

The 2025 Excavations of The Halaf-Ubaid Transition Levels at Tepe Gawra

Elizabeth A. Gibbon[1]

[1] University of Toronto

Tepe Gawra has long been a hallmark site for examining the development of sociopolitical complexity in the transition from the Halaf to the Ubaid periods in Mesopotamia. Excavations of the Halaf-Ubaid transitions levels (HUT) at Tepe Gawra during the 1930's revealed combinations of Ubaid style rectilinear architecture and Halaf circular structures, public buildings, human burials, and exotic raw materials and 'prestige' goods that show participation in long-distance exchange networks and the incipient development of social inequality. Despite the importance of this time period for understating the emergence of social complexity in the region, there is little consensus about the means through which the Ubaid spread from its origin in Southern Mesopotamia all the way the Levant, creating a 'cultural sphere' of unprecedented dimensions. Migration, acculturation, and colonization have all been suggested explanations for the phenomenon. The HUT levels at Tepe Gawra provide a unique opportunity to investigate these hypotheses. New excavations will commence at Tepe Gawra in fall 2025 targeting the exposed HUT levels to more thoroughly document archaeological remains that were undocumented in the initial excavations, including undecorated ceramics, palaeobotanical, and faunal remains. Technological analysis of ceramics and documentation of organic remains will allow for more detailed comparison with contemporary sites in the region to begin to untangle the complicated social dynamics of acculturation and migration during the transition from the Halaf to the Ubaid periods.

Proto-Urban Growth in the Nineveh Plain (PUG): Three Years of Archaeological Work at Tepe Gawra and Tell 'Arna

Khaled Abu Jayyab[1], Clemens D. Reichel[1], Ira G. Schwartz[1], Koushan Amir-Khosravi[1]

[1] University of Toronto

This paper will present preliminary results of work at the sites of Tepe Gawra and Tell 'Arna in northern Iraq between 2023 and 2025. The work at these sites is part of the broader umbrella project Proto-Urban Growth in the Nineveh Plain (PUG). The aims of PUG are to understand proto-urban developments and population aggregation that took place in the region during the early part of the Late Chalcolithic (LC) period (4500-3900 BC). The efforts of this project include exploring past assumptions about trajectories towards complexity through targeted excavations at Tepe Gawra and Tell 'Arna, and collaborating with our partners at the State Board of Antiquities and Heritage (SBAH) on a regional survey. In this work we will discuss how we are filling the gaps in our knowledge in regards to the Nineveh Plain, a region that has been closed off for the past 30 years. The talk will focus on outlining the theoretical and methodological approaches of the project, and steps that we have taken in the field so far in order to address them.

Spatial Optimisation in Early Bronze Age Households of Northern Mesopotamia: A Case Study of Micro-temporal Change in House 5 at Titriş Höyük (Virtual)

Mahyar Khademi Bami[1], Haskel J. Greenfield[2], Timothy Matney[2]

[1] University of Manitoba, [2] University of Akron

During the period of secondary state formation in northern Mesopotamia (Early Bronze Age/EBA), new cities were formed and laid out according to urban planning principles that addressed the needs of elite and non-elite urban dwellers. Internal (generational changes) and external (competition and military threats) drivers appear to have initiated modifications in the urban layout. The external forces drove the creation of large-scale fortifications that

limited the area of settlement. In contrast, households had limited capacity to expand and appeared to have a more efficient use of space within the initially established urban layout. Yet, most analyses of urban planning in the Near East view the architectural layout of buildings as static rather than dynamic. In contrast, this study uses micro-temporal information to distinguish between the different constructional sub-phases of an EBA building (House 5) in the Lower Town at Titriş Höyük. It has been interpreted previously as a domestic residence (house). This building complex changes in its structure through the annexation of adjacent plots and buildings, which changes how space is structured and how movements and functions are organised. This research employs Space Syntax analysis through GIS to offer a detailed and comprehensive examination of these modifications. House 5 exemplifies this movement toward spatial optimisation. Keywords: Early urban planning, Titriş Höyük, micro-temporal, spatial optimisation, GIS, space syntax.

Looking for the Levant in Mesopotamia: An Archaeological Study of Objects from the Neo-Assyrian Tombs of Nimrud's Northwest Palace Queens

Amy R. Gansell[1], Liat Naeh[2]
[1] St John's University, [2] University of Toronto

Inscriptions from the tombs of Nimrud's Northwest Palace Queens reveal that some of these Neo-Assyrian queens had probable West Semitic names: Atalyah, Yabah, and Hamah. Their names have prompted theories that they were diplomatic brides who came to Assyria from the Levant. A few objects from their tombs may also be Levantine. However, scholars continue to grapple with the fundamental questions of whether these names, objects, and/or the women themselves were truly of Levantine origin. Also debatable is whether the inclusion of Levantine artifacts in the tombs can confirm the queens' Levantine heritage. Digging deeper into these questions, we turn to the archaeological record. First, we catalogue the small number of probable Levantine artifacts from the queens' tombs. Second, we identify their findspots and roles in any assemblages (such as a dress ensemble). We highlight the cases of gold bowl, a seal, and a pair of scarab clusters. Finally, we compare and contextualize these finds in relation to probable Levantine objects excavated from both other burials and non-burial contexts in the Northwest Palace. Looking farther afield, we touch on the presence/absence of Levantine objects at other Neo-Assyrian sites. Looking for the Levant in Mesopotamia, we consider not only what types of objects, production techniques, materials, and iconographies might attest to the objects' and, in turn, the queens', Levantine origins, but also how the archaeological record might support an object's status as a marker (or not) of Levantine heritage.

"Mesopotamian Material Religion": Mapping Sacred Spaces in Mesopotamia

Christina Tsouparopoulo[1], Latif Oksuz[2], Rafal Solecki[1]
[1] Cardinal Stefan Wyszynski University in Warsaw, [2] Durham University

In this talk, we will present findings from the *Mesopotamian Material Religion* (MeMaRe) project, which uses Geographic Information Systems (GIS) to explore sacred spaces in Mesopotamia (3000–539 BCE). We will demonstrate how GIS mapping, combined with theoretical frameworks from Mircea Eliade's concept of hierophany and Jonathan Z. Smith's ritual-centered approach, offers insights into how sacred spaces were constructed, experienced, and transformed. We will present preliminary spatial analyses across micro (individual site practices), meso (intra-site spatial patterns), and macro (regional distributions) scales. This multi-scalar approach reveals shifts in sacred space distribution and their connections to broader social and political dynamics.

2C. Cultural Heritage: Preservation, Presentation, and Management II (Georgian)

Chair(s): Nour Munawar, University of Amsterdam

A Museum's Balancing Act: Negotiating Heritage Under Fire

Nadine N. Panayot[1]
[1] American University of Beirut

This presentation explores the historical evolution and institutional trajectory of the Archaeological Museum at the American University of Beirut, recognized as the third oldest museum in the Near East. Founded within a context frequently characterized by political and social upheaval, the museum has progressively asserted its position as a vital hub for the conservation and dissemination of cultural heritage, despite enduring considerable adversity. Central to this analysis is the meticulous restoration of fragmented glass vessels—objects that, though relatively modest in their historical prominence, symbolically encapsulate the museum's enduring commitment to resilience, scholarly dedication, and collective effort. In response to ongoing aerial bombardments, the museum has activated a comprehensive emergency response protocol, which includes the construction of a fortified underground repository to ensure the protection of its collections. This case study offers critical insight into the museum's adaptive methodologies and highlights its indispensable role in safeguarding and perpetuating the region's cultural legacy.

Community-Led Cultural Heritage Preservation: The Sersal Project

Marc Marin Webb[1], Nathaniel Brunt[2], Jomaa Jameel Murad[3]
[1] University Pennsylvania, [2] University of Victoria, [3] Independent Scholar

This presentation explores the Sersal Project, a digital photographic and oral history initiative documenting, preserving, and sharing the histories of the Yezidi people in Iraq. The project addresses the cultural devastation caused by the 2014 ISIS genocide, which not only resulted in immense human suffering but also targeted Yezidi cultural and religious sites, erasing spaces of intergenerational memory. The Sersal Project contributes to the collective preservation of Yezidi cultural heritage through two strategies. On the one hand, it employs a post-custodial archival approach through fieldwork in Iraq's Ninewa and Dihok Governorates, digitizing materials while ensuring original records remain within the community. This participatory method fosters local ownership by embedding Yezidi community members in archival processes. On the other hand, the Sersal Project focuses on the identification and repatriation of historical visual materials from Western heritage institutions, reconnecting Yezidis with their past, including some of the earliest photographic records of Yezidi life dating back to the 1880s. The project draws on an extensive corpus of previously unexplored source material, including a comprehensive survey of both vernacular archives in the homeland and institutional archives in the UK and the US. The project integrates artistic interventions and community-driven metadata production to interpret archival materials through Yezidi epistemologies. This

approach empowers Yezidis to assert their distinct ethno-religious identity and resist assimilation into broader nationalist narratives.

The Value of Community-Centered Qualitative Research Approaches in Madaba, Jordan

Barbara Anglisz[1]
[1] Independent Scholar

In 2023, a qualitative research project was conducted in Madaba, Jordan on behalf of the Madaba Regional Archaeological Museum Project (MRAMP) leadership team. The objective of the research was to gain valuable insights into local perspectives and provide an informed assessment to identify potential actions for the development and execution of the proposed archaeological museum in Madaba, famously known as the "City of Mosaics". The research sought to refine the museum's objectives, themes, and programming to align with the needs of local stakeholders. Qualitative data was gathered on stakeholder perceptions concerning the proposed museum's conceptual elements, display design, and exhibit narratives. Additionally, the study aimed to understand local stakeholders' heritage values, their interest in contributing to the establishment of the new museum, and the roles they will assume once the museum becomes operational. This paper highlights the significance of qualitative research in producing detailed, context-specific data that can guide policy development and practical strategies for heritage management. It includes an overview of the data collected and a demonstration of the custom-built online database report generator tool. This data management reporting tool was created to efficiently search and display stakeholder feedback for specific interview questions. The generated reports provide the leadership team with recommendations from the participants to inform MRAMP's strategic plans, incorporating input and involvement from the local community as part of the museum's planning process. Adopting collaborative, community-centered research approaches can enhance cultural heritage preservation and encourage participation, contributing to more sustainable heritage management practices.

Cultural Heritage as a Lever for Peacebuilding: Challenges and Prospects in the Sahel

Issouf Balima[1]
[1] IKAM Burkina

Cultural heritage is a key element in peacebuilding, particularly in conflict-affected regions such as Burkina Faso. In the Sahelian context, marked for more than a decade by insecurity, violent extremism, and humanitarian crisis, the protection and promotion of cultural heritage appear to be essential tools for local community resilience and long-term stabilization. This article analyzes the role of cultural heritage in conflict prevention and resolution in the Sahel, highlighting the challenges related to its preservation, the initiatives undertaken, and the prospects for effectively integrating heritage into peace and sustainable development strategies. It also highlights the progress made thanks to our collaboration with ASOR over the past three years.

Establishing Authority: How the IAA changed Israeli Public Archaeology

Boaz Gross[1]
[1] Israel Antiquities Authority

The Israel Antiquities Authority (IAA), established in 1990, replaced the Department of Antiquities and Museums (IDAM), which governed Israeli antiquities from then creation of the Jewish State in 1948. The paper will explore the mechanisms, methods and policies of each governing agency, from the IDAM to the IAA, and their changes over the course of several decades. It will examine the way the two institutions handled and operated large-scale public archaeology projects and through this observation, the paper will infer the social, political and economical changes in Israel from the 1970's to the early 2000's, and their manifestations in Israeli archaeology.

2D. Archaeology and Biblical Studies II (Arlington)

Chair(s): Stephen Cook, Virginia Theological Seminary; Alison Acker Gruseke, Williams College

The Lord of the Animals, the Cosmic Tree, and the Cloud Rider: Reclaiming the Imago Dei in Daniel

Stephen L. Cook[1]
[1] Virginia Theological Seminary

This presentation explores the ancient Near Eastern motif of the "lord of the animals," known from iconographic traditions such as the Mesopotamian depiction of heroes or deities mastering wild beasts (especially the "Master of Animals" iconography on cylinder seals), in relation to its profound connection to the biblical concept of the Imago Dei (see Genesis 1, Psalm 8, and Daniel 7). Focusing on Nebuchadnezzar's dream of the cosmic tree (Daniel 4) and the vision of the "Cloud Rider" aka "One Like a Son of Man" (Daniel 7), the talk examines how dominion over animals symbolizes humanity's divine mandate to reflect God's image through responsible stewardship and spiritual maturity. Nebuchadnezzar's transformation into a beast in Daniel 4 represents the loss of the divine image through pride and tyranny. In contrast, the "Cloud Rider" / "Son of Man" in Daniel 7 restores true dominion, embodying the ideal ruler who reflects divine authority and selfless governance. By integrating these visions, Daniel's scroll offers a theological vision of humanity's potential to fulfill the Imago Dei, underscoring divine judgment against human hubris and affirming ultimate redemption through restored cosmic order.

Micro-design Analysis: Investigating the Influences Behind Hezekiah's Winged Sun Disk Imagery

Gary Myers[1]
[1] New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary

The Bible identifies Hezekiah as a good king and a cultic reformer. However, archaeological discoveries related to Hezekiah (including a royal seal bulla) muddle the portrait of the king. While his seal impression affirms the historicity of the king by name, title, and parentage, it also includes foreign imagery. At first glance, the seal design (a winged sun disk and two ankhs) appears incongruent with strict obedience to the law and Hezekiah's role as a cultic reformer. Determining the direct influences behind the royal seal design is an essential step in understanding the meaning behind the symbols. The researcher created a unique evaluative tool/process to isolate finer, nuanced design similarities ("micro design similarities") and pinpoint direct influences beyond motif and type. The multi-step evaluation process includes human analysis followed by separate artificial intelligence (AI) protocols designed to guard against subjectivity. While researchers agree that Hezekiah utilized Egyptian motifs, opinions differ on the direct influences at the 'micro' design level. The researcher compared Hezekiah's winged sun disk design with a small sample of winged sun disk designs from Egypt, Phoenicia, and the Northern Kingdom as a test case for the micro design similarity comparative process. The analysis revealed greater affinity between Hezekiah's winged sun disk seal type and seals from Phoenicia and the Northern Kingdom than with Egyptian designs.

The Representation of Sculpture in Scenes from the Hebrew Bible at the Dura Europos Synagogue

Kristen Seaman[1]
[1] University of Oregon

Paintings from the mid 3rd-century CE Synagogue at Dura Europos are the most well-known ancient depictions of scenes from

the Hebrew Bible. Dura Europos was a multicultural city that was located in the Roman province of Syria-Coele (modern Syria). Many previous scholars have studied the Synagogue's painted biblical scenes, but little attention has been paid to their representations of sculpture. Most notably, sculpture is represented in the scene of the Philistine captivity of the Ark (I Samuel 5:1-4). The Hebrew Bible relates that, after the Philistines had captured the Ark and set it beside a statue of Dagon in the temple of Dagon at Ashdod, the statue of Dagon was found on the ground with its head and hands cut from its trunk. The Dura Europos painting represents the statue's body parts, along with other items, scattered on the ground near the Ark and the Temple of Dagon. In this paper, I do a close reading of both the Hebrew Bible and the Dura Europos paintings. I examine the significance of the broken Dagon statue, exploring how the dismembered sculptural body echoes the dismembered human body parts that are depicted elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible and in the Synagogue's paintings. I take special note of the paintings' imagery that is associated with the body parts in Ezekiel's vision of the Valley of Dry Bones (Ezekiel 37:1-10). I also investigate the relationship between the paintings' sculptural imagery and interpretations of the Second Commandment's prohibition of images.

Tattoos in Ancient Israel and the Ancient Near East

Susan Ackerman[1]
[1] Dartmouth College

Among the several verses in the Bible that refer to marks made on a person's body (most famously, the so-called mark [ʾôt] of Cain in Gen 4:15), two are generally taken to refer to tattoos: Lev 19:28 and Isa 44:5. Scholars who have commented on these verses often look to traditions regarding body marking from elsewhere in the ancient Near East, especially Mesopotamia. Yet while Mesopotamia materials can help illuminate Isa 44:5, they are less useful for understanding Lev 19:28. This paper thus builds on Nili Fox's 2019 suggestion to prioritize Egyptian evidence regarding tattoos, with a special focus on recently published materials (unavailable to Fox) from the New Kingdom workman's village of Deir el-Medina. The specific tattoo designs found on three female mummies there, and on related figurines from the region, allow us to expand on and enhance previous interpretations of tattooing practices in the southern Levant: first, the interpretation of the so-called Revadim-type plaques from the thirteenth century BCE and, second, the interpretation of Lev 19:28.

The Description of the Maccabean Revolt in the First Book of Maccabees in Light of the Archaeological Data and the Context of the Wars of Saul and David

Dvir Raviv[1]
[1] Bar Ilan University

The historical authenticity of the First Book of Maccabees has been the subject of extensive scholarly debate. This paper aims to focus on the events of the Maccabean Revolt and contribute to the discussion by adding two key dimensions – literary and archaeological. The literary dimension addresses the extensive use made by the author of 1 Maccabees of biblical narratives, particularly those of Saul and David, in framing the Maccabean Revolt, with particular attention to the depiction of Judas Maccabeus' battles. The connection between the Maccabees and the early Israelite kings, particularly the Davidic stories as portrayed in Chronicles which preordained the establishment of the Davidic dynasty and its close ties to the Temple cult, is a deliberate rhetorical strategy designed to enhance the legitimacy of the Hasmonean dynasty and promote this dynastic rule as a political ideal. The archaeological dimension, which until recently was very sparse concerning the region of Judea during the Maccabean Revolt, includes new findings that support the basic historical reliability of the framework of the revolt's events as described in 1 Maccabees. The integration of textual and material data raises the issue of assessing the historical authenticity of literary depictions that incorporate allusions to the Bible.

2E. Archaeology of Jordan II: Contextualizing Archaeological Finds (Berkeley & Clarendon)

Chair(s): Monique Roddy, Walla Walla University; Craig Tyson, De'Youville; and Stephanie Selover, University of Washington

Re-evaluating the EBA "collapse": Concurrent EBIII Urban and EBIV Rural Trajectories in Light of New Radiocarbon Data from Khirbet Ghozlan in Jordan

Jamie Fraser[1], Caroline Cartwright[2]
[1] W.F. Albright Institute of Archaeological Research, [2] The British Museum

The EB IV period (2500-2000 BCE) in the southern Levant has traditionally been described as a rural interlude between the collapse of proto-urban centers in EB II-III and their re-emergence as a network of city-states in the MBA. However, recent excavations at the small, rural site of Khirbet Um al-Ghozlan in Jordan suggest the need for significant revision of both the relative and absolute chronologies for this period. Initially identified as an EB IV site by Gaetano Palumbo, Khirbet Um al-Ghozlan was excavated by the British Museum in 2017, 2019, and 2022. The site comprises a modest (0.25 ha) enclosure located in the eastern uplands of the Jordan Rift Valley escarpment. Excavations have yielded a clean and well-defined assemblage of EB IV material culture associated with a briefly occupied, single-phase settlement. Surprisingly, 18 radiocarbon determinations (12 analyzed at SUERC in Scotland, and 6 at ORAU in Oxford) indicate that the site was occupied between 2900–2850 cal BCE. This paper presents these new radiocarbon results and explores their implications for understanding the EB IV as a long-term rural tradition that originated in the north Jordan Valley following the abandonment of EB II mound sites. Rather than representing the aftermath of urban collapse, the EB IV may instead reflect a sustained rural lifeway that coexisted with—and perhaps underpinned—the ephemeral urbanism of the EB III period.

An Egyptian Statue and Egyptian-Style Signet Ring Found at Khirbat Safra, Jordan

Trisha Broy[1]
[1] Union College

In successive excavation seasons a limestone signet ring with an Egyptian-style inscription and a 13th dynasty seated Egyptian figure were discovered in an Iron Age IA context at Khirbat Safra. These objects, located approximately ten meters from one another, were found in adjacent domestic structures at the south-east corner of the site. The statue is unique in Jordan's Iron Age and is thus of special interest for discussions on the interconnectedness of Egypt and central Jordan during this period. It also prompts questions regarding the secondary use of Egyptian statuary and the distance to which these objects can travel over time. The propinquity of the signet ring, with its faux-Egyptian inscription speaks to a possible relationship between the objects and may indicate an ideological connection of the site's residents to the culture of Egypt.

Redating the Lidded Clay Coffin from Dhiban, Jordan

Craig W. Tyson[1], Kent Bramlett[2]
[1] D'Youville University, [2] La Sierra University

A full-length, lidded clay coffin found in Tomb J3 at the site of Dhiban, Jordan in 1952, has been dated variously from the 9th–7th centuries BCE, and discussed as part of a typological sequence of "anthropoid coffins" that include breastplate coffins found in Jordan

at Sahab, Amman, and Pella. More recent research on clay coffins, especially those found in Egypt, provide a refined typology and more robust corpus with which to compare the lidded clay coffin from Dhiban. This paper reviews previous discussions of the Dhiban coffin and offers a new assessment of its typology and date, arguing that it fits well within the corpus of full-length lidded clay coffins from Egypt that date from the Late Period (664–525 BCE) down to the Roman Period (30 BCE–641 CE).

An Ammonite Royal Ritual Procession

Joel S. Burnett[1]
[1] Baylor University

The corpus of stone statuary from Iron II Amman provides evidence for a royal ancestor cult in the Ammonite capital, Rabbat Ammon (Hübner 1992; Burnett 2024). The related iconography of the atef crown occurs in statuary and terracotta figurines portraying the Ammonite chief god (Abou-Assaf 1980; Daviau and Dion 1994) and arguably the living Ammonite king (Burnett 2016). One such figurine from the Ammonite site Tall Jalul depicts an atef-crowned figure playing a musical instrument (Younker et al. 1996). In this presentation, I bring the Ammonite iconography in question into relationship with imagery from the Nimrud ivories and other artistic evidence from the Iron Age southern Levant. I also give attention to monumental features of Iron II Rabbat Ammon (Amman Citadel) and comparisons with Syro-Anatolian architectural, epigraphic, and sculptural evidence indicating processions and other "civic ritual" in urban spaces (Gilibert 2011). I conclude from the Ammonite evidence and these broader Levantine comparisons that the urban royal program of the Ammonite kingdom included a ritual procession featuring members of the royal household at Rabbat Ammon.

Attic Pottery at Tell el-Kheleifeh: Foreign Imports and Local Tastes on the Gulf of Aqaba

Joseph A. Greene[1], Kathleen Lynch[2]
[1] Harvard University, [2] University of Cincinnati

In his 1938–1940 excavations at Tell el-Kheleifeh, Nelson Glueck found in the upper levels of the site a small number of sherds he confidently identified as early fifth-to-fourth century B.C. Attic black glazed and figured wares. This pottery, coupled with discovery at the site of Aramaic ostraca, paleographically datable to the fifth century B.C., led Glueck to postulate that, despite the absence of preserved architecture in the site's upper levels, occupation had continued at Kheleifeh from the late Iron Age into the Achaemenid Persian period. In the fifth and fourth centuries, the site was, he thought, still an important node on the long-established network of South Arabian incense trade. However, because Glueck was convinced that Kheleifeh was Ezion-geber, Solomon's tenth-century seaport on the Gulf of Aqaba, he was eager to carry on digging into earlier Iron Age levels. He set the Attic pottery aside, planning to deal with it eventually in his final report. But Glueck never published a final report; and although much Kheleifeh material has since been restudied and republished, the Greek wares have never been included. This paper corrects that omission. It also tests Glueck's identifications and datings of this pottery and re-examines, in the light of fresh evidence, his interpretation of how and why these Attic imports came to Kheleifeh.

2F. And the Land had Rest? The Aftermath of Destruction and the Development of Memory I (Studio 1)

Chair(s): Nitsan Shalom, University of Oldenburg and the Hebrew University of Jerusalem; Igor Kreimerman, Hebrew University of Jerusalem

Negiatiating a Ruined Past: Introductory Comments (5 min.)

Ruins as a Living Landscape: The Case of Canaanite Hazor (Virtual)

Nitsan Shalom[1]
[1] The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

Canaanite Hazor is highlighted in the Hebrew Bible as an exceptional enemy. In Joshua 11, it is described as "the head of all those kingdoms" and is notable for being the only city set on fire by Joshua. Hazor's defeat is framed as the climax of the conquest narrative. While the questions of who destroyed Late Bronze Age Hazor and why remain unresolved, it is clear that the once monumental city had transformed into a ruinscape, in which later inhabitants had to establish their new settlements. This lecture explores the interactions of the Iron Age residents of the site with the remains surrounding them. The ruins of the Canaanite city were part of the urban landscape for centuries, with particular reverence shown to certain locations that were left untouched, while other structures were reused, looted, or built over. By analyzing the contexts in which Bronze Age artifacts and architectural elements were reused, avoided or manipulated during various phases of the Iron Age, we can examine the attitudes of the inhabitants toward the ruins around them. This allows us to explore how this relationship evolved over time and whether the ancient remains were charged with deep significance, as reflected in the stories attributed to them in the Bible, or whether they were more pragmatically exploited as available raw materials.

Temple Mount in Byzantine Jerusalem as damnatio memoriae (condemnation of memory) of Jewish Jerusalem

Irina Barash[1]
[1] The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

The study explores the memory manipulation strategies employed by the builders of Byzantine Jerusalem to address the formidable challenge of representing—within the same urban space—both the defeat of (Jewish) Jerusalem and the triumph of (Christian) Jerusalem. The city was to be represented and remembered simultaneously as both vanquished and victorious, with Jewish memories and space both erased and appropriated. I argue that the building activity, the development of stational liturgy and the pilgrimage routes in Byzantine Jerusalem were designed to physically and conceptually both isolate and showcase the destroyed and desolated Jewish Temple Mount, a dominant topographic feature within the Christian cityscape. By combining archaeological methods of spatial analysis with an in-depth study of literary sources and insights from social memory studies, this lecture explores how Byzantine Jerusalem's network of streets and built environment established narratives and traditions literally in stone, embedding them within the cityscape as well as within the collective memory of the early Christians. It concludes that the emptiness of the Temple Mount in Byzantine Jerusalem was not merely a void, but a symbol of the desolation of the once-great Jewish past associated with this sacred site, creating a stark contrast with the flourishing development of the rest of the city. The Jewish past was thus confined to a single (though large) space of the ruined Temple Mount, while other areas of the city were appropriated and redefined as integral to Christian tradition, visibly manifesting Christian triumph over the past.

Losing Luxury: The Afterlife of the Herodian Palace of Tiberias

Shulamit Miller[1]
[1] The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

The first century CE historian, Flavius Josephus, records the destruction by fire of the Herodian palace in Tiberias during the First Jewish Revolt against Rome (Life 64–69). Yizhar Hirschfeld's excavations at the site exposed architecture dated to the first century CE, which bears considerable similarities to contemporary Herodian palatial architecture, such as the use of drafted-margin

masonry, marble opus sectile floors, and wall paintings. Consequently, the excavator associated the remains with those of the palace constructed by the city's founding king, Herod Antipas, that was later destroyed by fire as narrated by Josephus. A reevaluation of the architecture, however, indicates a more complex settlement history than originally thought. First, there is no substantial evidence that the palace was extensively destroyed by fire. Second, the palace was not abandoned following the failed revolt but was instead converted into simple houses that were not identified by Hirschfeld. This talk focuses on these houses and on choices made by the builders as they adapted the palatial architecture for a new use. For example, which elements of the palace continued to be used, which were canceled, and how new construction related to elements of luxury were preserved from the pre-existing palace. Ultimately, the houses serve as a basis from which to explore broader shifts in aesthetics as well as in the socio-economic ideologies characterizing this Galilean city during the Roman period.

Ghost Towns and New Villages: Rethinking Idumea's Second Century Crisis

Debora G. Sandhaus[1]
[1] Israel Antiquities Authority

The Idumean territory during the Hellenistic period extended from the HaElah Valley in the north to the Beer Sheva Valley in the south, encompassing the Shephelah, the southern hills around Hebron, the southern Judean Desert, and the northern Negev. Under Ptolemaic and Seleucid rule, the region thrived with cities, villages, estates, and fortresses, maintaining strong ties to Ptolemaic Egypt. However, archaeological evidence reveals two waves of abandonment in the second century BCE, leaving much of the territory deserted into the first century BCE. Despite this, the southern hills and slopes, along with sites in the Judean Dead Sea desert, exhibit occupational layers above earlier destroyed or abandoned settlements. Some contain only sparse remains, while others show more structured reoccupation, including new settlements. Additionally, the neighboring northern region saw the emergence of new villages. This raises key questions: Where did the former Idumeans go, given that sources suggest they converted and integrated into Judean society? Why did they not resettle their own fertile locales? Were they prevented by the Hasmonean regime? Why were the southern hills and Dead Sea region chosen for reoccupation, while seemingly more suitable areas remained abandoned? Who were these new settlers—refugees, squatters, or organized resettlers? And was this occupation organic or shaped by policy? This lecture examines depositional patterns and material culture to explore the socio-political dynamics of abandonment and resettlement in Idumea, shedding light on Hasmonean territorial strategies and local responses to change.

The Destruction of Mt. Gerizim: Archaeology, History, Interpretation

Andrea M. Berlin[1]
[1] Boston University

The destruction of the sanctuary on Mt. Gerizim by the forces of John Hyrcanus is a key part of the modern understanding of the rise and consolidation of the Hasmonean kingdom. Archaeological excavations found unequivocal evidence of destruction across the site; coins date that event c. 111/110 BCE; and Josephus identifies Hyrcanus as the agent (Antiquities 13.255-256). Yet a closer look at the archaeological details reveals critical discrepancies, omissions, and patterns that undercut the interpretation of a site-wide siege and comprehensive destruction. Rather, the evidence indicates actions that were targeted, performative, and message-laden. In its day, evidence shows that the message was received: the sanctuary was abandoned and its worshippers scattered. However by the first century CE, when Josephus was writing, all aspect of that message had been lost. When the Romans do to the sanctuary in Jerusalem what the Hasmoneans had done to the sanctuary on Mt. Gerizim, no one catches the connection. A similar ignorance of precedent suffuses modern accounts, such that the brutality and finality of this destruction is remade as a victorious dot on a map of expansion.

2G. Megiddo at 100: Exploring the Layers and Legacy of ISAC's Expedition at Armageddon (Studio 2)

Chair(s): Eric Cline, George Washington University; Kiersten Neumann, University of Chicago

The Place of ISAC and Megiddo in the History of Archaeology

Rachel S. Hallote[1]
[1] Purchase College SUNY

When it was founded in the early 20th century, Chicago's Oriental Institute (now renamed ISAC) quickly became prominent in Near Eastern Studies in the United States. It was birthed at a time when many American universities were expanding their interest in the region, and also trying to engage the public through museums. Chicago was at the forefront of these goals. The Megiddo expedition which began in 1925 was instrumental to the prominence of the Oriental Institute. This paper will examine the state of the discipline of Near Eastern Studies at the time of the OI's founding and at the outset of the Megiddo expedition, will explore the ways that the new Institute and excavation helped move the discipline forward, and will examine the outsize role that the Megiddo expedition played in the archaeology of the southern Levant. Lastly, we will discuss the post-Chicago role of Megiddo in the archaeology of the southern Levant.

The House that Chicago Built and the People Who Lived in it

Norma J. Franklin[1]
[1] University of Haifa

In an era when excavation teams typically lived in tents or basic accommodation, the Chicago excavation team at Megiddo constructed a luxurious dig house on the lower mound. Although little of the structure remains today, its grandeur is captured through evocative photographs and memoirs. This lecture celebrates the journey from simple tents to the iconic dig house, exploring its history and significance. Who were the architects? Who lived and worked within its walls? Who visited and left their mark? By exploring these questions, the dig house serves as a fascinating lens into work and play at Megiddo a century ago.

Rummaging through the ISAC Megiddo Archives: Everything You Wanted to Know but Were Afraid to Ask

Eric H. Cline[1]
[1] George Washington University

As I wrote in the Preface to my Digging Up Armageddon book (2020), which documents the Chicago excavations being celebrated in this session today, I found archival research — to which I was a newcomer — to be unexpectedly similar to doing an archaeological excavation, except that it involved digging through paper rather than dirt. As I said there, just as with a dig at an ancient site, where the presence (or absence) of a single item can sometimes make a tremendous difference, trying to resolve a specific issue at an archive often raised a whole host of other questions even while answering the original query. There was also the same thrill of finding something, especially the unexpected; the same dejection at coming up dry despite a promising beginning; and the same satisfaction that comes from putting together enough puzzle pieces to yield a plausible hypothesis for a past event. Moreover, the bits and pieces that I found enabled me to piece

together a story that frequently reads like the script for a daytime soap opera, including staff intrigues, infighting, romance, and dogged perseverance; in other words, a typical excavation, not unlike one today. In this presentation, I will share some of the more interesting (and perhaps unexpected) tidbits, facts, and sordid gossip that I uncovered while doing the research for the book.

Buried in the Archives: New Readings of Burial Practice from Old Excavation Records

Melissa S. Cradic[1]
[1] University at Albany, SUNY

The Institute for the Study of Ancient Cultures (ISAC)'s Megiddo archives document the University of Chicago's sprawling excavations at the site from 1925-1939. This set of archaeological archives contains a rich, and largely unpublished, collection of written and visual sources including letters, field diaries, elevation logs, sketches, plans, and field photographs. This paper demonstrates how these disparate and often fragmentary sources of evidence can be used in combination to address new questions about the site's extensive intramural and extramural burial record, with a special focus on the Middle and Late Bronze Age strata. Specifically, using standardized close reading techniques for observation, measurement, and cross-referencing across source materials, this study leverages these resources to apply new methods of taphonomic analysis to burial contexts. Based on successful test cases, the study argues that legacy visual resources in particular provide a surprisingly detailed and strong dataset for comparative analysis, even with recently excavated burials that have a much higher degree of resolution in their documentation methods. Using the Megiddo archives as a case-study, the paper presents how these datasets and methods have yielded important new insights into burial practice in the Bronze Age Levant. It also highlights the broader impacts of these results, making a case for the significant potential of similar legacy archives from Mandate Palestine for new, high-resolution analytic methods that improve data quality and resolution compared with the sparse qualitative and quantitative evidence that is typically available in final publications of excavations from this period.

Megiddo's Ivory and Gold Hoards: A Tale of Divisions, Acquisitions, Exhibitions, Loans, and Casts

Kiersten Neumann[1]
[1] University of Chicago

The extraordinary ivory and gold hoards excavated by the University of Chicago's Institute for the Study of Ancient Cultures (ISAC) Megiddo Expedition (1925–1939) have long captured scholarly and public interest. The delicately carved ivories, in particular, have been extensively analyzed in terms of stylistic groups, workshops, and trade networks, while the gold objects continue to generate discussions on material composition and Late Bronze Age metalworking. Yet their post-excavation histories—object narratives shaped by institutional priorities, international diplomacy, and colonial-era collecting practices—have received far less attention. This paper traces the trajectories of these objects from their excavation at Megiddo to their distribution between ISAC and the Palestine Archaeological Museum (now the Rockefeller Archaeological Museum) under the partage system of British Mandate Palestine. Through archival records, expedition publications, and museum documentation, it situates Megiddo's ivory and gold hoards within broader discussions on archaeological ethics, collecting legacies, and curatorial strategies for working with artifacts acquired through scientifically controlled excavations conducted under colonial authority. The paper concludes by examining how the ISAC Museum's current exhibition, "Megiddo: A City Unearthed, A Past Imagined" (September 2025–March 2026) re-engages with these materials, demonstrating their continued significance not only as archaeological finds from the infamous Armageddon but also as objects with an active role to play in an evolving museological landscape.

2H. Gender in the Ancient Near East II (The Loft)

Chair(s): Avary Taylor, Yale University; Kelsie Ehalt, University of Michigan

A Second Look at Gender and Power in the Instructions of Ptahhotep

Jacquelyn Williamson[1]
[1] George Mason University

Ptahhotep, in the famous passage in lines 325-337, seems say that it is important to keep a wife from power, and that the husband should control his wife. We often interpret this passage as proof that in ancient Egypt the woman's place was in the home, subject to her husband's superior position. But is that truly what the passage is saying? Interpretations of it can change depending upon which framework of power, or cultural systems, to which one ascribes. As academics, we base our interpretations of gender and power on different, perhaps unconscious, assumptions about power, which particularly impacts our understanding of ancient women. Using Ptahhotep, this paper dismantles colonialist Western expectations about how power functions, with the aim of examining this ancient evidence with new eyes. Expanding upon research presented at the International Congress of Egyptologists in Leiden, new critical perspectives further allow alternate modes of analysis to not only challenge our understanding of the Instructions of Ptahhotep, but how we approach the study of women's roles in ancient Egypt as a whole.

Hormone Monsters and Personal Gods: Anthropomorphized Libidos in Mesopotamia and the Netflix Series Big Mouth

Noam Cohen[1]
[1] Muhlenberg College

The Mesopotamian notion of the personal god is multivalent and difficult to pin down. Scholars have suggested that the personal god could be a tutelary deity, family god, personified ego, and more, all of which are likely true, depending on the circumstances. Several cuneiform texts present the personal god and related tutelary deities as functioning as an anthropomorphized, externalized libido. A young man may have a young, virile personal god, but a man with sexual disfunction "has no god" down below, and a sexually shamed individual may lose his personal god for a period of time. This representation of the personal god is remarkably similar to that of the "hormone monsters" in the Netflix original series Big Mouth (2017 –). In the animated series, human characters are assigned hormone monsters, and it is the monsters' job to encourage sexual experiences, but also to help the humans navigate fraught social situations. Like the personal gods of Mesopotamia, hormone monsters may come and go, and may take different forms depending on the libido of the human subject. This comparative reading highlights the role of the personal god as sexual avatar, among others, and offers a colorful analogue to how the personal god may have been envisioned, particularly in humorous pedagogical texts, such as the legal-pedagogical text known as Old Man and the Young Girl, whose sexual humor recalls that of Big Mouth.

Accuracy, Authenticity, and Representation: Player Perceptions of Gender in Assassin's Creed

Roselyn A. "Rose" Campbell[1]
[1] University of California, Los Angeles

The popular Assassin's Creed video games have been the topic of much discussion amongst academics. Multiple games have been set in the ancient Near East, including Assassin's Creed: Origins (set in

Ptolemaic Egypt), Odyssey (set in Classical Greece), Mirage (9th century Baghdad), and the original Assassin's Creed game, set in the Levant during the Crusades. With the introduction of the Discovery Tours, a franchise that already touted itself as grounded in history added an explicitly educational aspect to its recent games. While many scholars have considered the pedagogical utility of these games, most have focused primarily on accuracy and authenticity (or lack thereof) in the games themselves. This study takes a slightly different approach by considering how players themselves perceive the ancient world as depicted in these games, outside of an explicitly educational context. Focusing primarily on games set in the ancient Near East, this paper considers how players perceive depictions of gender in the Assassin's Creed games. Player impressions were gathered from chat forums and an anonymous online survey. After the preliminary results of this study were presented in 2023, more than 300 additional survey responses were received, and thus this paper provides updated trends and conclusions. One of the core aims of this study is to consider the baseline assumptions that many non-academics may acquire about the ancient Near East, and consider ways to engage in broader and more productive conversations with students and the public about important topics such as gender in the ancient world.

Survey on Field Safety: What Have We Learned in the Past Ten Years?

Beth Alpert Nakhai[1]
[1] The University of Arizona

In response to the alarm raised in 2013 by bioanthropologists Kate Clancy, Robin Nelson, Julienne Rutherford, and Katie Hinde, I committed myself to investigating the problem of safety in the field for female archaeologists working in the Middle East and North Africa – and to making it possible for everyone to engage in fieldwork across our broad region without fear of intimidation, harassment, and violence based on gender, sexual orientation, or gender identity. I obtained the mandated Institutional Review Board certification through University of Arizona and used Qualtrics to develop the Survey on Field Safety: Middle East, North Africa, and the Mediterranean Basin. Circulated in 2014, 2015, 2019, and 2024, the survey provides a decade's worth of data from more than 750 respondents. They report that, over the course of this decade, codes of conduct increasingly contain language defining and prohibiting sexual violations. Responsibility for reporting violations are increasingly mandated, as are repercussions. Nonetheless, acceptance of sexual violations remains a problem, as do drug and alcohol abuse, violence, racial and religious harassment, theft, vandalism, and more. So, too, do harassment, intimidation, and discrimination in fieldwork and post-fieldwork assignments and opportunities based on gender, sexual orientation, and/or gender identity, and expropriation of professional contributions. Perpetrators of assaults and other violations include individuals holding positions of authority. This presentation provides some of the data gleaned from this project, presents areas of ongoing concern, and offers thoughts about how to move forward toward the goal of safety and equity for all in our field.

2I. Recent Work in the Archaeological Sciences (Whittier)

Chair(s): Alyssa V. Pietraszek, University of Haifa; Hannah M. Herrick, Simon Fraser University

Reconstructing Relative Sea-Level Changes & the Ancient Coastline of Caesarea, Israel: Insights from the Geological and Archaeological Records

Alyssa V. Pietraszek[1], Roy Jaijel[2], Mor Kanari[2], Beverly N. Goodman Tchernov[1]
[1] University of Haifa, [2] Israel Oceanographic and Limnological Research, Haifa

Coastal zones are inherently dynamic, shaped by processes such as sediment deposition, erosion, sea-level fluctuations, shoreline retreat, and episodic events, which complicate paleoshoreline reconstructions and the identification of the original seaward extent of coastal archaeological sites. However, integrating geological and archaeological records may offer a more complete view of coastal landscape changes. This research examines the ancient Mediterranean coastline of Caesarea, Israel, north of the ancient Roman megaharbor Caesarea Maritima, where an aqueduct and ancient sewer outlet extend into a modern bay. Archaeological, drone, and geophysical surveys were combined with sedimentary analyses from two submerged contexts: a sediment core collected ~200 m offshore within a palaeochannel visible in the seismic data, and an underwater excavation ~500 m offshore of the sewer outlet. The core reveals recent (past few centuries) marine sands overlying fine-grained terrestrial sediments dated to ~12,000-6,000 BCE. In contrast, the offshore stratigraphy preserves a near-continuous sequence of marine sands and event horizons, including deposits from the Roman Period. These findings suggest that the offshore area was a protected marine environment or below the influence of breaking waves, while the nearshore coring location was likely terrestrial during the Roman Period. This study provides critical insights into the coastline's relative position during the timing of Caesarea's occupation and improves our understanding of recent relative sea-level changes along this stretch of Mediterranean coast, contributing to broader knowledge of how coastal systems respond to sea-level fluctuations.

Archaeomagnetic Dating of the Late Bronze Age Collapse and Early Iron Age in the Southern Levant

Yoav Vaknin[1], Ron Shaar[2], Oded Lipschits[1], Stefan B. Münger[4], Amihai Mazar[5], Erez Ben-Yosef[1]
[1] Tel Aviv University, [4] University of Bern, [5] Institute of Archaeology

One of the major challenges in archaeology is the ability to accurately and precisely date archaeological finds. In the study of the Bronze and Iron ages, dating is usually based mainly on ceramic typology and radiocarbon dating. Ceramic typology, even when well-established, provides only a relative chronology. Radiocarbon dating requires organic archaeological materials which are not always available and yields absolute age ranges, which are often too wide to enable precise interpretations. Despite intensive use of radiocarbon dating for over more than two decades, the Levantine Iron Age chronology debate, related to biblical history, remained unresolved. In this lecture we will present archaeomagnetic dating results from Late Bronze and Iron Age destruction layers and pottery assemblages combined with new radiocarbon dating results. Our method is based mainly on the reconstruction of the direction and intensity of the ancient geomagnetic field "recorded" in destruction layers burnt during military campaigns. This reconstruction resulted in a precise curve of the changes in the geomagnetic field. The curve enables high-precision archaeomagnetic dating by comparing magnetic data recorded in poorly constrained materials with the well-dated curve. Combining this dating method with new radiocarbon dates resulted in precise dating of archaeological finds and historical events, such as the destruction of Shiloh. It also helped resolve the ongoing debate regarding the date of the arrival of the Philistines in Canaan and its relation to the Egyptian withdrawal from this region, a debate which began more than four decades ago and has major implications for biblical history.

Harnessing the Potential of Microarchaeological Biominerals for Isotope-based Reconstruction of Past Climate: A Case Study from the Indus Valley Site of Tigrana, Haryana

Ritvik Chaturvedi[1], Narendra Parmar[2], Anil K. Pokharia[3], Pankaj Kumar[4], Prosenjit Ghosh[1]

[1] Indian Institute of Science, [2] Central University of Haryana, Mahendragarh, [3] Birbal Sahni Institute of Palaeosciences, Lucknow, [4] Inter University Accelerator Centre, New Delhi

The excavation of an archaeological site involves systematically removing sediment, which contains a 'micro-archaeological' record not always visible to the naked eye. Examples include bones of smaller species, teeth, and organic plant matter. To reconstruct past environments, the micro-archaeological record of molluscs was examined. Molluscs produce calcium carbonate ($CaCO_3$) shells, typically aragonite, through bio-mineralisation. Like biologically produced minerals of bones and teeth, mollusc shells constitute a critical component of a site's micro-archaeological record. As mollusc shells biomineralize in isotopic equilibrium with ambient water, their oxygen isotope composition ($\delta^{18}O$) reflects changes in external temperature. This makes them valuable proxies for reconstructing environmental conditions, corroborated by laboratory studies with molluscs grown in controlled temperatures. Globally, mollusc shells are durable, well-preserved biogenic recoveries across archaeological sites. However, their potential for reconstructing palaeo-environments has been underutilized in Indian archaeology, where they are often limited to species enumeration. Here, we present a continuous $\delta^{18}O$ record from the molluscan assemblage of the Chalcolithic Indus Valley site of Tigrana, Haryana. Located in the upper basin of the River Saraswati palaeochannel, the site saw continuous occupation from the Mature to Late Indus phases. Our preliminary $\delta^{18}O_{aragonite}$ data reconstructs past temperatures from 4500–400.

Clay Sourcing of the Erbil Plain: Preliminary Results

Kyra Kaercher[1],
[1] Montana State University- Northern

Ceramics, because of their ubiquity on archaeological sites, have been used as proxies for various cultural aspects including technological development, trade networks, ideological patterns, and cultural contact. This project seeks to understand clay procurement and firing of ceramics by analyzing clay sources found on the Erbil Plain. The Erbil Plain surrounds the modern-day city of Erbil in Iraqi Kurdistan. Previous research has shown a broad Erbil Plain regionality for the manufacturing location of ceramics found on the plain based on comparisons with published geological sources. This paper presents the preliminary analysis of nineteen samples taken around the Erbil Plain in 2023-4. Using thin section petrography, linked with geological collections from the surface and published resources, we can begin to determine the types of clays in the region surrounding Erbil. The samples are also fired at multiple temperatures, and analyzed via Fourier Transform Infrared Spectroscopy to create a baseline for identifying firing temperatures in the various clays. These clays are also compared to thin sections of ceramics from the Neo- and Post-Assyrian ceramics from the site of Qach Rresh, Iraqi Kurdistan to begin to look at differences in clay usage and technological development. Future plans for this work include more clay sourcing, geochemical patterning, and the creation of a database for the Erbil plain, and Kurdistan in general.

DNA Evidence from the Fall of Nineveh (Halzi Gate)

Victoria Moses[1], Arie Shaus[1,3], Michael McCormick[1], David Reich[1], Michael Shamoon-Pour[2]
[1] Harvard University, [2] Binghamton University, [3] Mount Holyoke College

Ancient DNA (aDNA) is a powerful tool for answering fundamental archaeological questions of ancestry, kinship, and mobility in the ancient Near East. aDNA evidence from the historical period in the Near East remains underrepresented, primarily due to challenges with preservation. However, recent advances in analytical techniques and targeted sampling of historical period sites are addressing this underrepresentation. Our successful aDNA sampling of individuals from the Halzi Gate at Nineveh showcases the impact of aDNA and enriches our understanding of this significant archaeological context. The excavations of the Halzi Gate in 1989-1990 uncovered in situ evidence for the destruction of Nineveh. Just outside of the monumental fortification of this fallen capital, twelve individuals and a horse were subject to violent deaths, with arrowheads embedded around the skeletons and rampant osteological trauma suggesting the collapse of the gate during the invaders' attack. Our aDNA analysis of seven of these individuals provides further information about the identities of these victims. They included both biologically male and female individuals, and none were close relatives, including the infant and subadult individuals. While the sampled individuals were genetically unrelated, they show evidence for similar ancestry that aligns with other individuals from the region and period.

2J. Africa in the Ancient World II (White Hill)

Chair(s): Brenda J. Baker, Arizona State University; Michele R. Buzon, Purdue University

Interpreting Changing Patterns of Mobility and Social Organization Using a Multi-isotopic Approach in Kerma-period Sudan

Lesley A. Gregoricka[1], Brenda Baker[2]
[1] University of South Alabama, [2] Arizona State University

Human movement in ancient Nubia has been interpreted primarily through isotopic studies of dental enamel derived from colonized, sedentary agricultural communities at and north of the third cataract of the Nile River, revealing the presence of likely Egyptian migrants who may have settled there. Conversely, this study approaches questions of mobility through a diachronic examination of pastoral communities beyond control of the Egyptian state, between the fourth and fifth cataracts around al Qinifab, Sudan. Expanding on prior strontium isotope analyses, we analyzed 61 teeth from 30 individuals throughout the Early/Middle, Classic, and Late Kerma phases (2500-1100 BCE) for stable oxygen and carbon isotope values. While strontium isotope ratios were indicative of a highly mobile people whose movements gradually declined over time, oxygen isotope values ($\bar{x}$=2.8 ± 1.4, 1σ) did not vary significantly, suggesting that drinking water continued to be derived from isotopically similar sources. Nevertheless, carbon isotope ($\bar{x}$=-7.0 ± 1.9, 1σ) value ranges—initially limited in the Early/Middle (-9.3 to -5.2; Δ4.1) and Classic (-8.0 to -4.7; Δ3.3) phases—doubled in variance (-11.3 to -2.9; Δ8.4) by the Late Kerma. This variety of carbon was likely the result of a shift from a diet centered around secondary animal products to more heterogeneous foodstuffs derived not only from managed herds but also domesticated plants. Altogether, data suggest that the mobile pastoralism practiced during Early/Middle Kerma phase gave rise to the adoption of a more sedentary agropastoral economy by Late Kerma groups, perhaps as part of Kushite state coalescence.

Strontium and Oxygen Isotope Variability in the Ancient Nile Valley:
An Overview Migration Research and Avenues for Future Approaches

Michele R. Buzon[1], Iwona Kozieradzka-Ogunmakin[2]
[1] Purdue University, [2] University of Exeter and University of Warsaw

Human groups in the ancient Nile Valley of modern-day Sudan and Egypt moved about the landscape over the millennia for myriad reasons, including, but not limited to, subsistence strategies, resource exploitation, and sociopolitical expansions. Isotope analysis of human tissues has been used over the last decades as a means of identifying first generation immigrants and tracing the movements of individuals and communities. This presentation provides an overview of strontium and oxygen isotope analyses in the region with the goals of understanding the variability through time and space and identifying useful trends in the data. Faunal, sediment, and botanical isotope values are presented to explore overall distribution. Established local ranges and human values indicate a large degree of overlap. Suggestions are made for the practical and reasonable usage of these data in answering questions about ancient human mobility as well as avenues for future research.

'Where the South Declines towards the Setting Sun': Commodifying Kush in Achaemenid Persia

Peter M. Johnson[1]
[1] New York University

After Cambyses' successful conquest of Egypt in 525 BCE, classical sources tell us that the Achaemenid king continued his campaign south into Nubia where he eventually failed to establish control. Scholars debate the historicity of this event given the lack of archeological evidence to support such an invasion. Regardless of whether such a campaign occurred, these sources speak to an Achaemenid fascination with the people, land, and resources that lay beyond Egypt. Darius I eventually includes Kush as one of his satraps, or tributary nations, which supported the Persian throne even though the region never came under direct Achaemenid control. Nubians begin to appear in tribute scenes on royal monuments offering ivory, gold, and ebony. Kush's payments were characterized as gifts rather than tribute and reflected the strategy used by the Persians to symbolically integrate Kush into the empire. Rather than ruling Kush directly, the Persians leveraged Kushite commodities as a form of symbolic dominance. These depictions of Nubians drew on conventions established by the Egyptians, Assyrians, and Phoenicians to bolster their legitimacy. By examining the small corpus of texts and representations pertaining to Nubia during the Achaemenid Empire, this paper explores how Nubians were symbolically exploited and exoticized in the 6th and 5th c. BCE as a tool for imperial statecraft.

Migratory Exchanges at the Cross-roads of Antiquity: Tracing the Interactions Between South Arabia and the Horn of Africa through Epigraphical Evidence

Valentina A. Grasso[1]
[1] Bard College

This paper traces the interactions between South Arabia and the Horn of Africa from the first millennium BCE to the 3rd century CE to evaluate the cultural, economic, and political impact of seaborn cross-cultural exchanges between the two regions. My analysis highlights the extent to which contacts across the Red Sea contributed to the development of cross-regional networks that enabled trade in the Mediterranean and the Indian Ocean during Antiquity. At the same time, it examines how these interactions influenced the social and political structures of the societies involved in the period leading to the unification of South Arabia under Himyar and the heyday of the kingdom of Aksum on the opposite shore of th Red Sea.

Mapping the Ancient Kushites/Ethiopians in Pre-Christian Antiquity: A Study Based on Written Sources

Asterios Kechagias[1]
[1] North-West University

Ancient Sudan and its inhabitants were referred to in the Bible and Egyptian sources as Kush/Kash and Kushites. This name appears to correspond to the Greek terms Aethiopia and Aethiopians, though the latter sometimes have a broader meaning. In any case, until the end of the first millennium BCE, Aethiopia primarily denoted regions of ancient Sudan. This paper seeks to gather and examine various ancient Greek, Latin, Biblical, Mesopotamian, and Egyptian sources to determine the geographical locations where Aethiopians/Kushites are attested in antiquity. Specifically, these sources mention Aethiopians as inhabitants or visitors in the following regions: African Kush, West Africa (Morocco), Yemen, India, Iran, the Levant, and several Aegean islands (Cyprus, Kos, Lesbos, and Samothrace). Some sources depict them as permanent residents, while others describe them as travelers or temporary visitors. The primary objective of this study is to map the ancient Aethiopians based on written sources. After careful examination of the various sources, it will become evident that many—if not all—of the Ethiopians mentioned as residing in the aforementioned locations are directly or indirectly connected to the broader Sudan region. Whether these accounts reflect historical reality is a question that requires archaeological investigation; a complex and challenging endeavor. Regardless of archaeological confirmation, the belief that Aethiopians, primarily from Sudan, traveled or

migrated to such diverse regions is significant in itself. This perception provides valuable insight into how different ancient cultures understood the movement and presence of Aethiopians/Kushites across the ancient world.

2K. Glyptic Databases: Collaboration and Integration in the Digital Humanities Transition (Tremont)

Chair(s): Ben Greet, The University of Zurich; Nadia Ben-Marzouk, The University of Zurich

Digitizing the Corpus of Indus Seals and Inscriptions: Challenges and Opportunities

Marta Ameri[1], Gregg Jamison[2]
[1] Colby College, [2] University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee

As we begin the process of digitizing the material first collected in the Corpus of Indus Seals and Inscriptions (CISI), we are faced with several challenges that reflect the inherent contradictions embodied in the study of glyptic materials from the Indus Civilization. While the Corpus itself was established primarily as a way of collecting inscribed materials in order to facilitate the study (and possible decipherment) of the Indus script, a growing corpus of archeological data and changing theoretical frameworks for the study of seals and sealings have significantly altered the approaches to both glyptic and script studies. The digitization of the Corpus offers an opportunity to better serve the needs of the academic communities studying these materials, but also highlights the conflicting needs of different groups, raising the question of whether it is possible to create a single product that can satisfy all the constituencies.

"Hebrew Stamp Seals" (HSS): A New Database of Provenanced Iron Age Hebrew Seals (Virtual)

Eythan Levy[1]
[1] Universitaet Zuerich

This talk will present the "Hebrew Stamp Seals" (HSS) database, a new online database of provenanced Iron Age Hebrew seals and seal impressions. The database contains an exhaustive catalogue of such items, focusing on epigraphic aspects. It is hosted at the university of Bern and can be accessed by the institutional URL https://nodegoat.unibe.ch/viewer.p/32 or the shortcut https://hebrewseals.com. The database was implemented using the Nodegoat database system (https://nodegoat.net/) for digital humanities, which allows archaeologists to easily develop, host and deploy databases of artifacts, and provides nice geographical visualizations. The presentation will feature a broad presentation of the database and will then highlight some of the challenges encountered during its development. We will also present some use cases, highlighting the extraction of quantitative information from the database.

The Digital Corpus of Stamp-Seals from the Southern Levant: Advancing the Digital Glyptics Transition

Stefan B. Münger[1]
[1] University of Bern (Switzerland) -- Kinneret Regional Project

The Digital Corpus of Stamp-Seals from the Southern Levant (CSSL; cssl.levantineseals.org) has evolved into a cornerstone resource in glyptic studies, continuously enhancing its collaborative and integrative capabilities. This paper presents the latest technological advancements within CSSL, focusing on the integration of AI-driven semantic search and deep learning tools to enrich research methodologies in digital glyptics. The advantages and challenges of these new technologies are examined, technical obstacles encountered during implementation are addressed, and insights are provided into how these features facilitate a more dynamic exploration of the extensive dataset of Southern Levantine stamp-seals. In addition, the current version of CSSL will be demonstrated to showcase recent improvements in data retrieval, user experience, and accessibility that pave the way for broader, interdisciplinary research questions, new methodological strategies, and novel analytical approaches to further strengthen CSSL's role as a robust tool in the digital humanities transition.

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 19, 2025 | 2:00pm–4:05pm (EST)

3A. Jerusalem and the Archaeology of a Sacred City III (Grand Ballroom A)

Chairs(s): Prof. Yuval Gadot, Department of Archaeology and Ancient Near Eastern Cultures, Tel-Aviv University; Dr. Yiftah Shalev, Israel Antiquities Authority

The Excavations beneath Wilson's Arch and their significance on understanding Roman Period Jerusalem

Joe Uziel[1], Tehillah Lieberman[1]
[1] Israel Antiquities Authority

Wilson's Arch is one of the most outstanding and discussed monuments in the research of ancient Jerusalem. The arch, which supported one of the entrances to the Temple Mount, remained fully standing and intact, since its construction and through to modern times, where it still supports the entrance to the Haram al-Sharif. The excavations, conducted by the Israel Antiquities Authority between 2015 and 2018, aimed at resolving one of the most heated debates in the archaeology of Jerusalem – the date of construction of the arch. The following lecture will present an overview of the importance of the finds, particularly of the Roman period, in lieu of the publication of the final report of the excavations. The lecture will explore the debate revolving around the construction of the arch, which can now be securely placed in the Early Roman Period, as well as the importance of the unexpected discovery of a theater-like like structure in the urban fabric of the budding Roman colony, Aelia Capitolina.

Jerusalem's Southeast Sector in the Late Roman Period

Jodi Magness[1]
[1] University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill

Excavations in the Givati Parking Lot have brought to light a large, late Roman peristyle building, which, according to the excavators, was constructed in the late third-early fourth century CE and destroyed in the earthquake of 363. In this paper, I evaluate the chronology of this building in the light of the published evidence and consider its relationship to late Roman houses to the south, which were excavated in 1927 by J. W. Crowfoot and G. M. Fitzgerald.

The Surroundings of the Temple Mount after the Destruction of 70 CE and the Foundation of Aelia Capitolina – Who Lived and Who Built in This Area? Thoughts in Light of the Excavations of Wilson's Arch and the Great Causeway

Shlomit Weksler-Bdolah[1]
[1] Israeli Antiquities Authority

Excavations conducted in recent years at the foot of the Western Wall of the Herodian Temple Mount, under the huge arch, known as 'Wilson's Arch' revealed a small, Roman period Odeon. The surprising location of the Odeon, which was evidently built later than the western wall of the Temple Mount and Wilson's Arch – raises many questions. The Odeon – whose construction was never completed, and it is not clear whether it was ever used – was dated to the first half of the second century CE, during the foundation of Aelia Capitolina. Its rapid covering with earth fills shortly thereafter – adds doubts about the course of events that shaped this area. In the lecture, I intend to examine the place of the Odeon in the urban

layout that began to develop at the foot of the Temple Mount immediately after the destruction of the Herodian city in 70 CE, and was finally shaped a few years after the foundation of Aelia Capitolina in the days of Hadrian. I shall rely on the final reports of the Israel Antiquities Authority excavations at Wilson's Arch (directed by Uziel and Lieberman), and west of Wilson's Arch (directed by Onn, and myself), as well as on finds revealed and published in Bahat excavations. The findings allow a cautious discussion of the development of the urban layout in this area, which began immediately after the destruction of Jerusalem at 70 CE.

A Statue is Worth a Thousand Words: The Microhistory of Two Roman Statues from Aelia Capitolina

Guy D. Stiebel[1]
[1] Tel Aviv University

A Statue is Worth a Thousand Words: The Microhistory of Two Roman Statues from Aelia Capitolina Recent excavations in Jerusalem have yielded a wealth of new data regarding the Roman city of Aelia Capitolina. This paper focuses on two artefacts only—two small marble statues unearthed within the city's boundaries—that illuminate a relatively underexplored aspect of Aelia Capitolina: its artistic heritage. A fresh interpretation is proposed for the first artefact, an ornately decorated statue base discovered in the Christian Quarter, which exhibits a unique set of features. The second artefact, a fragmented marble head of a female figure, is examined set in context within the Roman mansion (villa urbana) where it was found. Both statues offer new insights into the inhabitants of the Roman city, its architectural landscape, and, no less importantly, its divine sphere—encompassing both earthly and heavenly (Roman) Jerusalem.

Wilsons Arch: Extracting Archaeological Data from Historical Archives

Shimon Gibson[1]
[1] University of North Carolina at Charlotte

This lecture examines the historical documentation and archaeological research surrounding Wilson's Arch in Jerusalem, a significant architectural structure on the western side of the Temple Mount. Early travellers and explorers frequently recorded observations of the massive ancient masonry in this area, with Rabbi Joseph Schwarz's 1845 account providing one of the earliest known references to the clearance of a subterranean space beneath what later became known as Wilson's Arch. However, it was Swiss explorer Titus Tobler in 1846 who first physically examined and described its interior, followed by notable nineteenth-century researchers such as James T. Barclay, Charles Wilson, and Charles Warren, and later by William Franklin Stinespring in 1963. Archaeological investigations have since sparked extensive scholarly discussions regarding multiple aspects of Wilson's Arch, including its dating, structural function, and architectural relationships. Key debates center on its chronological development as part of a bridge spanning the Tyropoeon Valley, its role as the base of the Lower Aqueduct supplying water to the Ḥaram, and its connection to the Hasmonean and Herodian First Wall defensive systems. By analysing historical records and excavation data, this lecture aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of Wilson's Arch within its architectural and historical contexts, offering insights into its significance prior to the most recent excavations conducted at the site.

3B. Archaeology of Mesopotamia II (Grand Ballroom B)

Chair(s): Lucas Proctor, J.W. Geothe University Frankfurt; Glynnis Maynard, Cambridge University

Dilmun and Mesopotamian Interaction During the Bronze Age: Elemental Composition of Pottery Assemblages from 4000-year-old Site on Failaka Island (Kuwait) Using pXRF

Hasan Ashkanani[1]
[1] Kuwait University

The Barbar-period pottery type (2030 -1950 BC.) from Tell Saad and F6 sites in Failaka Island have been widely recognized to reconstruct the provide cultural affiliation and chronological schematics. The pottery assemblage from Ur III Dynasty period was also identified to attest the existence of regional interaction between Mesopotamia and the Arabian Gulf. A total of 188 ceramic sherds from Tell Saad and F6 in Kuwait in addition to Qala'at and the Royal Mounds of A'ali in Bahrain, as reference groups, are subject to non-destructive portable X-ray fluorescence (pXRF) spectrometry. The aim of this study to examin the perfomance of pXRF to differentiate between the two civilizations' assemblage and reconstruct the chemical database of the Bronze Age pottery. Its first kind of this study, the results indicate that chemcial analyses can successfully distinguish subgroups within a typological category of ceramic assemblages non-destructively. The results also identified the five trace elements were help to obtain the chemical composition which can provide more insight into the similarities and differences among Dilmun Barbar-period pottery types.

Irrigation Systems in the Iraqi Western Desert: An Analysis of the Abu Jir Springs Line (Virtual)

Jaafar Jotheri[1], Louise Rayne[2], Ali Algbouri[2]
[1] University of Al-Qadisiyah, [2] Newcastle University

Abu Jir Springs, located at the boundary between the Mesopotamian floodplain and the Arabian Plateau, represents a series of natural springs that have been active since the region achieved geological stability during the late Pleistocene epoch. These springs have historically attracted human settlement, and many are linked to activities related to irrigation and habitation. The significance of these springs increased during the Sasanian period when the area became the western frontier of the Sasanian Empire. However, In recent decades, most springs have dried up due to excessive groundwater extraction and climate change. The irrigation system in this region remains largely unexplored, as academic attention has primarily been directed towards the Mesopotamian floodplain. In this study, the irrigation systems around these springs, including canals, farms, and qanat, have been mapped. Twenty-two springs were selected as case studies, with their irrigation canals and farms mapped accordingly. Satellite images from 1960s to 2024 were used to trace the canals, followed by ground truthing in 2023 and 2024. Several criteria characterise the irrigation canals and farms in the study area, such as most springs featuring a combination of canals, fortresses, and farms. The inhabitants demonstrated advanced water management practices, such as utilising grouped springs and qanats for irrigation. They also implemented trial-and-error methods for canal construction, along with specialised canals designed to drain excess water.

Assyria's People Problem: Minding the Country and Feeding the City (Virtual)

Petra M. Creamer[1]
[1] Emory University

In the first millennium BCE, imperial Assyrian urban centers such as Nimrud, Erbil, and Nineveh sustained growing populations which outstripped those of earlier polities, creating urgent challenges to maintaining the empire both abroad and at home. In this paper, I investigate the potential urban density of such sites to estimate the resources required to sustain the urban population of the Heartland. Apparent responses to supplying such a growing population include programs of mass population resettlement, agricultural

intensification, and increasingly centralized administration over the landscape and its resources, though the precise mechanisms for these are still poorly understood. I pair this discussion with the recent results from the ongoing archaeological project, Rural Landscapes of Iron Age Imperial Mesopotamia (RLIIM), which investigates the nature of nonurban sites founded during the height of the Assyrian Empire and their persistence through imperial collapse in 612 BCE. Excavations and remote sensing at the site of Qach Rresh on the Erbil Plain have pointed to the site's importance as a rural center for storage and production, illuminating Assyrian strategies for administering the productive countryside and distributing agropastoral goods to cities.

Agricultural Adaptation Practices in the Area of Lagash

Zaid Alrawi[1]
[1] University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology

The region of ancient site of Lagash in southern Iraq is known for its widespread marshes. Seasonal fluctuation in the water level of these marshes contributes to the creation of environmental challenges to the local farmers who invest in the limited lands suitable for crops either in the marshes, or on their fringes. With remote sensing methods, Geographical Information Systems (GIS), and ethnographic information, this paper describes two strategies adopted by the local farmers in order to cope with the issues of salinization and lack of available arable land. The simplicity of these two practices suggests that they have deep roots in the regional past. It is likely that they were implemented in ancient times, as well as in other regions of southern Mesopotamia having similar natural settings. Further exploration of these two strategies in the future will help in better understating of how ancient farmers adapted to their changing environment.

3C. Cultural Heritage: Preservation, Presentation, and Management III (Georgian)

Chair(s): Nour Munawar, University of Amsterdam

The Iraqi Museum in the 21st Century: War, Looting, Recovery, and the Ongoing Struggle to Preserve Iraq's Heritage

Ali H. Mohsin[1], Yasir Al-Zubaidi[2]
[1] University of Michigan, [2] The Iraqi National Museum

The 2003 looting of the Iraq Museum led to the disappearance of around 100,000 artifacts, a devastating blow to Iraq's cultural heritage. In the years since, recovery efforts have led to the return of significant objects, including the famous Gilgamesh Dream Tablet, repatriated from the U.S. in 2021. Despite these successes, the museum continues to face challenges in preserving and managing its collection. As the former registrar of the Iraqi Museum, I will provide an overview of the museum's registration process, explaining how artifacts arrive through excavations, donations, and confiscations, and how they are documented, archived, and allocated to storage, displays, or exhibitions. I will also outline the procedures for scholars seeking access to unpublished materials in the museum's collection. Researchers must follow a formal application process to study and photograph artifacts, ensuring their work aligns with the museum's policies on preservation and scholarship. This presentation is particularly relevant for excavation teams and academics working in Iraq, as understanding these procedures is essential for the proper and legal handling of artifacts from discovery to curation.

The National Museum of Sudan in Khartoum: From the Looting of Collections to the Virtual Museum

Faïza Drici[1]
[1] French Archaeological Unit for Sudanese Antiquities

Since April 2023, Sudan is embroiled in armed conflict. The destabilization and the insecurity affecting all regions of Sudan have resulted the cessation of cultural, scientific and academic activities. In this context, the archaeological heritage has not been spared: several museums have been looted, including the National Museum of Sudan in Khartoum. Inaugurated in 1971, this major cultural institution preserves and exhibits the country's archaeological discoveries. The collections come from sites dating from prehistory to medieval periods, including masterpieces from the ancient kingdoms of Kerma, Napata and Meroe. Since 2019, the National Corporation for Antiquities and Museums (NCAM) has been working on the rehabilitation of the museum. The reopening to the public was scheduled for the end of 2023, but the war led to this major project being abandoned. Since then, satellite images have confirmed the loading and transport of a large number of objects by trucks towards the borders of the country. Access to these collections is now more important than ever. The NCAM and the French Archeological Unit for Sudanese Antiquities (SFDAS) have started the creation of a Virtual Museum. This project, essential to the protection and the valorization of Sudanese cultural heritage, will ensure for the first time online access to one of the most important African museum collections today under threat, but also to precious archival documents. It will be an essential tool in the fight against illicit trafficking of cultural property on which the competent authorities can rely. These treasures are today the subject of growing concern among the international scientific community, which fears their deterioration or illicit sale.

Results of the Survey and Documentation of Al-madina Archaeological Site

Karrar Al-majidi[1]
[1] University of Glasgow

Surveying and documentation work is one of the most important available methods to know the patterns of settlement, human lifestyles, the condition of archaeological sites, and the impact of natural, human and animal factors on them in order to take the necessary measures and provide protection and preparation for excavation, rehabilitation, maintenance and subsequent preservation operations. Therefore, our study on the archaeological site (Al-Madinah) in Al-Amara District in Maysan Governorate was one of several sites included in the archaeological survey work in the year (2023) that aims to know the history of the site, document its condition, use old cadastro maps, study and photograph the site and the pieces spread on its surface, draw them, prepare maps via the (GIS) program, and use a drone and a (differential) device to create a high-resolution contour and topographic map of the site.

Wrap Up, Q&As, Moving Forward and Plans for ASOR 2026

Nour Munawar[1]
[1] University of Amsterdam

3D. Violence in the Ancient Near East and Hebrew Bible I (Arlington)

Chair(s): Anthony P. Soohoo, SJ, Pontifical Biblical Institute; Shane Thompson, North Carolina Wesleyan College; Laura Battini, Collège de France

Translating Violence in New Kingdom Egypt: Terminology and Implications

Jonathan Winnerman[1]
[1] University of California, Los Angeles

Egyptological discussions of violence have greatly expanded in recent years, moving beyond the historical dimension to focus on the treatment of captive bodies, statues, and even scribes. These advances, grounded largely in art historical, theoretical, and archaeological sources, however, have not been reflected by shifts

in translations. Within the realm of philology, scholars still rely on a somewhat consistent set of Egyptian words that may be translated as "violence," but it is unclear why these specific words should be singled out from other potentially violent terminology. Many, most notably pr-ʿ, can only be understood this way metonymically, and they all have literal translations that are just as often if not more commonly found in scholarship. The choice of whether to translate "violence" is therefore a subjective one, but one that has greater implications for how we view the associated actions and the role of violence within Egyptian culture. This presentation will discuss several terms, which may be translated as "violence," in their monumental, pharaonic context. In doing so, it seeks to analyze them through the lens of recent scholarship, to assess whether these translations are appropriate, and to comment more generally on the problem of studying violence in antiquity.

The Lexicon of Destruction

Jonathan S. Gardner[1]
[1] Trinity International University

Urbicide, the intentional destruction of urban spaces for no military purpose, has been a significant topic in genocide studies since the Bosnian War of the late 1990s. However, the practice has rarely been discussed in ancient Near Eastern and Hebrew Bible studies, where the primary focus has been on the destruction of human life. Yet, it is well recognized that the targeted destruction of urban spaces was a common practice in the ancient Near East. The Assyrians were notorious for their violent destruction of cities, with the phrase "I destroyed, I demolished, I burned with fire" echoing like a mantra throughout their royal inscriptions. In addition to their willingness to destroy, the Assyrians employed a variety of methods, including fire, water, and pickaxes, among other means, to tear down opposing cities. This study distills the language of destruction into a "Lexicon of Destruction" to differentiate general destruction from intentional acts of urbicide carried out by the Assyrians and to explore the meaning behind these episodes. Royal inscriptions and palace reliefs are examined in tandem to provide the fullest possible picture of each event. It is hoped that understanding the Assyrians' prolific lexicon will offer a valuable lens for interpreting other instances of urban destruction and urbicide in the ancient Near East.

Gender Identity and 'Grammars of Violence' in Middle Assyrian Law

Samantha Rainford[1], Noam Cohen[2]
[1] New York University, [2] Muhlenberg College

Tablet A of the Middle Assyrian Laws (MAL A) comprises laws that almost exclusively concern women, with §19-20 as exceptions that deal with sexual intercourse between males. Both laws imply the feminization of male passive sexual partners through sex acts: the theft of a male's masculinity through rape or the relinquishment of one's own masculinity through consensual sex. To use Sharon Marcus's terminology, the laws emphasize a script or "grammar" of violence in which men are subjects/perpetrators of violence and women are objects/victims of violence. We argue that this "grammar of violence" is used to re-classify male victims of same sex sexual violence as "women", a shift made more overt by the inclusion of these laws on a tablet of so-called "women's laws." Even the act of gender re-scripting (that is, rendering a male victim of sexual violence as a "woman") could be culturally violent, as shown in two Neo-Assyrian texts that disparage and insult a certain Bel-Eṭir by calling him a "raped captive" and a "woman." We conclude with an exploration of female sexual predation and how it fits into this grammar of violence and suggest that, while envisioned to be potential active solicitors of sex or even dominant sexual partners, they remain rendered in a grammatically passive manner, consistent with the Middle Assyrian cultural paradigm that scripts women into passive sexual roles. Therefore, while a male victim of sexual violence can be re-scripted as feminine, female instigators of sex cannot be re-scripted as masculine.

"Today You have Ordained Yourselves": Levite Violence and the Politics of Identity in Exodus 32

Lenin Prado[1]
[1] Brandeis University

This paper analyzes Exodus 32:25–29—the episode in which the Levites kill approximately 3,000 Israelites after the worship of the golden calf—as a case of ritualized violence that redefines communal identity, enforces internal boundaries, and legitimizes emerging leadership in ancient Israel. Rather than treating the passage as a straightforward punishment narrative, the study argues that the Levites perform a symbolic act that reconstructs group membership and secures their elevated status within the community. The analysis draws on theoretical insights from religious studies scholars Jonathan Z. Smith, Bruce Lincoln, William T. Cavanaugh, and Catherine Bell. Smith's work on ritual as symbolic action helps frame the Levites' violence as a means of reordering the community following a crisis. Lincoln highlights how discourse and violence together produce authoritative distinctions and reinforce social structures. Cavanaugh critiques the modern religious/secular violence binary, showing how the label "religious" often conceals the political and identity-shaping roles violence can play. His critique clarifies that the Levites' actions do not reflect irrational zeal but enact a deliberate, internally directed performance of communal reconstruction and institutional legitimation. Bell's understanding of ritual as a socially embedded practice further illuminates how the Levites negotiate power and formalize group boundaries through their actions. By drawing on these intersecting frameworks, this paper demonstrates that Exodus 32 portrays ritual violence as a tool for resolving internal disorder, forging collective identity, and establishing the Levites' authority within a reordered social structure.

Widely Disseminated Violence: Studying Variants of the Violence Represented or Described in the Evidence of the Ancient Near East (Virtual)

Rita Dolce[1]
[1] Università degli Studi Roma TRE

Based on the research currently underway on violence, depicted or described, some variants are identified aside from officially displayed and heroic-epic violence. This violence, which I define as "widely disseminated violence", is accomplished in different ways, indirect or subliminal, manifest or identifiable in the visual evidence, and also perceptible in the written sources.

3E. Digital Archaeology and History I (Berkeley & Clarendon)

Chair(s): Leigh Anne Lieberman, Princeton University; Matthew Howland, Wichita State University

Paleo-Hebrew Seal Script: Typology and Network Analysis (Virtual)

Eythan Levy[1], Silas K. Klein[2]
[1] Universitaet Zurich, [2] Faculdade Unida de Vitória

This paper will present work accomplished in the framework of the SPARK research project "Paleographic networks: Towards automated paleographic dating", funded by the Swiss National Science Foundation, and carried out at the Institute of Jewish Studies at the University of Bern. The project aimed at developing a quantitative methodology for paleographic dating based on the explicit modelling of ground paleographic data, allowing for an automated extraction of dating estimates from digitally encoded paleographic models. The case study examined in this project is the script of provenanced paleo-Hebrew seals and seal impressions. We

developed a new typology of the script, based on modular paleographic features. We then encoded in a database the paleographic features of all the graphemes appearing in the exhaustive corpus of provenanced Iron Age Paleo-Hebrew seals and seal impressions (c. 320 items, see the online database "Hebrew Stamp Seals", at https://www.hebrewseals.com). We also developed software for network analysis of the corpus, allowing to explore the relations between the paleographic features. The talk will present our typology and its accompanying database, as well as our network-based methodology and results.

Centrality and Periphery: Orthographical Patterns in Neo-Assyrian Legal Texts

Avital Romach[1]
[1] Yale University

This study introduces a computational approach to investigate Neo-Assyrian scribal education through orthographical analysis. While Neo-Assyrian legal documents show remarkable standardization, scholarly perspectives vary on how scribal knowledge was transmitted across the empire. Drawing on a corpus of 1,085 sale documents from ORACC's Archival Texts of the Assyrian Empire corpus (ATAE; https://oracc.museum.upenn.edu/atae/), I analyze variant spellings in standard formulaic legal clauses with particular attention to geographic distribution and chronological development. I will employ network analysis to visualize relationships between texts based on shared orthographical features, and assess quantitative network metrics to reveal potential communities of practice. Special cases like the latest dated documents in the corpus, that were written after the fall of the empire at Dur-Katlimmu (dated to 603 and 600 BCE), provide critical test cases for understanding how scribal traditions responded to institutional changes. The quantitative metrics extracted are then used to evaluate hypotheses and assess the probability of centralized versus localized scribal training models. I discuss how to establish clear parameters and thresholds for what patterns would support different hypotheses. Thus, the application of computational methods in this research is two-fold: a reproducible analysis of orthographical habits under the Assyrian empire, and a theoretical framework to translate usually subjective estimations or conclusions to quantifiable and testable results. It offers systematic ways to evaluate competing historical hypotheses about institutional practices that left limited direct evidence, while providing a replicable framework applicable to similar questions in other ancient contexts.

Literacy, Scribal Proficiency, and Knowledge Transmission in Western Periphery Cuneiform: A Bayesian Approach

Shai Gordin[1]
[1] Independent Scholar

This paper examines the complex dynamics of scribal literacy and proficiency in the Western Periphery cuneiform tradition through computational analysis of graphemic distributions. Moving beyond traditional approaches that view scribal competence as binary, I employ Bayesian probabilistic modeling to quantify diverse proficiency levels visible in orthographic practices across multiple corpora, including Alalaḫ, Mari, Assyrian texts, and Hittite documents. My methodology acknowledges writing as an autonomous system with distinctive developmental trajectories (Weeden 2019), while integrating material considerations such as tablet morphology alongside graphemic features. By constructing statistical "fingerprints" of scribal practices, I evaluate transmission patterns as adaptive processes rather than mere reproduction. Can we further test recent chronological revisions suggesting earlier Hittite scribal traditions originating from multiple source points, potentially as early as the 18th century BCE? (Kloekhorst & Waal 2019). My pilot study employs Bayesian inference to transform sign distribution metrics into probabilistic models of knowledge transmission. This approach quantifies sign repertoire distribution across genres, calculating polyvalence ratios within each corpus and employing conditional probability analysis to determine how likely scribes were to employ particular readings given their frequency in potential source traditions. The Bayesian framework enables the integration of diachronic elements through temporally-weighted priors, allowing for the statistical modeling of sign-reading transmission as evolving phenomena rather than static distributions. By examining these practices through probabilistic rather than deterministic frameworks, we gain insight into how literacy functioned as a dynamic system shaped by institutional contexts, documentary genres, and functional requirements.

Sentiment Analysis in Hittite Texts (Virtual)
Maria Molina[1], Emma Yavasan[2]
[1] Tel Aviv University, [2] Independent Scholar

This paper explores the application of sentiment analysis to Hittite contexts to uncover the emotional landscape, mostly, in the texts concerning religious practices (rituals and prayers). Traditional methods have relied heavily on manual annotation, limiting the scale and scope of analysis. In contrast, sentiment analysis provides a systematic approach that can discern recurring emotional patterns, shifts in tone, and nuances that might elude conventional historical and philological techniques. Our methodology employs a combination of lexicon-based and machine learning techniques, including the fine-tuning of large language models tailored for low-resource languages like Hittite. The core of our research utilizes a sentiment-bearing terms lexicon developed from extensive studies in Hittite linguistic, cultural, and religious contexts. The primary data source for this study is the TLHdig, a digital repository hosted by the University Mainz and the University Würzburg, containing structured XML annotations of Hittite texts. This repository has been meticulously parsed and processed into a structured format for computational analysis by E. Yavasan and S. Gordin (Yavasan, Gordin 2024). Our approach also involves manual sentiment annotations to refine the accuracy of the language models, enabling them to identify and classify emotionally marked or neutral passages within the texts. The analysis focuses on formulaic language typical of Hittite rituals, which often carries inherent emotional connotations, aiding in the detection and classification of sentiment. This research integrates computational methods with a deep understanding of linguistic and cultural nuances, offering new insights into the emotional dimensions of Hittite religious practices and their socio-historical contexts.

The Freedman's Journey: Reconstructing the First Recorded Roman Encounter with Sri Lanka
Stefan Woehlke[1], Nimesh Fonseka[2]
[1] University of Maryland, [2] International Water Management Institute

The aim of this paper is to examine the oceanographic elements that shaped seafaring to South Asia from the Mediterranean world while also examining connections between the Roman and South Asian worlds through the reconstruction of the first recorded interaction between Rome and the nation of Sri Lanka. By the late 4th century, both Rome and Sri Lanka were aware of each other's existence, having come into contact with goods or received accounts from travelers. There is only one firsthand Roman account of Sri Lanka, known through Pliny the Elder's retelling in the 1st century CE. The freedman of Annius Plocamus, while sailing the Red Sea, was blown off course, embarking on a 15-day journey and landing in Sri Lanka. Six months later, he was returned by an embassy from Sri Lanka's king. This instance represents a unique spatial connection between the Roman world and Sri Lanka and highlights Sri Lanka's proficiency in long-distance seafaring. Visualizing this journey underscores how unlikely it was to travel from the Arabian Sea to Sri Lanka, raising the question of how it was possible. Using historical and literary analysis, artifact analysis, and data visualization, this paper examines the journey to draw broader conclusions on the Roman and South Asian worlds, which will be explored further in the conclusion.

3F. And the Land had Rest? The Aftermath of Destruction and the Development of Memory II (Studio 1)

Chair(s): Nitsan Shalom, University of Oldenburg and the Hebrew University of Jerusalem; Igor Kreimerman, Hebrew University of Jerusalem

Sculpture in Parthian Assur
Breton Langendorfer[1]
[1] Princeton University

While excavating the ruins of Qal'at Sherqat/Assur, the religious capital of the Assyrian Empire, the archaeologist Walter Andrae discovered that the city had experienced a remarkable second life in the first centuries CE. Under the Arsacids, the old ruin mound hosted a new settlement built in the architectural style then current in Mesopotamia. Moreover, he uncovered evidence that the second city had again been dedicated to its eponymous god and celebrated two of the most important annual festivals observed in the Assyrian period, a continuity of cultic practice and memory over some 600 years. This paper explores the Parthian "resurrection" of the destroyed city of Assur and its central temple, focusing on the sculpture uncovered by Andrae's excavations. These include both fragments of statues, similar to the life-sized portraits of dignitaries from nearby Hatra, and several intact stelae featuring men in devotional poses. Though dressed in a Parthian garb, both formats have analogs within older Assyro-Babylonian material culture, and there is evidence of the conscious emulation of ancient sculptural forms and ritual functions in the Parthian city. Constituting a revival rather than a survival, this paper seeks to understand how the citizens of Assur in the first centuries CE made use of the Assyrian past and its representational practices evident within their city, and how this material remembrance might inform our understanding of the visual culture of northern Mesopotamia (particularly at Hatra) under the Arsacids more broadly.

Rites and Ruins: Destruction, Memory, and Sacred Space in the Greek World
Ryan A. Boehm[1]
[1] Tulane University

Scholars have traditionally posited that literary laments over the destruction of cities and temples are rare outside of the Mesopotamian city-laments and the Biblical tradition influenced by it. Building on recent scholarship elucidating the manifold intersections among the Near Eastern and Greek literary traditions, however, I suggest that lament over fallen cities and destroyed sacred spaces held a prominent place in several genres of Greek literature and engaged with a paradigm familiar from formal Near Eastern city lament. Within this cultural framework, destruction narratives tend to have formulaic character that casts the fall of city as a terminal event for the site, its population, and its rites (as the gods abandon it), and, unlike the Near Eastern tradition, little room is left for the possibility of restoration. Moreover, historical authors often invoke poetic conventions when describing historical destruction events. While such narratives are eloquent statements about the trauma and disruption of violent destruction, the realities were often much more complex. This paper examines the role of religion and sacred space in the resilience of communities across destruction events. Drawing on case studies from Greece and Asia Minor in the classical period, it traces historically and archaeologically attested continuity of worship across destruction events, the transfer of specific cults to new sites of settlement by refugees, the mechanisms by which sacred space was respected, and the role of sacred space in reconstituting or refounding communities.

The Impact of Assyrian Conquests on the Local Populations of the Southern Levant
Eli Itkin[1]
[1] Tel Aviv University

The Neo-Assyrian conquests of the southern Levant marked the beginning of a refugee crisis in the region. These repeated military campaigns, combined with imperial deportation policies, led to the widespread destruction of numerous sites and the displacement of

local populations. The main aim of this paper is to examine the processes and impacts of forced migration on local peoples in the southern Levant during the Iron IIB–C. This will be done through an analysis of historical sources and archaeological data, using anthropological models for the study of refugees. A significant focus will be placed on outlining the differences between deportees, refugees, and post-destruction squatters, which reflect aspects of internal displacement and resettlement of uprooted communities. While all three groups exhibit various features of forced displacement, each had a its own distinct experience, which in turn influenced settlement patterns, social organization, and interactions with host populations. The differences among these groups will be examined archaeologically on a regional basis, with case studies from the southern Levant. This will be done in attempt to illustrate the interplay between imperial ambitions and local responses, thus offering insights into the resilience, and adaptability of displaced communities.

Dwelling on Destruction: Hazor after 732 BCE

Pnina Tom Broers[1]
[1] The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

During his campaign to the Southern Levant in 732 BCE, the Assyrian king Tiglath-Pileser III destroyed the city of Hazor. Shortly after, the site was partially resettled, mostly along the northern slopes. New, small, buildings were erected on the ruined settlement, reusing some of its walls. Despite the poor preservation of these flimsy structures, two phases of this squatter activity are clearly recognizable in different places. The material culture of the squatter phase is similar to that of the previous settlement, suggesting that the same individuals who had fled Hazor had now returned to their ruined residences. A new case study of Hazor, re-evaluating published material, combined with information from the renewed excavation project, shows that the recovery from destruction never occurred. In this lecture, I will address stratum IV and III of Hazor and propose that an Assyrian administrative centre was neither established in Hazor nor in nearby Ayelet ha-Shachar, as commonly believed. Rather, after a few decades of literally 'dwelling on destruction', Hazor was abandoned in the early 7th century BCE. This makes a significant contribution to our understanding of the geopolitical dynamics in the area, as Hazor's position in the Neo-Assyrian period is often used as a reference point. I will suggest that similar patterns are recognizable in and around the Hula Valley and present an alternative reconstruction of its settlement history in the late 8th and early 7th centuries BCE.

3G. Archaeology of Religion in the Levant during the Second and First Millennia B.C.E. (Studio 2)

Chair(s): Lidar Sapir-Hen, Tel Aviv University; Ido Koch, Tel Aviv University

Animals and Rituals in the 2nd and 1st Millennia BCE from the Southern Levant: The Faunal Remains Perspective

Lidar Sapir-Hen[1]
[1] Tel Aviv University

Animals played an integral role in rituals in the southern Levant during the 2nd and 1st millennia BCE, with their remains frequently found in various ritual contexts. In some cases, these remains are clearly linked to ritual activity—for example, through articulated deposits or associations with human remains. However, other cases present challenges in understanding the specific ritual behaviors involved. This paper reviews several case studies from archaeological sites dated to the Bronze and Iron Ages of the southern Levant, where ritual and daily interactions with animals can be examined and compared. It explores the various roles animals held in these practices and discusses the symbolic significance and perception of both wild and domestic animals.

Iron Age Zoomorphic Libation Vessels from the Southern Levant: Function, Symbolism, Agency

Yuval Amir[1]
[1] Tel Aviv University

This paper addresses the understudied phenomenon of Iron Age zoomorphic libation vessels from the Southern Levant. Characterized by hollow, barrel-shaped bodies, deliberately perforated openings, and zoomorphic representations—primarily equids and bovines—these ceramic vessels were clearly designed for the containment and controlled pouring of liquids, suggesting a strong association with ritualistic practices. Despite their widespread distribution across numerous archaeological sites, a comprehensive, comparative analysis of these vessels as a cohesive cultural phenomenon remains notably absent. Building upon a meticulously compiled database of excavated examples from secure Iron Age contexts, this research delves into three key aspects that illuminate their significance: 1) the vessels' functional role, determined through a detailed examination of their formal properties and a nuanced analysis of their specific archaeological contexts, including associated finds and stratigraphic layers; 2) their symbolic role within the Iron Age worldview, interpreting the complex relationships and interactions between humans and the depicted animals, specifically equids and bovines, to understand their value and importance within the prevailing cosmological framework; and 3) their active agency in ritual liquid sacrifice, highlighting their integral role in the performance of these practices and exploring how their form and design facilitated the intended ritual actions. By integrating these three perspectives, this paper aims to provide a more holistic understanding of these intriguing artifacts and their place within the ritual landscape of the Iron Age Southern Levant.

Animals in the Courtyard, Animals in the Commons: A Social Zooarchaeology of the Iron I Cultic Complex at Tel Abel Beth Maacah

Theo Kassebaum[1]
[1] University of North Carolina

As animal bodies can be viewed as both partible and social through their specific embodiments in depositional contexts, the study of archaeological animal remains is critical to better understand how more-than-human collectives create and sustain religious spaces. This paper interrogates how religious practice is co-constructed by non-humans, with a particular emphasis on how animals are situated within the Iron I cultic complex at Tel Abel Beth Maacah. This complex, with its distinctive rooms and courtyard, is reconfigured as a multispecies "commons" wherein animals are granted access to distinct areas of the site. In this paper, a fine-grained faunal analysis is applied to the depositional contexts within the complex at Tel Abel Beth Maacah to consider how animals are positioned in intricate networks of access and exclusion. Additionally, the zooarchaeological assemblage is examined with a particular emphasis on how animals were brought into this space across three distinct occupation phases, taking a diachronic view of religious practice. Through this analysis, animals are presented as beings central to the perpetuation of religious space and memory of religious practice.

Ritual and Sacrifice: The Faunal Remains from an Iron Age I Temple at Beth Shemesh, Israel

Haskel J. Greenfield[1], Karin Tamar[2], Dale W. Manor[3], Zvi Lederman[4]
[1] University of Manitoba, [2] Steinhardt Museum of Natural History, [3] Harding University, [4] Independent Researcher

Few Iron Age I temples have been excavated with modern systematic excavation and recovery methods of zooarchaeological remains. Systematic excavations conducted over the past quarter century at Tel Ain Shams, ancient Beth Shemesh, uncovered the

remains of an Iron Age temple in Levels 5-6 (c. 1150-1100 BCE). This small (3ha) site is strategically located to control movement both east and west through the Soreq valley, as well as to the north and south of the hill country (Shephelah). The Iron I temple is a small building in the northern quarter of the site. Features within the temple include a stone table and two large stones with a groove for draining fluids that may represent sacrificial platforms or altars. Representations of female deities (e.g., Ashera) were found in and near the temple. This paper presents the zooarchaeological material from within and immediately without the temple enclosure. The nature of the faunal remains support the interpretation of this structure and its immediate surroundings as a temple complex.

Human–Animal Relations in the Iron Age Southern Levant: A View from Stamp Seals

Ido Koch[1]
[1] Tel Aviv University

The depiction of animals on seal-amulets from the Iron Age Southern Levant reflects complex human–animal relations, shaped by perceptions of nature, religious beliefs, and socio-political contexts. Lions, bulls, ibexes, and ostriches feature prominently in these representations, each carrying distinct religious associations that offer insight into how humans conceptualized their interactions with the animal world. By exploring the symbolic roles of these animals, this talk investigates themes of dominion, divinity, and protection, contextualizing these motifs within broader glyptic traditions and assessing their place in the visual and religious culture of the Iron Age Southern Levant. Through a systematic review of seal-amulet iconography and an examination of the occurrences of these motifs, this study traces their spatial and chronological distribution, incorporating new insights made possible by the Corpus of Stamp Seals from the Southern Levant (www.levantineseals.org). This presentation contributes to a deeper understanding of how material culture reflects evolving human–animal relationships in the region.

3H. Archaeology of Syria I (The Loft)

Chair(s): Kathryn Grossman, North Carolina State University

Echoes of Ugarit: What Happened to the People?

Nathan C. Lovejoy[1]
[1] Universita Ca' Foscari Venezia

This paper investigates the archaeological and epigraphic traces of the people of Ugarit following the destruction of the city and the collapse of Late Bronze Age institutions across the eastern Mediterranean. It takes as a starting point the fact that the communities who called Ugarit home did not simply perish along with the city. So then, we must ask: what happened to the people of Ugarit? Did their beliefs, their traditions, their lifeways survive without a major city or political institution to ground them? If so, then where and in what capacity? In this paper, I will aim to demonstrate a resilience of Ugaritic traditions that point towards the survival of certain communities within rising polities of the Iron Age in northwest Syria and southern Turkey. While the city of Ugarit was not reoccupied by its previous denizens following its destruction and abandonment, its people surely found new homes and integrated themselves within communities across the region, evidenced by the persistence of certain practices and echoes of an Ugaritic past within novel Iron Age institutions.

Throught the House: Approaches to Ancient Household Inequality at Ugarit

Stefano Aprà[1]
[1] New York University

Over the past four decades, the quantitative investigation of ancient wealth and status disparities has been recognized as a powerful tool to enable a broader and deeper understanding of the economic and social fabric of past societies, while allowing us to shed light on macro- and micro-historical processes, transformation and change. In the expanding field of the 'Archaeology of Inequality', the prevailing approach has been focused on the analysis of the 'house' – conceptualized as the architectural structure together with its contents and its inhabitants – employing modern econometric tools (e.g. Gini Coefficient, Lorenz Curve) to quantify ancient inequality. However, methodological inconsistency and variability frequently affect this type of analysis, potentially leading to distorted historical reconstructions and interpretations. Drawing upon recent scholarly literature, and relying on the exceptional archeological dataset offered by the site of Ras Shamra (ancient Ugarit) as a case study, this paper develops and applies a multi-proxy analytical framework designed to quantify and investigate ancient inequality more reliably. This framework aims to effectively integrate the most promising current methodologies, and in parallel proposes possible solutions for overcoming some of the main methodological pitfalls related to the study of ancient disparities. Overall, the goal of this paper is to encourage methodological and theoretical discussion on the presented topic while adding an additional layer of analysis to the study of Ugaritic economic configuration and social structure.

Named Authorship and West Semitic Cuneiform in the Bronze Age

Richard S. Hess[1]
[1] Denver Seminary

This study will survey named authorship in West Semitic cuneiform compositions of the Levant during the Bronze Age, to consider what compositions may be ascribed to such authors or scribes, and to reflect on the importance and use of such compositions. Cuneiform writing existed in the second millennium BCE West Semitic world. Was the name of the author or scribe of such literature used in the text? To what extent was this the case? The survey here will attempt to answer these questions by examining especially the major Western Akkadian sites of Syria in the Bronze Age such as Mari, Alalakh, Emar, and Ugarit. These represent the central area of such attested cuneiform literature with regions to the east, southeast, and south also being influenced by this cultural phenomenon.

Evolution and Continuity of the Hama Textile Industry in the Bronze and Iron Ages

Caroline Sauvage[1]
[1] Loyola Marymount University

This paper presents a diachronical exploration of the textile industry at Hama (Syria) through the study of textile tools and related materials material preserved in the National Museum of Copenhagen. It focuses on the type(s) of industry(ies) and their production attested through time and within their archaeological contexts to explore changes and continuity of textile production from the Early Bronze Age to the Iron Age. Using data derived from experimental archaeology, and what is known of the textile production chaîne opératoire, this paper will propose a better understanding of the textile producers, places of production, and possible finished products attested at the site, before replacing Hama's production within the contemporary Syrian textile industry. Ultimately, this paper will scrutinize cultural changes and continuity attested by textile production and workers at the site over the long durée of the Bronze and Iron Ages.

Regional Influences and Trade Interactions in Bronze Age Syria: Insights from Terracotta Figurines of Tell Hadidi

Jennifer Fueger[1]
[1] University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee

An examination of the diverse designs present in the terracotta figurines from Tell Hadidi reveals regional interactions in ancient Syria. Tell Hadidi, an extensive Bronze Age site (circa 3300 B.C. – 1200 B.C.), spanning approximately 135 hectares is situated on the western bank of the Euphrates River. Between 1973 and 1977, salvage excavations were undertaken in anticipation of the construction of the Tabqa Dam. A considerable portion of the findings remain unpublished. Of the 200 recovered clay figurines, this study will focus specifically on 76 anthropomorphic examples. Rather than pursuing a conventional gender-based typological analysis, this research emphasizes aspects such as production methods, patterns of breakage, decorative elements, and regional contexts. The elements and provenience of the figurines, along with their implied gender, suggest a more intricate significance regarding their usage. Previous scholarship has posited that the cultural influence behind the figurines is Hittite in origin; however, a closer examination of the distinctive decorative elements inherent in the figurines suggests that their influence more likely stems from the southern Levant and, to a certain degree, Cyprus. Moreover, the assumption that these figurines inherently signify aspects of fertility worship is also open to scrutiny, particularly given that this inference relies merely on the female representation of the figurines. Based on the results presented, it is evident that the origins and use of the figurines differ markedly from previous interpretations. This nuanced understanding of the figurines' origins and significance provides valuable insights into the cultural dynamics of Bronze Age Syria.

3I. Archaeology of the Southern Levant (Whittier)

Chair(s): Sarah Richardson, University of Manitoba

Entangled Figurines: Late Bronze Age Female Plaque Figurines in the Southern Levant

Shoshana R. Guterman[1], Shira Albaz[1], Aren M. Maeir[1]
[1] Bar Ilan University

The Late Bronze Age female plaque figurine is a well-known figurine type which can provide a unique perspective into the entanglement of Southern Levantine culture during the Late Bronze Age. These plaque figurines appear throughout the Ancient Near East and the Southern Levant in various forms, depicting both women and goddesses. In the Southern Levant among the different Late Bronze Age female plaque figurines are fairly similar figurines with varying degrees of different motifs, dress, hand-positionings, etc. Among the motifs represented in these figurines are motifs from both the north and the south which are represented in these entangled female plaque figurines which develop within the Southern Levant. These figurines represent the entanglement of Mesopotamian goddess figurines and Egyptian goddess and potency figurines, which led to the development of Sothern Levantine figurines. During the Late Bronze Age Tell es-Safi/Gath is a major Canaanite city in the Southern Coastal Plain of modern day Israel. At Tell es-Safi/Gath numerous Late Bronze Age plaque figurines were discovered, ranging across the various forms. This paper will explore the entanglements of northern and southern influences in Canaanite society within the Southern Levant and specifically at Tell es-Safi/Gath through the lens of the Late Bronze Age female plaque figurines.

Identifying the Origins of Hard Stone Beads from Timna: Technology, Trade, and Mineral Sourcing

Geoffrey E. Ludvik[1], Jonathan Mark M. Kenoyer[2], Randall W. Law[2], Eruz Ben-Yosef[3]
[1] Holy Apostles College, [2] University of Wisconsin, Madison, [3] Tel Aviv University

Recent work in the Timna Valley has vividly illustrated the significance of the region and its nomadic inhabitants to early Iron Age exchange networks. The scale of copper mining and processing that took place during the Iron Age in the Timna Valley is impressive, Moreover, products made from Timna copper have been identified abroad suggesting the local elite were linked to long distance, extra-regional trade routes. This study proposes to examine Timna's connectivity using a different class of artifacts: hard stone beads. Here the authors analyze 11 carnelian beads and two carnelian flakes from three sites within the Timna Valley. Stylistic, technological, and geochemical characteristics were considered. Morphometric data were first taken from each bead, then silicone impressions were made of each drill hole. These were measured under a digital microscope and analyzed using a scanning electron microscope (SEM). Since tool marks visible under SEM are diagnostic of different drill materials, the authors identified the drilling methods used. This allowed us to suggest the overall production sequence of each bead. Lastly, mineralogical origins were assessed using laser ablation inductively-coupled plasma mass spectrometry (LA-ICP-MS) to characterize the elemental composition of each carnelian bead. Compositional profiles were statistically compared to signature values of documented carnelian sources. Results together suggest beads from multiple regional workshop traditions and geological deposits were in circulation among the nomadic inhabitants and workers of Iron Age Timna. Connections were specifically noted among several Timna beads and regional sources in northern Arabia as well as Iran and India.

State-Controlled Industry? Tel Shiqmona and the Politics of Purple Dye Production (Virtual)

Golan Shalvi[1], Ayelet Gilboa[2]
[1] University of Calgary, [2] Haifa University

Purple-dyed textiles were among the most prestigious commodities of the ancient Mediterranean, symbolizing elite status and political power. While scholars often emphasize Tyre's prominence in shellfish-derived purple-dye production, there is a notable absence of archaeological evidence confirming such activities in Tyre during the Iron Age. In general, archaeological evidence for purple-dye production from this period is scarce. Located on Israel's Carmel coast, Tel Shiqmona provides the most extensive and stratified dataset for purple-dye manufacturing during the Iron Age (ca. 1100–600 BCE). The site offers an unparalleled record of industrial continuity over five centuries, challenging common assumptions about the organization and control of this coveted industry. This study presents comprehensive findings, including a fully documented chaîne opératoire of production, specialized ceramic dye vats and associated artifacts. Due to its unique preservation, Tel Shiqmona reveals critical insights into the technological and economic frameworks of ancient dye production. Evidence suggests that large-scale manufacturing was linked first to the expansion of the Kingdom of Israel (9th–8th centuries BCE) and later to Neo-Assyrian economic interests (7th century BCE). This political context highlights the site's role in broader regional dynamics. This presentation affords first insights into the history of purple dye production in the Iron Age Levant by integrating archaeological, textual, and scientific evidence. The finds also provide a framework for identifying additional production sites in the Mediterranean and assessing the role of state-level actors in ancient industries.

Archaeological and Textual Connections between Ancient Egypt and Tel Shimron

Krystal V. L. Pierce[1]

[1] Brigham Young University

Since 2017, ongoing excavations at Tel Shimron in Israel have uncovered areas of a Middle Bronze Age Canaanite city and monument, Iron Age Israelite town, Hellenistic farming outpost, Roman Period Jewish community, and Mamluk village. Shimron's location along an extensive trade route led to international connections with surrounding regions, including Egypt. Archaeological material from Shimron, including scarabs, seals, amulets, beads, and stone and glass vessels attest to various connections between the site and Egypt from the Middle Bronze Age to the Hellenistic Period. Textual evidence from Egypt, including an execration text, monumental inscription, papyrus, and three Amarna letters provide information about the relationship between Egypt and Shimron in the Middle Bronze Age and Late Bronze Age. In this paper, an overview of the extant archaeological and textual material related to Egypt and Shimron will be outlined and discussed in order to provide a preliminary view of connections between Egypt and the site across different periods.

Present State of Archaeology in the Gaza Strip
Wolfgang Zwickel[1]
[1] Johannes Gutenberg-Universität Mainz

At least 42 excavations have been carried out in the Gaza Strip in recent years, but only very few of them have been published in line with our current quality standards. The lecture will provide a chronological overview of the excavations and will in particular also deal with the excavations that have not been published or have only been published inadequately. They have often been overlooked in discussions about the cultural history of the Gaza Strip in the past, but although virtually no precise excavation results are known, they can make a significant contribution to the history and cultural development of this region. Ultimately, this lecture should also be seen as a reference to the preservation and safeguarding of culturally relevant sites in the Gaza Strip (even of those sites which are not well-known) in the context of reconstruction measures. Furthermore, it aims to encourage the publication of as yet unpublished sites.

3J. The Samaria Ostraca: A Twenty-First-Century Reappraisal (Workshop) (White Hill)

Chair(s): Madadh Richey, Brandeis University; Matthew Suriano, University of Maryland

George Reisner and the Discovery of the Samaria Ostraca
Peter D. Manuelian[1]
[1] Harvard University

This talk will briefly summarize how George Reisner (1867-1942), a Semitic philologist turned Egyptologist and archaeologist, ended up working on behalf of Harvard University for two seasons at Samaria. The dig represents his only excavation outside of Egypt and Nubia (Sudan) over a career that spanned more than forty years and covered twenty-three archaeological sites. I hope to cover the discovery of the ostraca, Reisner's recording systems, and the aftermath of the find (publication, etc.), based on archival research at Harvard University and elsewhere in Boston.

The Archaeological Contexts of the Samaria Ostraca
Ron E. Tappy[1]
[1] Pittsburgh Theological Seminary – The Zeitah Excavations

Having concluded that the 1910 field season would steer Harvard University's expedition to Samaria to a logical if premature conclusion, George Andrew Reisner photographed the remains of a building recently exposed near the southwestern corner of the summit and requested that his architect, Clarence Stanley Fisher, produce a plan of the structure. Workers then began removing the floors of the building's various rooms and in the early morning of August 11, 1910, recovered the first potsherd bearing a Hebrew inscription from a layer of dirt packed along the eastern wall of the building's Room 401 (ultimately, the only such fragment published from this area). Over the next few weeks, dozens of laconic shipping dockets came to light, and the corpus of Samaria Ostraca took shape.

Eventually, Reisner registered and published 63 ostraca made up of 75 ceramic fragments and believed the writings came from the legendary kingdom of Ahab. Until recently, analysts have focused on the paleography of the script and the socio-historical content of the mostly ink-written inscriptions. Though their archaeological provenance received less attention, a general understanding took hold that the ostraca had appeared on or just beneath the floors of the aforementioned building, which Resiner immediately called "the Ostraca House." Close study of unpublished field records and sectional data, however, shows that—rather than emerging from the square chambers and hallways inside the building proper—46 of the 75 inscribed fragments (61.3%) came from long, corridor-like rooms or passageways situated on the eastern side of the main Ostraca House, while 29 fragments (38.7%) were found across a swath of excavation stretching northward for nearly 40 meters through Summit Strips 4 and 7.

The Archaeology of the Rural Hinterland of Samaria
Erin Hall[1]
[1] Columbus State University

This paper examines the archaeology of the rural hinterland of Samaria, focusing on the lived experience of those who inhabited the region during the Iron IIB period. The Samaria Ostraca, a set of inscribed administrative records, reference royal estates and farmsteads that supplied agricultural products, particularly olive oil and aged wine, to the capital of the Northern Kingdom of Israel. While these texts provide valuable historical insight, an archaeological approach allows for a more comprehensive understanding of daily life, economic production, and rural settlement patterns. By integrating survey data and other published materials, this study explores the material culture of the Samarian Highlands, including settlement architecture, agricultural installations, and patterns of land use. Particular attention is given to the distribution and function of olive presses and wine production facilities, shedding light on the organization of agricultural production and the economic networks connecting rural communities to the urban center of Samaria. By reconstructing the rural landscape, this research contributes to a more nuanced understanding of the relationship between state administration and agrarian communities in the Northern Kingdom of Israel, offering insights into the dynamics of power, economy, and daily life in the region.

The Languages of the Samaria Ostraca: A History
Madadh Richey[1]
[1] Brandeis University

The ostraca from Samaria have been identified almost from their discovery as written "in Hebrew"; most recent treatments have presented as fact W. F. Albright's judgment that the ostraca are best defined as written in a "northern Hebrew dialect." This paper reviews and critiques the empirical foundations of this linguistic judgment and queries in ideological-critical terms why it has become so pervasive while alternative hypotheses of comparable linguistic and historical probity are now rarely articulated.

Manasseh, the Father of Machir and the Emergence of the Kingdom of Samaria
Lauren Monroe[1]
[1] Cornell University

By brushing against the grain of the Bible's larger narrative trajectories, this paper explores the origins of the tribal territory of Manasseh. I will suggest that the idea of Manasseh develops in the context of the late 9th and 8th century ambitions of Samarian kings, who transformed an older political landscape in which the name Machir had deep roots. The territory of Manasseh provided the necessary glue to bind together a kingdom of Greater Israel that stretched north of the Jezreel valley, east of the Jordan River, westward towards the Mediterranean and southward towards Bethel. The political-historical reconstruction I offer opens new possibilities for contextualizing the administration of land and distribution of agricultural goods represented in the Samaria ostraca. In addition, as a counterweight to arguments that the Bible is too late and steeped in Judahite political ideology to offer a reliable witness to Israel's deep past, I suggest that we can in fact catch glimpses of history in its words, if we turn them at just the right angle to the light, arrange them just-so, and heed Stephen Greenblatt's call to a kind of Geertzian "thick description."

A Renewed Look at the Socio-Onomasticon of the Samaria Ostraca
C.M. Isaac[1]
Lona Linda University

This paper reexamines the social profile of the name bearers recorded in the Samaria Ostraca. By analyzing the onomastic data within its historical and administrative context, the study proposes new hypotheses concerning the sociocultural and possibly tribal affiliations reflected in the collection. Particular attention is given to patterns in naming conventions, and their implications for understanding the socio-political landscape of Samaria during the 8th century BCE.

Respondent
William Schniedewind[1]
University of California, Los Angeles

3K. Archaeology of the Black Sea and the Caucasus (Tremont)

Chair(s): Michael Zimmerman, Bridgewater State University; Misha Elashvili, Bridgewater State University

Advances in Rock Art Research in Georgia (Virtual)
Levan Losaberidze[1]
[1] Flinders University

In the past decade, rock art research in Georgia has undergone significant development, transitioning from sporadic documentation efforts to more systematic and multidisciplinary investigations. This paper presents an overview of recent advances in the study of Georgian rock art, with particular attention to methodological and chronological advancements. A review of the literature revealed numerous sites that were discovered in the past but later forgotten or overlooked. This showed the urgent need for their rediscovery, raising public awareness, and updating documentation. Recent advances of digital techniques in rock art studies, such as DStretch, photogrammetry, and GIS, have enabled us to enhance the state of the art of the neglected cultural heritage. This study highlights how the study of Georgian rock art is shedding light on the Caucasus region as one of the less studied area from the rock art perspective. These initial investigations can serve as a catalyst for better understanding of various aspects of everyday life of the past societies, including their rituals, symbolic behaviours, interactions with the landscape, etc. By situating Georgian rock art within the wider framework of regional rock art traditions across millennia, this research underscores the potential of the South Caucasus to contribute to global rock art discourse.

GIS Modelling of Ancient Landscapes: Paleoenvironmental Insights from the Paravani Lake Basin (Virtual)
Mikheili Lobjanidze[1], Nino Pataridze[1], Akaki Nadaraia[1]
[1] Ilia University

This research focuses on the Paravani Lake Basin in the Javakheti volcanic highlands of southern Georgia, situated at elevations ranging from 2000 to 3300 meters. Characterized today by a semi-arid climate and fragile high-mountain ecosystems, the region contains extensive archaeological evidence pointing to significant environmental and cultural transformations in the past. Of particular interest is the distribution of Late Bronze Age megalithic settlements and fortifications, many located well above 2000 meters, elevations that are currently marginal for permanent habitation. This suggests that past climatic and environmental conditions were substantially different and more favorable for sustained human activity at high altitudes. To better understand the paleoenvironment and its role in shaping human settlement patterns, we constructed a potential paleolandscape model using high resolution DEM data, satellite imagery, and paleoenvironmental data from geoarchaeological and paleoclimatic studies. Our analysis included mapping of historic hydrological networks, including potential remnant glaciation, and vegetation zones based on terrain and known palynological data. Least-cost path analysis and viewshed modeling were applied to explore mobility patterns, site intervisibility, and land-use strategies. The study produced a paleolandscape map of the Paravani Basin and provided basic findings about the temporal distribution and types of megalithic sites. The results highlight possible mobility patterns, land use strategies, and the functional character of megalithic settlements in the basin, offering new insights into human adaptation to high-altitude environments in the South Caucasus. These findings also contribute to our understanding of high-altitude settlement in the wider South Caucasus during the Late Bronze Age.

Highland Life in the Parthian Period: Evidence from the Yardımlı Region of Azerbaijan (Virtual)
Lara Fabian[1], Hannah Lau[2], Jeyhun Eminli[3]
[1] University of California, Los Angeles, [2] Hamilton College, [3] Institute of Archaeology of Anthropology, Azerbaijan and National Academy of Sciences

Fieldwork conducted in the southern highlands of Azerbaijan during the summers of 2024 and 2025 by the collaborative Azerbaijani-American SHARP (Southern Highlands Archaeological Research Project) team has revealed evidence of large-scale stone-built architecture from the late 1st millennium BCE—early 1st millennium CE. Initially identified in 2024 and further investigated in 2025, the structure exhibits multiple phases of construction, spanning from the late Iron Age into the first millennium CE. This adds to past and ongoing research conducted on the region's burial sites that has uncovered a complex mortuary landscape with diverse burial traditions during the late Iron Age. This paper will present the archaeological data from the new work on settlement activities, including preliminary excavation and survey data. It will contextualize this new evidence within wider understandings of life in the Talış Mountains and associated highland spaces during the post Achaemenid period – a landscape that has received relatively little attention in past scholarship. The work of SHARP suggests that the mountains were the site of considerable investment in the Parthian period. This investment may have both stemmed from and reinforced growing regional connectivity during a period of heightened imperial engagement by both Iranian and Mediterranean powers in the South Caucasus.

Noah's Flood in the Context of Geological Changes in the Black Sea Region (Virtual)
Angelina Novoseletska[1]

The Black Sea region experienced significant changes at the Pleistocene-Holocene boundary. American researchers W. Ryan and W. Pitman proposed a theory in 1996 about a catastrophic rise in the Black Sea level 7,500 years ago. However, Ukrainian researcher T. Kondaruk offers an alternative hypothesis of three possible scenarios: catastrophic, moderate, and oscillatory. The researcher found that on the outer shelf, the changes were catastrophic, while on the inner shelf, they were gradual. This confirms the possibility of different flooding scenarios for the Black Sea shelf. Ryan and Pitman theory supported by the discovery of an underwater delta and studies of the isotopic composition of stalagmites. However, Ukrainian scientists, including V. Yanko and O. Smyntyna, believe that the flow through the Bosphorus changed many times, and the water level differs from Ryan and Pitman's data. These researchers lean towards a gradual flooding. Research by J.D. Sarfati supports the idea of a global Noah's Flood. In his works, he argues that science confirms biblical events. The chronology of Noah's Flood, according to the Bible, dates back to about 4000 years ago, which

does not coincide with the Ryan and Pitman hypothesis. The global flood explains numerous geological consequences, such as volcanic activity and erosion. The problem lies in the interpretation of the chronology of geological strata. Global and local catastrophes could have occurred at different times. Therefore, hhe Ryan and Pitman hypothesis can be considered in the context of global flooding but should not claim its origins who localize it in the Black Sea region.

The Paravani Kurgan One of the Earliest Evidences of Wagon Burial and Gold Artifacts in the South Caucasus

Nino Pataridze[1], Kakha Kakhiani[2], Eliso Kvavadze[2]
[1] Ilia University, [2] Georgian National Museum

The Early Kurgan Period represents a transitional phase in the prehistoric chronology of Eurasia, beginning in the 4th millennium BCE and spanning several centuries. This culture initially emerged in the region between the middle courses of the Dnieper and Volga rivers, eventually spreading across a vast geographic area — westward to the Balkans, southward to the Caucasus, and eastward to Central Asia. The South Caucasus, and Georgia in particular, stands out for its abundance of migratory routes and cultural strata, positioning the region as a significant center in the history of humankind. Despite its rich archaeological potential, Javakheti remains comparatively underexplored. Its historical importance is underscored by the continuous traces of human activity found there, from the Stone Age to the modern era. It is also worth noting that the region is rich in megalithic monuments, which testify to the existence of a well-organized society with substantial architectural knowledge during that era. Within this context, of particular significance is a kurgan burial discovered on the shores of Lake Paravani, dated to the early 3rd millennium BCE. This site provides one of the earliest known instances of chariot burials and the use of gold in the region. These findings collectively point to a high level of social and cultural development in the South Caucasus during the Early Bronze Age.

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 19, 2025 | 4:25pm–6:30m (EST)

4A. Community Archaeology: Decolonizing Field Research (Workshop) (Grand Ballroom A)

Chair(s): Frederick A. Winter, D.C. AIA; Jane DeRose Evans, Temple University

Collaborating for Archaeology in Serbia

Frederick Winter[1]
[1] D.C. AIA

Collaborating in Serbia In the late 1970s and into the early 1990s, Brooklyn College CUNY joined various institutions to conduct surveys and excavations on pre- and proto-historic sites in the Morava Valley. Serbian partners in these projects included the country's national museum in Belgrade and the local museum in whose district the projects were conducted as well as Serbian research institutes. The collaborations were a mandate of the country's permitting process, which required the equal participation of national entities with the foreign academics. The upside was that these partnerships made the projects part of the national effort to investigate its past, ensuring a welcoming environment for the foreign archaeological team and giving access to local resources and facilities. Difficulties, when they arose, were most often due to infighting among the Serbian collaborating partners. As an interesting wrinkle to the Serbian projects, in the early 1990s when war in northern Serbia made field work impossible, the U.S. directors arranged for the senior director of the Serbian team to join them as a co-director on the summer archaeological field school they were conducting that year on a colonial site in New York City. The success of all of these projects was dependent on personal connections that had been established over many years. In-country experience and communication skills in the local language were critical. It is also the case that the availability of U.S. funding was essential. The current reassessment of U.S. funding priorities, which could significantly reduce the funding available for U.S. projects overseas, will doubtlessly require modifications in the models of collaborations.

Community Engagement in North Africa and the Sahel: Results and Lessons from ASOR CHI

Darren Ashby[1]
[1] American Society of Overseas Research

Over the past eight years, ASOR's Cultural Heritage Initiatives (ASOR CHI) has worked with communities across North Africa and the Sahel to document, conserve, and celebrate their heritage. These collaborations have taken many forms, guided by community priorities, partner capacities, available funding, local permissions, and security conditions. In this talk, we review the different ways that ASOR CHI has worked with communities on heritage projects in the region, the challenges we faced, the results of the work, and the lessons we learned along the way. In particular, we focus on mini-grant schemes and the development of heritage toolkits as means to support greater community involvement in and control over local heritage protection and promotion activities. Through this discussion of ASOR CHI's successes and setbacks, we aim to help build a more collaborative future for all of those involved in archaeology and heritage work.

Community-Informed Archaeology: Bridging Local Knowledge and the Preservation of Archaeological Landscapes in Sudan

Jenail Marshall[1]
[1] Purdue University

This project advocates for the inclusion of local communities in archaeological research, ensuring that historical and cultural narratives reflect African voices and perspectives. Through ethnographic engagement and extended periods of living within communities before, during, and after archaeological field seasons, this research challenges colonial legacies in archaeology by centering African methodologies and frameworks. Over the past two years, interviews and interactions with nearly 100 participants—including community members from Tombos, Abu Fatima, and Kerma in Sudan, as well as Sudanese archaeological specialists and diaspora members—have provided critical insights into how archaeological spaces are constructed compared to how these spaces are experienced in everyday life. By prioritizing direct engagement, this approach not only preserves cultural heritage but also empowers communities to shape the narratives of their own histories. This paper contributes to broader discussions on community-informed archaeology, particularly in conflict zones and regions like Africa, which are often overlooked in global discourse. It highlights the importance of integrating local knowledge and lived experiences into archaeological practice, offering a model for more inclusive and ethically grounded approaches to the study of the past.

Community Perspectives in Collaborative Archaeology: Thoughts from the Development of El-Kurru Heritage Center

Anawar M. Mohamed[1], Geoff Emberling[1]
[1] University of Michigan

Community Perspectives in Collaborative Archaeology: Thoughts from the Development of El-Kurru Heritage Center Co-authors Geoff Emberling and Anawar Mohamed Abstract This paper analyzes the role of community engagement in decolonizing archaeological practice through Community Heritage Center case study at El-Kurru, Sudan. By including and centering local voices, we examine how collaborative models can challenge historical inequalities perpetuated by colonial research frameworks. The El-Kurru project,

initiated in 2013 by the University of Michigan, NCAM, and local collaborators, counters starkly with George Reisner's early 20th-century excavations, which alienated the community by extracting artifacts without dialogue, facilitating lasting distrust. Drawing on perspectives from foreign archaeologists, Sudanese heritage professionals, and El-Kurru community members, we detail efforts to rebuild trust through participatory practices. Efforts include photo competitions celebrating local heritage, school programs adding Kushite history, and co-creating a Heritage Center. We aim to present local narratives and recover traditional crafts while generating village revenue. Challenges such as funding constraints, competing external projects, and reconciling religious values with pre-Islamic heritage pose complexities that need unique and careful solutions. In self-critical reflection, we discuss tensions between international, national, and community priorities and the need to address power imbalances in funding, education, and cultural capital. The project's iterative process—is characterized by transparency, shared decision-making, and adaptive responses to community concerns about how archaeology can shift from extraction to partnership. By providing local agencies with heritage stewardship, our work offers a model for decolonizing practice; establishing sustainable archaeology must prioritize community ownership, benefit, and voice to redress historical injustices and provide a chance for inclusive futures.

Reflections on the Bir Madhkur Incense Route Project (Virtual)
Andrew M. Smith II[1]
[1] George Washington University

In 2007, King Abdullah of Jordan called for economic development in Wadi Araba, a region in southern Jordan where I have worked since 1993, and a virtual no-man's land before the 1994 peace treaty Jordan signed with Israel. I responded to the King's call with the Bir Madhkur (Incense Route) Project. Bir Madhkur is a Nabataean-Roman-Byzantine site in Wadi Araba, within the hinterland of ancient Petra, and along the ancient Incense Route that linked al-Ula, Petra, and Gaza. The ancient (and modern) significance of Bir Madhkur was (and remains) clear. In 2007, Petra was about to become one of the New Seven Wonders of the World, Petra was already a World Heritage site (since 1985), the entire Incense Route through the Negev desert of Israel had been a WH site since 2005, and al-Ula in Saudi Arabia was soon to be inscribed (2008) as a WH site. The project, therefore, was timely and full of potential, because Bir Madhkur is (and remains) a key along the link along the ancient Incense Route that connects al-Ula, Petra, and Gaza. With project goals aligned with this royal initiative, and with the support of a host of individuals and organizations (public/private, governmental/non-governmental), we began our work at Bir Madhkur in 2008. So began a long (and ongoing) effort to create an archaeological park. My contribution here is to provide a simple reflection on this more than decade-long experience, and the many complex challenges we faced in our response to the Jordanian national agenda.

Speak Up! A Manifesto for Integrating Local Languages into Core Archaeological Field Training
Yağmur Heffron[1]
[1] University College London

In this paper I explore the intersection between archaeological labour relations and field training. Focusing on the language politics between local and foreign archaeologists collaborating on field projects in contemporary Türkiye, I highlight the invisible labour of translation and cultural mediation undertaken by native speakers as an issue of archaeological ethics and decolonisation, as well as one for epistemological concern. Archaeologists who train and later build fieldwork careers in countries where they do not speak or understand the local language/s not only normalise and benefit from the colonialist outlook that has shaped archaeological practices in the Middle East and North Africa in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, but also write themselves out of meaningful, reciprocal knowledge exchange with host communities and in-region scholarly networks. I propose that, in order to fully address this problem, international fieldwork projects must develop conscious pedagogical strategies to provide all non-native speakers language training commensurate with their career stage, responsibilities and positions within the project; as well as offer resources and guidance to native-speakers who choose to take on fairly compensated translation tasks. Knowledge of local languages should be part of the fundamental professional skillset of all archaeologists who work outside their native language environments. If we would find it laughable to imagine a Turkish team of archaeologists conducting field research at a Neolithic site in Britain for decades, during which time neither the director nor any of senior staff have acquired conversational English while the training of Turkish students relies on being paired with native English-speakers on and off site, the reverse should seem equally absurd.

Towards Building Real Engagement Programs Between Museums and Migrant Communities: Decolonizing Museums Storage
Yaroub Al Obaidi[1]
[1] Duquesne University

By linking the artifact and the story attached to it, which provides the viewer with an opportunity to build his own perception of many topics. The aim of exhibitions that involve migrant communities is to create a genuine partnership between the participating parties: the museums and the immigrant communities who have relocated to new countries. These museums often house collections that represent the history, culture, and heritage of the immigrants' countries of origin. The question arises: How can such exhibitions go beyond merely showcasing artifacts to ensure true representation and active participation from these communities? Rather than being passive witnesses at the opening of an exhibit, migrant communities should be involved from the outset, taking part in the curation of exhibitions that authentically represent their cultural narratives. This approach offers a more inclusive perspective of migrant communities, particularly for younger generations who may not have had the opportunity to experience their home countries. Such collaborations provide a platform to discuss important ethical considerations regarding the transportation of antiquities from their countries of origin to museums. This includes the complex issues surrounding the repatriation of artifacts. These ethical questions often intersect with legal concerns, but beyond the legalities, museums have a moral responsibility to foster cultural exchange between artifacts and the communities in their new homes. As a case study for this research, I examine the collaboration between the Muslim African American Community and Philadelphia Free Library in the 2022 'In the Path of Islam' project. This initiative was deeply rooted in community participation at every stage, ultimately culminating in a community-driven exhibition.

4B. Archaeology of Mesopotamia III (Grand Ballroom B)

Lucas Proctor, J.W. Goethe University Frankfurt; Glynnis Maynard, Cambridge University

2025 Excavations at Nippur
Augusta McMahon[1]
[1] University of Chicago, Institute for the Study of Ancient Cultures

This paper will present the results of the 2025 excavations at Nippur, south Iraq. Our research aims are examination of the city edge of Nippur during the three episodes of its largest extent, in the Ur III, Kassite, and Neo-Assyrian to Neo-Babylonian periods. Nippur has been excavated since the 1890s, but these past excavations

concentrated on the main eastern and western mounds. By contrast, our current focus is the suburban area south of the main mounded portion of the site. Less is known of this southern suburb or city edge, which offers the opportunity to examine an area of low-density settlement within the city. This area was potentially occupied by a diverse population ranging from recent migrants to the wealthy, with variation over time. Our excavations have recovered two segments of the city wall in this part of the site, with complex reuse of earlier city walls in each of our target periods. There is also a large 1st millennium BCE house just inside the wall, with evidence for elite, high-status occupants. These add valuable data to the history of this important city and its inhabitants.

Was the Ancient Landscape in the Nina (Tell Zurghul) Region, Southern Mesopotamia, a Riverine or Marshland?

Malath Feadha[1], Jaafar Jotheri[1]
[1] University of Al-Qadisiyah

Nina, also known as Tell Zurghul, is an archaeological site that was part of the State of Lagash around 6000 years ago. It is located now in a marshland area about 250 kilometres from the Persian Gulf. There are uncertainties regarding its ancient environment, geographic features of its landscape, and proximity to the Gulf. It has been suggested that Nina was situated in a marshland environment close to the Gulf. Another suggestion is that Nian was associated with a river surrounded by agricultural floodplains rather than marshes. However, these suggestions have not yet been confirmed by off-site geoarchaeological studies. Therefore, several boreholes have been drilled to examine the sedimentation environment. In addition, the nearby quarries that mud brick factories dug have also been investigated as they give clear lithological sections. Both boreholes and quarry sections have shown that this region's alternation between riverine and marshy environments is typical. The alternation between marsh and channel environments observed in the sediments indicates that the rivers experienced frequent avulsions in this area, leading to rapid floodplain aggradation. However, the riverine sediments were likely to dominate the environment around the Nina site as the sections had more fine sand and red clay than greenish clay sediment.

Initial Urbanism at Lagash – New Fieldwork in Area G

Steve Renette[1]
[1] University of Cambridge

The ca. 500 ha archaeological site at Al-Hiba, the ancient city of Lagash, has a highly differential preservation pattern in which different periods of its occupation are immediately accessible at the surface. In Area G, excavations by Donald Hansen in 1972, 1976, and 1990 documented a long sequence of an Early Dynastic I (ca. 2900-2500 BCE) administrative complex. This period has not been investigated in extensive archaeological fieldwork since the 1920s-30s excavations at Ur and the Diyala sites. As a result, our knowledge of this formative stage in early Mesopotamian history remains extremely limited. New mapping efforts since 2019 have revealed a densely built-up neighborhood surrounding the Area G complex. In April 2025, new fieldwork was implemented, combining UAV mapping, geophysical prospection, and selective area scraping to obtain a detailed plan of the large architectural complex, which is characterized by a distinct curving wall, embedded within its urban fabric. Additionally, new trenches were laid out to commence excavation in preparation for sustained fieldwork in the coming years. This paper will present the initial results from the 2025 pilot season in Area G, in the context of the publication of the legacy data, and lay out a plan for future work.

Report on the 8th Season of Excavation at the Site of Lagash, Dhi Qar Province, Iraq (Virtual)

Holly Pittman[1]
[1] University of Pennsylvania

This paper will report on the 8th season of excavation at Lagash running from early October to late November 2025. Work during this season will continue in the deep sounding of Trench 3 in Area H. It will also focus on remote sensing including drone photography and magnetometry as well as surface survey. One goal of the season is to understand the craft production industry of District 2 in Area H, testing whether stone and lithic industries are more dominant in this zone. Another goal is to determine the nature of the infrastructure visible through remote sensing. Are we seeing canal installations or roadways? Finally results of the method of scraping the surface to reveal architectural plans visible through remote sensing will be presented, with a discussion of the viability of such an approach to expand our horizontal exposure.

The Zindan

Ahmed Khammas[1]
[1] State Board of Antiquities and Heritage, Iraq

Iraq contains thousands of archaeological sites. One of its most significant though little known sites is the Zindan Archaeological Site in Diyala. The Zindan, a Persian name for a prison, was one of the Sassanian Empire's largest and significant fortresses. about 80km northeast of Baghdad. Historically, it was on the Great Khorasan Road, an inter-city nodal network connecting Asia with the Middle East and further afield. The size of the Zindan, measuring 40,800 sqm in total, is commensurate with its significance as a key component in Sassanian security infrastructure provided along the Great Khorasan Road. The brick-structure is 502 M length, 14.5 in width and 16m in height. It has 14 pillars or towers, of which 10 are still standing. For more than 1,600 years, the building was buried, and only a few parts of it are visible. Within two years, (2021 - 2022) as director of the Diyala's State Board of Antiquities and Heritage (SBAH) office, I undertook a project to Excavate the Zindan, through the architectural exploration of the building's structure and more than 60 artifacts, we were able to develop a concept of the ancient function of the building, and its importance as part of the lost Sassanian royal city of (Dastgird), which was discovered by us a year ago, located about 5.6 km to the north, that was destroyed by Heraclius in 628 AD. Thus, it highlighted the largest, longest, and most important archaeological site in eastern Iraq, which is considered the unique building of its kind in Mesopotamia.

4C. Archaeology of Israel I (Georgian)

Chair(s): Boaz Gross, Israeli Institute of Archaeology and Tel Aviv University

Khirbet Summeily: A Preliminary Report, 2011–2023

Jeffrey A. Blakely[1], James W. Hardin [2]
[1] University Of Wisconsin-Madison, [2] Cobb Institute Of Archaeology, Mississippi State University

The Cobb Institute of Mississippi State University excavated at Khirbet Summeily over five seasons between 2011–2023, seasons interrupted and shortened by two Gaza wars and COVID. Summeily is located on a terrace above Wadi el-Hesi about 20 km ENE of Gaza. Occupation occurred from the end of the 11th century possibly to the beginning of the 8th century BCE. Four strata have been recognized: three with architecture (Strata IV, III, and II) and post-occupational topsoil (Stratum I). Strata IV and III, and probably Stratum II are interpreted as governmental structures located along a significant road in a large pasturage. Stratum IV is not well understood because it has only been encountered at the edges of the site. It is likely that we recovered a gate or entrance into the structure. This stratum was probably destroyed in a conflagration in the early 10th century. Bullae were recovered apparently dating to this phase. Stratum III has three phases and represents the major period we have investigated. A low podium was constructed above the earlier remains, Phase IIIC. Upon the podium two usage phases, IIIB and IIIA, shared the same walls, but had distinct floors. One room, the cult room, probably had over 20 different lime plaster floors. These phases ended in a massive conflagration dating to the latter part of the 10th century. After an abandonment, Stratum II followed a different plan, having a structure, a hearth, and tabun, all probably dating around the end of the 9th century.

El-Ahwat: An Enigmatic Site Towering Above the Aruna Pass – Summary of the 2024-2025 Excavation Seasons

Shay Bar[1], Tzilla Eshel[1]
[1] Haifa University

The enigmatic site of El-Ahwat is situated in Israel's Wadi 'Arah, the ancient Aruna Pass, connecting Tel Esur and the Sharon Plain to Megiddo and the Esdraelon plain (Jezreel Valley). The site was excavated and published by the late Adam Zertal, who suggested that it was a fortified Iron Age I Sherden Sea people's colony settled there under Egyptian hegemony. This interpretation was debated by various scholars. In 2024 we returned to the site with the aim of answering some of the debated questions and to research the poorly investigated metallurgical activities at the site. In the lecture we will present the results of the 2024-2025 excavation seasons focusing on the dating of the different architectonic units at the site, the possible Egyptian connection of its inhabitants, and some preliminary results of the metallurgical research.

New Discoveries along the High-Level Aqueduct to Jerusalem

Ya`akov Billig[1]
[1] Israel Antiquities Authority

During the last few years, several archaeological excavations were conducted along the route of the high-level aqueduct to Jerusalem, many of them directed by the author. These excavations contributed substantial new information pertaining to two important topics: 1. Understanding the planning of the route of the aqueduct along which the water flowed with a very slight gradient. Measuring the distance between several recently excavated segments and the elevation of the flow level, we found that the gradient descends approximately 0.5 m. per 1 km. To do so, the planners had to overcome difficult topographical obstacles along the route. 2. The chronology of the aqueduct. A coin of Agrippa I (41-44 C.E.) found sealed in the foundations serves as a terminus post quem and a late Byzantine (late 6th – early 7th cent.) structure constructed above its ruins proves that it did not function after that time. Up to 8 layers of plaster in the specus seem to show that the aqueduct was probably in use throughout that period.

The Evolving Topography and Community of Caesarea Maritima: The Caesarea City and Port Exploration Project 2017-2024

Joseph Rife[1], Peter Gendelman[2]
[1] Vanderbilt Divinity School, [2] Israel Antiquities Authority

In 2017 a new phase of exploration began at Caesarea Maritima with the initiation of the Caesarea City and Port Exploration Project, a collaboration between Vanderbilt University and the Israel Antiquities Authority. Four seasons of excavation and study have brought to light important new evidence for the evolving urban topography and community during the Roman Empire and Late Antiquity into the Islamic era. Digging has focused in two central but previously unexplored areas of the city. One area is the wide zone between the north platform of the Herodian Temple of Rome and Augustus and the decumanus maximus. We report on the northwest wing to the temenos and the best preserved stretch of the platform's retaining wall yet found. In Late Antiquity this central area was occupied by a warehouse complex for wine storage, and during the Umayyad, Abassid, and Fatimid eras a dense residential quarter flourished here. Our second area of exploration was the eastern limit of the city. We re-opened a large trench along the late circuit that has revealed the wall's full elevation and new evidence for its date and use. We also opened a large trench directly over the main East Gate in the late circuit, a massive stucture with decorative architecture. Our discoveries in these key areas of activity and passage in the evolving landscape of Caesarea Maritima are revealing new perspectives on how residents and visitors alike experienced the city over time.

4D. Prehistoric Archaeology (Arlington)

Chair(s): Austin "Chad" Hill, University of Pennsylvania; Blair Heidkamp, University of Texas, Austin

The Neolithic and Chalcolithic in the Plain of Navkur: Results of the Asingeran Excavation Project (2023-2025)

Maddalena Scattini[1], Marco Iamoni[1], Sebastiano Icaro I. Bortoluzzi[2], Francesco Venturoso[3]
[1] Università degli Studi di Udine, [2] University of Verona, [3] Sapienza University of Rome

This paper provides a detailed report on the findings and key conclusions from the last two seasons of excavation conducted in 2023 and 2024 in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, as part of the Asingeran Excavation Project. The archaeological investigations at Kanispan and Asingeran have provided data on the Neolithic Ceramic phase from the first site and the early Late Chalcolithic from the second site, offering an overview of the development dynamics during the 7th to 4th millennia BCE in the Navkur Plain. Excavations at Asingeran have led to the discovery of two superimposed large buildings: the "White Building" (WB) and the "Rectangular Mudbrick Building" (RMB), both dating to the early Late Chalcolithic. This paper will discuss data related to Asingeran's stratigraphy and architecture, material culture (including pottery and lithics), and funerary traditions. Additionally, a revised chronology for the early Late Chalcolithic, based on the typological study of the ceramic repertoire, will be proposed. Preliminary results from the latest campaigns at Asingeran and Kanispan, scheduled for autumn 2025, will also be presented.

Reconstructing Prehistoric Identity Through Ornamental Shells at Wadi al-Qattafi and Wisad Pools

Olivia Fiser[1], Yorke M. Rowan[1]
[1] University of Chicago

My research aims to understand the role of ornamental shells in curating social and individual identity in the prehistoric Near East. The Late Neolithic (~6250-5300 cal BC) sites of Wadi al-Qattafi and Wisad Pools are located in the eastern badia of Jordan. This study includes roughly 80 decorative shells from these sites that communicate a broader sense of identity for the communities through the presence of long-distance exchange networks, evidence for modification, and accessible shell material. Mainly sourced from the Red Sea, the diversity of shell types emphasizes the evolving desire for variety than observed during the previous period. My research analyzed several factors of these shells: preferred species, shell origins, and similarities of modification styles. Despite the numerous shell species from the sites, the associations of their roles in ornamentation are indicated by the types of modifications. Shells of certain shapes were modified similarly through abrasion, perforation, and/or fragmented portions. Indications of long-distance exchange are verifiable in the recovery of a singular Mediterranean exclusive seashell which, alongside the other material culture located at the sites, conveys the extent of the interaction spheres in which the inhabitants participated in. The recovered shells also delineate the individualism of the sites from each other in their unique makeups. This research broadens our understanding of prehistoric identity and emboldens different considerations that can be made in studying craft production and social change during the Late Neolithic.

From Hunter-Gatherers to Agriculturalists: The Evolution of Projectile Points in the Levant in Late Prehistory

Blair Heidkamp[1]
[1] University of Texas, Austin

This study explores the evolution of projectile points in the Levant, with a focus on changes in form and the adoption of lithic production techniques between the northern and southern regions during the Neolithic period. By gathering dimensional and weight measurements of projectile points, the research aims to evaluate technological shifts that occurred as Neolithic societies transitioned from hunter-gatherer to more sedentary, agricultural lifestyles. Building on existing scholarship, particularly the work of Avi Gopher, this study expands the geographical scope to include areas such as Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, and potentially Egypt and Turkey, thereby providing a broader context for understanding these changes. Examination of the relationship between shifts in subsistence strategies, including the domestication of animals, and the design of projectile points. Additionally, considering the impact of environmental events, such as the Younger Dryas and the 8.2-kiloyear event, as critical moments influencing lithic technology and subsistence changes. Additionally, the role of transhumance in the distribution of projectile points will be investigated to gain insight into population movements between the PPNA and PPNB periods.

Kites in Context Project 2025

Yorke M. Rowan[1], Chad Hill[2], Blair Heidkamp[3], Morag M. Kersel[4]
[1] University of Chicago, [2] University of Pennsylvania, [3] University of Texas, Austin, [4] DePaul University

The Kites in Context Project investigates desert kites, the well-known animal traps extending from Syria to Saudi Arabia across the Black Desert of Jordan. This research includes satellite imagery, mapping using UAVs (drones), pedestrian survey, and excavation of kite features and nearby structures. During the 2025 season our investigation concentrated on excavation and survey of features potentially associated with the nearby kites, as well as the kites themselves. In this paper, we present preliminary results from these excavations and survey with a focus on architectural elements and stratigraphic contexts.

Kites on the Landscape

Chad Hill[1], Yorke M. Rowan[2], Emily Hammer[3], Clara Skovronsky[1]
[1] University of Pennsylvania, [2] University of Chicago, [3] University of Pennsylvania

The basic distribution of desert kite hunting traps in the Badia of eastern Jordan has been well established by several remote sensing and survey projects. The kites, linked in discrete chains that stretch north to south across the “black desert”, represent a remarkable investment in infrastructure suggesting many unanswered questions about the role of hunting, the distribution of resources and human capital, and the long term shifts in human use of the landscape during the late Neolithic. However, in order to add greater clarity to our understanding of kites and their function, we must better understand how they are incorporated into the landscape and into the greater anthropogenic context in which they were constructed and used. In this paper we report new results of an ongoing regional GIS analysis, looking at the relationship between kites, the landscapes on which the kites are built, and migration patterns.

4E. Digital Archaeology and History II (Berkeley & Clarendon)

Chair(s): Leigh Anne Lieberman, Princeton University; Matthew Howland, Wichita State University

Historical Maps and Narratives and their Use in Landscape Reconstruction in the Bay of İskenderun, Türkiye

Jane C. Skinner[1], Ann E. Killebrew[2]
[1] Society for Eastern Mediterranean Archaeology and Heritage Studies, [2] Pennsylvania State University

The use of historical maps, documents, and narratives is essential for reconstructing ancient landscapes. This is particularly true for the Bay of İskenderun, where significant landscape modifications from the late 19th century to the early 21st century—aimed at maximizing agricultural productivity, draining swamps, and repairing the region after natural disasters—have transformed the pre-modern landscape. Furthermore, the names of sites and settlements in this area have evolved due to shifting political control, adding an additional layer of complexity. By leveraging Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and landscape analysis tools alongside traditional research methods, we have made strides in reconstructing and interpreting the ancient landscape of the Plains of Issos, Alexandreia, and Rhossos. In our presentation, we will apply these insights to the findings from the Bay of İskenderun Landscape Archaeological Survey (BILAS) and other earlier surveys of the region to demonstrate the importance and necessity of historical maps and documentation in our interpretation of the ancient landscape and settlement patterns.

Introducing the Desert Cults Mapping Project: A Digital Humanities Tool for Studying the Ancient Sacred Landscapes of the Arid Southern Levant

Juan Manuel M. Tebes[1]
[1] Catholic University of Argentina & National Research Council

The study of sacred landscapes built upon digital humanities approaches has by now become a prominent field of research in archaeology. In this presentation, I will introduce the Desert Cults Mapping Project (DCMP), a digital humanities project that studies the sacred landscapes of the southern arid margins of the Levant (modern southern Jordan/Israel and north-eastern Egypt) in the longue durée, with an interdisciplinary approach making use of archaeological fieldwork, ethnographic research, spatial technology, and satellite images. This is an ideal research area because it is one of the most studied regions of the Near East and setting of thousands of archaeological sites in pristine condition, the location of some of the earliest intramural burials and extramural cemeteries

of the Middle East, and the area where the cult of Yahweh most likely started and one of the earliest to be penetrated by Christianity and early Islam. The ultimate product will be an online, open-access database and associated map, listing all the cultic and mortuary sites in the Negev Desert, north-eastern Sinai, the southern Jordanian plateau and the Hisma Desert, dating from the Neolithic to the Early Islamic period (ca. 10,000 BCE-1000 CE). The project aims to answer in a unique way to big historical questions, such as: How were changes in this geographical distribution of the cultic and mortuary sites correlated with the religious, social, and political processes over time? Did the cultural transmission entail religious conservatism, or rather it involved innovation and adaptation?

Social and Spatial Network Analyses of Early Bronze IV Southern Levantine Mortuary Landscapes

Tucker Deady[1]
[1] University of Toronto

Traditional academic accounts would suggest that the Early Bronze IV (EB IV) of the Southern Levant was marked by a breakdown in communication, trade, and complex interactions, trends replaced by isolated groups that lost touch with the nucleated centers of previous years. Recent scholarship, however, tends to be less defined by division and instead considers concepts of integration, ancestral memory, and movement, and asks how these factors may have played a role in the ways people interacted and how they might be expressed in the archaeological record. This paper gives insight into alternative trajectories of connectivity and mobility through the lens of EB IV mortuary practices. Using a dataset that incorporates information from over 1400 tombs from 85 sites, social and spatial network analyses reveal patterns at different spatial scales, ultimately providing a better understanding of communities of mortuary practice. The resulting networks shed light on the reality of differentiation and similarities, demonstrating that the EB IV was a highly dynamic period and cannot be explained by drawing boundaries or ticking boxes.

A Limited Remote Survey of the Nile Delta using U-2 Aerial Photography

Oren Siegel[1]
[1] University of Toronto

This presentation details preliminary results of a limited remote survey of the Nile Delta using declassified aerial photography of Egypt's northern Nile Delta shot by U-2 spy planes. The U-2 imagery is significant because it is both earlier (1959) and significantly higher in resolution than CORONA satellite imagery, as Emily Hammer and Jason Ur's research has demonstrated. This talk will begin by briefly reviewing efforts to make this imagery of Egypt freely available to all interested researchers, but will primarily focus on the potential of the U-2 imagery to contribute new information when used in tandem with previous archaeological surveys of the Nile Delta. I'll begin by comparing archaeological features that are identifiable in the U-2 imagery with known sites documented in the recently published Archaeological Sites of the Nile Delta gazetter. The second part of the talk will compare and contrast the U-2 photos with CORONA satellite imagery, highlighting pros and cons of each data set. The final part of my presentation attempts to highlight two patterns that emerge from these comparisons: first, the high resolution of U-2 photos does allow for the discovery of potentially new archaeological features, but perhaps even more valuably, it allows us to suggest that some known archaeological sites may have been larger than previously thought; second, the landscape of parts of the Nile Delta changed significantly even in the roughly nine years separating this declassified U-2 mission and CORONA KH-4B satellite imagery.

Updates on Geospatial Approaches to Intervisibility and Communication Within the Byzantine Fire Beacon System

Annalise P. Whalen[1]
[1] University of Central Florida

This research employs Geographic Information System (GIS) methodologies to analyze the spatial relations and operational efficiency of the 9th century Byzantine fire signaling beacons. Some of these beacon towers still exist in fragmentary archaeological assemblages across central Anatolia, while others currently remain unidentified. The beacon network originated from the Taurus mountains, and ended near Constantinople, ensuring communication across the expanse of the Anatolia plateau. Specifically, this research tests the hypothesis that site elevation, viewshed, and intervisibility demonstrate a statistically significant correlation among potential beacon locations. Digital Elevation Models (DEMs) were generated in ArcGIS Pro to extract elevation and topographic data. Intervisibility and viewshed analyses were conducted to evaluate the optical communication capabilities of known beacon sites. Results of the spatial analysis provide insight into the efficiency of optical communication systems in the late antique and early medieval world, revealing that fortress architects strategically selected locations based on visibility, resource availability, and terrain, emphasizing landscape control beyond simple enemy detection. Elevation data, ranging from 428 to 2400 meters, demonstrate the network's adaptation to diverse terrain, influencing both defensive tactics and signal transmission efficiency. These findings reframe the frontier as a dynamic socio-geographic space of social integration and power projection, rather than a mere peripheral outpost. The Byzantine network reflects a strategic balance between natural terrain and communication needs, showcasing adaptive medieval infrastructure engineering that innovated beyond mere replication of past technologies.

4F. And the Land had Rest? The Aftermath of Destruction and the Development of Memory III (Studio 1)

Chair(s): Nitsan Shalom, University of Oldenburg and the Hebrew University of Jerusalem; Igor Kreimerman, Hebrew University of Jerusalem

From Ruin to Reign – The Faith of Jerusalem

Yiftah Shalev[1]
[1] Israeli Antiquities Authority

Babylonians in 586 BCE, and its transformation over the subsequent four centuries, remain key questions in archaeological research. Traditionally, scholars believed that the city remained small, impoverished, and insignificant until its revival as the Hasmonean capital in the late 2nd century BCE. However, recent excavations, particularly at the Givati Parking Lot site, present a more nuanced picture—one of gradual recovery and continuity rather than prolonged abandonment. Evidence indicates that resettlement began as early as the Persian period, with inhabitants returning to the ruined city and living among its debris. This was not merely an act of necessity but a deliberate choice, as they continued to reside within the ruins throughout the period, preserving the destroyed city as a "landscape of memory"—a testament to their deep connection to its past. These settlers were not impoverished squatters but active participants in Jerusalem’s economic and cultural resurgence. Trade with the Phoenicians played a crucial role in this process, reshaping both the city's physical layout and economic systems, and reestablishing its regional significance. By the late 3rd century BCE, Jerusalem had developed into a well-built, thriving urban center with extensive trade connections to the coastal region, Egypt, and Greece. This lecture will explore these new findings, offering a revised understanding of Jerusalem’s gradual but deliberate resurgence from ruin to a major political, religious, and economic hub.

Ruins to a Living Landscape: The Case of Canaanite Hazor
Nitzan Shalom[1]
[1] The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

Canaanite Hazor is highlighted in the Hebrew Bible as an exceptional enemy. In Joshua 11, it is described as "the head of all those kingdoms" and is notable for being the only city set on fire by Joshua. Hazor's defeat is framed as the climax of the conquest narrative. While the questions of who destroyed Late Bronze Age Hazor and why remain unresolved, it is clear that the once monumental city had transformed into a ruinscape, in which later inhabitants had to establish their new settlements. This lecture explores the interactions of the Iron Age residents of the site with the remains surrounding them. The ruins of the Canaanite city were part of the urban landscape for centuries, with particular reverence shown to certain locations that were left untouched, while other structures were reused, looted, or built over. By analyzing the contexts in which Bronze Age artifacts and architectural elements were reused, avoided or manipulated during various phases of the Iron Age, we can examine the attitudes of the inhabitants toward the ruins around them. This allows us to explore how this relationship evolved over time and whether the ancient remains were charged with deep significance, as reflected in the stories attributed to them in the Bible, or whether they were more pragmatically exploited as available raw materials.

From Destruction to Reconstruction: How Much Labor is Required?
David Brown[1]
[1] Univeristy of California, Los Angeles

With the advent of the Early Iron Age, many settlements in the southern Levant that suffered destruction or abandonment, and were subsequently resettled, express construction practices inferior to those displayed in preceding and succeeding periods. From domestic dwellings to storage strategies to defensive infrastructure, these efforts reflect value engineering—or minimum effort for maximum benefit. This paper explores the conscious decisions behind these labor efforts and what this says about the types of people who resettled these spaces. It likewise examines what these new inhabitants prioritized in their struggle to survive and the cultural memory that was lost in the process.

Ruins and the Remembrance of What Never Was
Daniel Pioske[1]
[1] University of St. Thomas

In his La topographie légendaire des Évangiles en Terre Sainte (1941), Maurice Halbwachs, one of the most important and early theorists of collective memory, examined a series of Christian pilgrimage accounts that reached back into the 4th century CE. The principal aim of Halbwachs' study was to to better understand the relationship between the archaeological evidence of the locations described in these accounts and the stories told about them in the New Testament. Though certain pilgrimage sites had some connections to a more distant past, what Halbwachs demonstrates throughout his discussion is the tenuous affiliations these places often had to events and figures from the first century CE. A community's remembered past and a historical one, Halbwachs observes throughout his work, are distinct modes of retrospection that may generate overlapping claims but also, at moments, distinct or competing ones. This paper draws on Halbwachs' early interest in the relationship between ruins and memory by turning to accounts of the fall of Late Bronze Age locations in the Hebrew Bible. My talk focuses on three locations that appear among biblical stories set in the Late Bronze Age period—Jarmuth, Lachish, and Shiloh—in order to investigate a mode of memory I've titled "remembering what never was." As with Halbwachs' investigation of certain Christian pilgrimage accounts, I argue that settlements with prominent Bronze Age ruins became sites of memory for later populations in the southern Levant who associated these remains with events and figures that had little historical attachments to these locations.

The Bible Among Ruins: Sodom, Israelite History and the Hebrew Bible
Peter Feinman[1]
[1] Institute of History, Archaeology, and Education

"The Bible among ruins" is a phrase used by Dan Pioske in three connected books to examine the impact of physical ruins in the landscape in which Israel lived on its history and the writing Hebrew Bible. He focuses on ruins west of the Jordan River. One ruin which he does not include in his study is Sodom, east of the Jordan. This paper will address the possible impact of the ruins of Sodom on the writing of the Hebrew Bible and Israelite history. As Pioske observes, biblical writers lived in a world that already was ancient. The lands familiar to them were populated throughout by the ruins from the Bronze Ages. References to these ruins abound in the Hebrew Bible, attest familiarity with the material remains by biblical writers. Stories were told about the ruins the people encountered or heard about. It is proposed that a meteor exploded at low altitude with the force of a ten megaton atomic bomb at an altitude of about one kilometer over the northeast corner of the Dead Sea, over the major city at Tall el-Hamman and obliterated civilization in the 25-kilometer-wide circular plain in the "Middle Ghor." The researchers presented preliminary findings at the ASOR 2018 meeting with a followup report "A Tunguska sized airburst destroyed Tall el-Haman a Middle Bronze city in the Jordan Valley near the Dead Sea" Scientific Reports (2022). The paper builds on their suggestion of a possible link to the story of Sodom.

4G. Rethinking the Amarna Letters: Cuneiform and Cultures in Contact (Studio 2)

Chair(s): Gina Konstantopoulos, University of California, Los Angeles

Languages, Scripts, and Scribalism in Late Bronze Age Ugarit and Canaan
Joseph Lam[1]
[1] University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill

Alice Mandell's Cuneiform Culture and the Ancestors of Hebrew presents a re-examination of the Canaanite Amarna Letters in light of sociolinguistic and material perspectives. Thus, the publication of the book offers an opportunity to reconsider scribal practices in Late Bronze Age Syria-Palestine more broadly. The present paper turns its attention to Ugarit, a site that uncovered texts representing eight different languages in five different scripts, inspired by the scribal strategies discussed in Mandell's work. In particular, it will examine scribal practices as they pertain to the use of the logosyllabic vs. alphabetic cuneiform scripts and what they tell us about both the motivations of individual scribes for particular script choices and the broader institutional context in which scribes operated.

Rethinking the Amarna Letters: The View from Ras Shamra
Andrew R. Burlingame[1]
[1] Wheaton College

In Cuneiform Culture and the Ancestors of Hebrew, Alice Mandell presents a vision of the Amarna Letters as a group of documents that reveal as much about the textual habits of professional scribes and administrators as it does about their linguistic habits. In fact, the latter can only be identified and understood in conjunction with the former. In this presentation, I respond to Mandell's approach to relating linguistic and textual performance in Late Bronze Age letter writing and illustrate how her important methodological proposals relate to the study of letters farther north in the "Western

Periphery." Discussing letters found at Ras Shamra, I propose new readings and interpretations that underscore the importance of a method that conscientiously attends to matters of orthography, formulary, and textual provenance in historically contextualizing and evaluating these primary sources.

The Egyptian Amarna Letters and the Scribes Who Wrote Them
Jana Mynářová[1]
[1] Institute of Ancient Near Eastern Studies, Faculty of Arts, Charles University

This talk examines the identification of individual scribes responsible for the Amarna letters of Egyptian origin, analyzing their handwriting, stylistic features, and linguistic choices. By comparing these letters with contemporary scholarly texts from the same context, the study explores connections between the two corpora and their implications for scribal practice in Egypt. The analysis sheds light on the extent of overlap between diplomatic and scholarly writing, offering insights into the training, role, and specialization of cuneiform scribes in Amarna.

Politeness in Akkadian Cuneiform Letters from the Late Bronze Age West
Jacob Lauinger[1]
[1] Johns Hopkins University

A core tenet of Alice Mandell's Canaanite Scribal Creativity… – and one that she demonstrates with numerous case studies – is that sociolinguistics has much to offer as an analytic framework for scholars working on the Amarna letters. This paper attempts to build upon Mandell's work in three ways: First, by focusing on the linguistic expression of politeness, a sociolinguistic topic not taken up in Canaanite Scribal Creativity…; second, by expanding the dataset to include not just Amarna letters but letters from other Late Bronze Age sites in the West; and third, by comparing and contrasting politeness in these Western letters with Akkadian cuneiform letters from southern Mesopotamia.

The Canaanite Amarna Letters, and the Scribes Who Wrote Them
Alice Mandell[1]
[1] Johns Hopkins University

The Canaanite Amarna Letters have been somewhat marginalized in Near Eastern Studies as "peripheral" Akkadian texts, written by incompetent scribes. The scribes have been described as deficient communicators, who were less sophisticated than professional peers from elsewhere in the cuneiform world. However, the material turn has transformed the study of the Canaanite Letters. Scholars are paying more attention than ever to the materiality of the letters and to the data that they provide about their writers: cuneiform specialists who interfaced between Levantine elites and the Egyptian court. We can now build profiles of both individual scribes and of the different scribal communities circulating in Canaan in the Amarna Period. The Canaanite letters are informative about how scribes were trained differently to craft letters. A holistic approach, furthermore, highlights the innovative ways that they wielded their cuneiform craft to communicate to the pharaoh and his officials. Putting together these different facets of the letters with their political and geographic contexts paints a picture of a dynamic and productive scribal presence in Canaan in the Amarna Age. Rather than passive secretaries, the scribes played a key role in diplomacy and in local political matters.

4H. Archaeology of Syria II (The Loft)
Chair(s): Kathryn Grossman, North Carolina State University

The Damascus National Museum: Back to Life (Virtual)
Salam Al Kuntar[1], Rima Khawam[2]
[1] Rutgers State University, [2] Fondation Maison des sciences de l'homme

After the fall of the Assad regime in December 2024, Syria is entering a new phase of rebuilding and rehabilitation of public institutions. This significant moment marks an end to the ordeal and suffering of the Syrian people and the start of a hopeful beginning. Therefore, there is much need to activate the role of museums as places of public engagement, education and shared national identity. The National Museum of Damascus is a focal point in the city. It is considered a symbol of national pride, a unifying place and a source of primary education for Syria's history and ancient cultures. In this paper we talk about our emergency intervention project at the Damascus National Museum. This project focuses on increasing the Museum's functioning capacity and preserving its collections and other deposited artifacts in the Museum galleries. We will present about our ongoing efforts to bring back the Museum to its role as a primary hub of culture and important source of public and academic education. Our project serves as a model to encourage other organizations to participate in the immediate post-war reconstruction of Syria' cultural heritage.

Remote Senseing-Based Analysis of Archaeological Site Damage in Syria
Jesse Casana[1]
[1] Dartmouth College

Throughout the early years of the Syrian Civil War, from 2011-2017, our research team undertook extensive analysis of damage to archaeological sites and monuments that was being caused by looting, militarization, intentional destruction, and other factors. Results of these efforts, conducted as part of an ASOR project and funded by the US Department of State, brought into clear view the severity of damage and the extreme risks to the rich archaeological heritage of the region. With the collapse of the Assad government and the end of the war, archaeologists and former antiquities officials have begun to return to Syria, beginning what will be a long process of mitigation and rebuilding. To support these new initiatives, our team has begun a renewed analysis, using newly acquired high-resolution satellite imagery to assess recent damage and current conditions at many key archaeological sites in Syria. Results show many cases in which patterns of looting and damage from earlier in the war have only multiplied, but other instances in which the entrenchment of front lines, as well as the effective defeat of ISIS, seems to have slowed the pace of destruction. Our findings are assisting with ongoing damage assessment efforts and also lay the groundwork for renewed collaboration with Syrian antiquities officials.

The Early Bronze Age at Hamoukar, Syria: Excavations in Area C, 2006–2010

Tate S. Paulette[1], Kathryn Grossman[2]
[1] North Carolina State University

The site of Hamoukar in northeastern Syria was one of the largest cities in northern Mesopotamia during the third millennium BC. Early Bronze Age occupation at the site has been explored through archaeological survey and excavations across the high mound and lower town. Excavations in Area C, near the northeastern corner of the lower town, were first conducted during the 1999–2001 seasons and were then resumed during the 2006–2010 seasons. Plans for further excavation were interrupted by the beginning of the Syrian civil war in 2011. The results from the 2006–2010 excavation campaign have only been published in an extremely preliminary fashion. In light of the recent request by the Directorate-General of Antiquities and Museums that archaeological expeditions resume work in Syria, it is more important than ever that the results of prior work at Hamoukar see full analysis and publication. This paper presents the results of a first effort to restart the long-dormant analysis of the excavations carried out in Area C between 2006 and 2010. It will include discussion of architecture, ceramics, small finds, and faunal remains.

Pottery-making and Communities of Potters in the Balikh Valley during the Ubaid and Late Chalcolithic 1-2 (ca. 5300-3900 BCE) (Virtual)

Giulia Russo[1]
[1] Freie Universitaet Berlin

The Ubaid and Late Chalcolithic 1-2 periods (ca. 5300–3900 BCE) in Northern Mesopotamia and Syria were marked by significant changes in pottery traditions. While general regional trends have been identified, their emergence and transformation varied across sites, reflecting localized socio-political and economic processes. Pottery traditions are key to understanding these developments and the interactions—both local and interregional—that shaped them. This paper shares the results of a technological study of ceramic assemblages from the Balikh Valley in Northern Syria. By applying the chaîne opératoire approach, grounded in the anthropology of techniques and practice theory, this study reconstructs the manufacturing processes of ceramics at various sites within the region. Through synchronic and diachronic analyses, it identifies distinct technical traditions and communities of potters, tracing their transformations over time and space. By situating the Balikh Valley within the broader Mesopotamian context, this research offers fresh perspectives on technological practices and community interactions during the transformative period between the late sixth and early fourth millennia BCE.

Skull Removal Practice in the Pottery Neolithic Period: A Case Study from the Cemetery of Tell el-Kerkh, Syria (Virtual)

Sari Jammo[1]
[1] Nagoya University Institute for Advanced Research/ Nagoya University Museum

The practice of skull removal was uncovered in the Epipaliolithic period and flourished during the Pre-Pottery Neolithic A (PPNA) and Pre-Pottery Neolithic B (PPNB) periods. This practice was frequently undertaken, and this reflects the importance of this practice for the people of Neolithic societies. However, in the Pottery Neolithic (PN) period, mortuary decapitation sharply decreased, and few sites demonstrated this practice. Excavations at Tell el-Kerkh have revealed a crowded Pottery Neolithic cemetery with c. 244 individuals, however, only ten specimens of skull removal. The cemetery uncovered multiple complex funerary practices which reflect the diversity of treating the dead. I suggest that the decrease in the practice of skull removal in this period is due to changes in the social structure of Pottery Neolithic society, which is based on a household system. Skull removal practice in this period became a selective decision practiced on an individual basis by some households only. Thus, there was a decline in interest in the skull removal practice.

4I. Economies of Scale among Emerging Complex Societies of the Old World: A Celebration of the Career of Haskel Greenfield (Workshop) (Whittier)

Chair(s): Jeremy A. Beller, University of Bergen; Tina Greenfield, University of Winnipeg; Kent Fowler, University of Manitoba

Escaping the Complexity of EBA Society: Further Insight into the Nature of Leisure and Gaming from Khirbat Iskandar, Jordan

Jeremy A. Beller[1], Natalia M. Handziuk[2], Shira Albaz[2], Audrey Lefort[4], Suzanne Richard[5]
[1] University of Bergen, [2] University of Notre Dame, [3] Bar Ilan University, [4] University of Saskatchewan, [5] Gannon University

The Early Bronze Age (3700-2000 BCE) southern Levant saw the emergence of early complex societies, largely characterised by increasing urbanism, new technologies, and specialised craft production. While day-to-day life certainly involved participation in basic subsistence and industrial activities, it also entailed facets of leisure and entertainment. Indeed, material evidence for such escapes from the rigours of daily life is increasing. This report discusses several gaming boards and pieces that were found at Khirbat Iskandar, Jordan, dating to the Early Bronze Age III-IV. Their interpretation is elucidated by their similarities to gaming boards and pieces from contemporary sites and their unsuitability as utilitarian objects. In particular, the gaming boards contain indentations in a 3 x 10 arrangement, reminiscent of those discovered elsewhere within the Early Bronze Age southern Levant. The collective objects provide insight into the nature of leisure, as well as inter-regional interaction, particularly between Egypt and the southern Levant.

"By the House of Their Fathers" (Numbers 1:2)

Shira Albaz[1], Aren M. Maier[1]
[1] Bar Ilan University

This paper will present and discuss the Early Bronze Age (EB) domestic architecture from the residential neighborhood in Area E at Tell es-Safi/Gath. Based on this, we will discuss the characteristics of EB III domestic houses in the Southern Levant. While most of the architectural research on the EB has focused on public architecture (fortifications, temples, and palaces/public buildings), here, we analyze domestic architecture to try and distinguish between different types of construction, which may indicate different populations or social hierarchical stratification. The residential quarter consists of the remains of several buildings that were uncovered on both sides of an alleyway. These buildings are a type of broad-room/front-room house, which appears to be typical of buildings in many parts of Canaan until the end of the Early Bronze Age. The uniqueness of the residential quarter is that the buildings are designed with a mirror-image plan. Domestic architecture can provide information on the communal and kinship makeup of the inhabitants of this neighborhood, and what this perhaps tells us about the social makeup of the population of this neighborhood, of Tell es-Safi/Gath, and other sites in the EB Southern Levant.

Awl-Waze Forward: Simple Bone Tool Identification and Preliminary Implications from the Early Bronze Age III Assemblage at Tell es-Safi Gath, Israel

Sarah J. Richardson[1]
[1] University of Manitoba

The study of simple bone tools has been largely overlooked in research on the Early Bronze Age Southern Levant (Genz 2016). This paper highlights the incorporation of these tools into the faunal database at Tell eṣ-Ṣâfi/Gath through Haskel's meticulous recording and analysis of these tools. The study examines the identification criteria for ten distinct tool types, their formation processes, and their distribution across periods. Preliminary findings reveal insights into the quantities and potential economic roles of these tools, alongside considerations of unidentified tool fragments. Finally, the paper explores why these artifacts have remained underutilized in the field and discusses their broader implications for understanding Early Bronze Age societies.

Iron Age Warfare: An Experimental Archaeology Perspective

Timothy Matney[1]
[1] University of Akron

The Near Eastern Iron Age witnessed dramatic changes in the technology of warfare as new materials, weapon designs, and military tactics replaced older models during the 1st millennium BC. This paper presents experimental and experiential results from ongoing studies examining the development of arrowhead and armor design, and the shift from bronze to iron as the common metal of war. Tests of the efficiency of two-lobed and three-lobed arrowhead designs, their fabrication in bronze and iron, and the penetration requirements against bronze and iron scale armor are considered. The technical challenges of casting bronze versus forging iron, and the requirements for conducting repairs and fabricating new arrowheads in the field during campaigns add complexity to understanding shifts in Iron Age warfare. The production of modern facsimiles for testing also provided useful observations on issues of materiality, and some limitations of traditional metallurgical practices.

Sharp Force Trauma and Chop Mark Identification Bias: Experimental Evidence on the Effects of Bone Structure, Cortical Thickness, and Axe Material

Tiffany R. Okaluk[1], Justin Dallman[2], Tina L. Greenfield[2], Itzhaq Shai[3]
[1] University of Manitoba, [2] The University of Winnipeg, [3] Independent Scholar

Sharp force trauma (SFT) is the primary criteria used to identify chop mark butchery in zooarchaeology. Chop marks are the outcome of both blunt and SFT and exhibit a mosaic of morphological traits associated with both trauma types. When present, SFT creates a distinct anthropogenic surface that is easily identifiable, whereas chop marks with no or minimal SFT resemble a fracture surface. This study aims to understand potential bias within using SFT as the primary morphological identification criteria by testing the relationship between bone structure, cortical bone thickness, axe material, and the extent of SFT. Medium mammal cervical vertebrae and femurs were impacted using stone, copper, bronze, iron, and modern steel axe heads. The experiment models how the existence and extent of SFT both depend on bone type and cortical thickness. It also found that axe material impacts the existence and extent of SFT. Whether an axe is made of stone or copper is an important factor in determining whether an outcome will exhibit SFT at all, whereas SFT depth is positively associated with whether the axe is made of iron or steel. A hurdle-lognormal model of SFT magnitude captures the duality of this process. Consequently, using SFT as the primary morphological criteria to identify chop marks in zooarchaeology introduces a substantial bias. It favors the identification of chop marks made by iron or steel axes, as well as marks on bones with lower cortical thickness and underlying trabecular structures.

From Clay to Complexity at Early Bronze Age Tell eṣ-Ṣâfi/Gath: Pottery Production in an Early Urban World

Jon Ross[1], Shira Albaz[2]
[1] The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, [2] Bar Ilan University

The main goal of the Tell es-Safi/Gath ceramic technology project was to clarify how Early Bronze Age households were provisioned with pottery from a chaîne opératoire perspective. Since large quantities of whole and reconstructed forms are lacking, the identification of shaping techniques relies on imaging deformations observed on refreshed ceramic breaks (thick sections) and sherd surfaces. The resulting classification of forming methods is integrated with the results of thin-section petrography. We pull together observations on the forms, petrofabrics, surface features, and vessel structure to inform a larger discussion on the organization of production at a major early urban site in the Shephelah. In this paper, we provide an updated overview of the results following the conclusion of recent excavations that exposed two to three rows of domestic buildings, separated by a narrow street, and well dated to the EB III. We primarily focus on the holemouth jars and serving platters, highlighting the strengths and limitations of this approach.

Behaviour behind the Blade: Understanding the Sacrificial Animals of Late Bronze Age Tel Burna, Israel

Tina L. Greenfield[1], Itzhaq Shai[2], Jane G. Gaastra[3]
[1] University of Winnipeg, [2] Independent Scholar, [3] Durham University

The investigation of southern Levant Late Bronze Age (LBA~1550-1200 BCE) cultic spaces has until recently received less attention in comparison with the much more significantly monumental temples of the Early and Middle Bronze Ages and the Iron Age. This is in part due to the scarcity of cultic spaces rather than temples from this period. Little comparative material for these unique features makes investigating their function and purpose more difficult. Hence, it is necessary to look at comparative material, both cultic and non-religious artifacts, to understand further what might define potential ritual behaviour. Between 2011-2017 an LBA cultic space (B1) was excavated at the site of Tel Burna, located in the Shephelah region of Israel. The investigation of animal remains from Tel Burna, allowed for an in-depth investigation into ritual behaviour (i.e. animal sacrifice and feasting) from a cultic space. Comparative faunal material from within the non-religious structures highlights differences in the use of the animals for different purposes at Tel Burna. Through the integration of zooarchaeological data from each building or space, a comparative picture of economic and religious behaviour is possible.

4J. Isotopic Investigations in the Ancient Near East and Caucasus (White Hill)

Chair(s): Goke Bike Yazıcıoğlu, Simon Fraser Universty; Benjamin Irvine, British Institute at Ankara

Determining the Dietary Habits of the Neolithic Community of Gusir Höyük Using Ssable Isotope Analysis

Kameray Özdemir[1], Benjamin Irvine[2], Handan Üstündağ[3], Joris Peters[4], Necmi Karul[5]
[1] Hacettepe University, [2] Bilkent University, [3] Anadolu University, [4] Ludwig Maximilian University Munich, [5] Istanbul University

Reconstructing the dietary habits of past human populations is a major focus of bioarchaeological research. These studies often require the application of multiple methodologies and the combination of different data sources in order to develop a

comprehensive and in-depth understanding. The main methods used in research to determine past dietary habits include examining oral and dental health, osteological stress indicators, archaeobotanical and zooarchaeological analyses, and stable isotope analyses. Stable isotope analysis applied to the early (PPNB) Neolithic community of Gusir Höyük have provided a better understanding of dietary habits and subsistence strategies during this critical period in the development of human society. In this study, carbon and nitrogen stable isotope ratios were analysed from bulk bone collagen obtained from the bones of 38 adult individuals and 33 contemporary faunal specimens. The very narrow range observed in the human δ13C and δ15N values indicate homogeneous dietary habits in the population and probable dietary commensality. This paper presents results from the TUBITAK 1001 project (Project No. 123K441 - 'Palaeodiet Analysis of the Neolithic Period Population of Gusir Höyük').

An Investigation of Geographic Extent and Herd Mobility Using Strontium (87Sr/86Sr) and Understanding Diet and Mobility at Neolithic Gusir Höyük, Türkiye Using δ34S Analysis

Benjamin Irvine[1], Kameray Özdemir[2], Handan Üstündağ[3], Joris Peters[4], Necmi Karul[5]
[1] Bilkent University, [2] Hacettepe University, [3] Anadolu University, [4] Ludwig Maximilian University Munich, [5] Istanbul University

Stable isotope values of sulphur (δ34S), from bulk bone collagen, can provide information about both dietary habits and the origin of humans and animals, and thereby consequently, mobility and movement in humans and animals. This paper will discuss the results of δ34S analysis of humans and wild animals from the early Neolithic site of Gusir Höyük from the Siirt region of southeast Türkiye, within the scope of a TÜBİTAK 1001 project (Project No. 123K441 - "Gusir Höyük Neolitik Dönem Topluluğunun Paleodiyet Analizi"). These findings provide further insight (in conjunction with δ13C and δ15N values) into understanding the dietary habits, movement, and mobility of both humans and animals at an early Neolithic site with regards to understanding social and economic aspects of their life, including environmental niche exploitation, hunting ranges, and early agropastoral activities.

An Isotopic Investigation into Animal Management from Archaeological Remains at the Ancient Urban Center of Gordion, Turkey

Nicole Hultquist[1], David Meiggs[2], Phoebe C. Wilcox[1], Petra Vaiglova[3], Ethan F. Baxter[4], John M. Marston[1]

Agropastoral strategies at the ancient urban center of Gordion, in central Anatolia (modern Turkey), have been studied since the 1980s, with considerable progress to date in understanding the histories of farming, herding, and environmental change in the region. Less well understood, however, is how spatial patterning of agropastoral activities affected the diet of domestic animals. By focusing on successive imperial periods, from the Late Bronze Age (1400-1200 BCE) Hittite Empire to the Hellenistic (330-100 BCE) occupation, this project investigates the response of farmers and herders to distinct strategies for state finance employed by different states. Using a multi-isotopic approach, this project aims to enable dietary interpretation of past agropastoral activities, frequently at an intra-annual scale. This presentation reports carbon, nitrogen, and sulfur isotopic results from caprine, cattle, and pig dentine. It provides a detailed investigation of agropastoral strategies, including an assessment of animal husbandry strategies over successive periods of distinct political authority in the region. This presentation also discusses the next steps for research and future integration with other isotopic research across Anatolia.

An Investigation of Geographic Extent and Herd Mobility Using Strontium (87Sr/86Sr) and Stable Oxygen (δ18O) Isotopes at the Urban Center of Gordion, Türkiye

David Meiggs[1], Nicole Hultquist[2], Ethan F. Baxter[3], John M. Marston[2], Stephanie Walker[4], Andrew Lonero[4]
[1] Rochester Institute of Technology, [2] Boston University, [3] Australian National University, [4] Boston College

Strontium and oxygen isotopes are now frequently used to assess mobility in past human and animal populations. While agropastoral strategies are broadly understood at the multi-period urban center of Gordion, Türkiye, less well understood is the geographic extent of livestock management in relation to the agricultural cycle. To investigate the role of state finance strategies during imperial periods at the site, dating from the Late Bronze Age (c. 1400-1200 BCE) through the Phrygian and Hellenistic periods (c. 950-3rd cent. BCE), we use a combination of strontium and oxygen isotopes measured from sheep/goat, cattle, and pig tooth enamel. An analysis of plant remains from the immediate vicinity of the site and local region and an isoscape covering modern Türkiye will be used as a baseline comparison for strontium to maximize geographic inferences. Seasonal differences observed in previous analysis of intra-tooth oxygen values were used to guide strontium samples. We investigate the environmental context suggested by including strontium isotopes. Together, these isotope systems provide a sensitive measure of the geographic extent of herd movements. Our investigation will detail observed geographic patterns in livestock mobility and their implications for agropastoral management through time at the site. Needs for further research will be identified and discussed in the context of current isotopic studies of fauna in Anatolia.

Interpreting Individual Life Histories Using Multiple Isotope Proxies at Alişar Höyük, Türkiye

Suzanne E. Pilaar Birch[1], Gökçe B. Yazıcıoğlu[2], Hannah Moots[3]
[1] University of Cambridge, [2] Simon Fraser University, [3] University of Chicago

Alişar Höyük is a multi-period site located in central Türkiye, with occupation spanning from the Neolithic through the Byzantine era. In the late 1920s and early 1930s, excavations at Alişar were directed by Eric Schmidt, and human skeletal remains were brought back to the US and housed at the University of Chicago for the greater part of the next century. Recently, these remains have been studied using stable isotope and ancient DNA analysis as part of the larger project "Genomes, Migrations, and Culture in the Early Civilizations of the Middle East". In this paper, we present radiocarbon dates and stable isotope data derived from 18 individuals in order to reconstruct in-depth individual life histories at the site through time. The interpretation of dietary inputs is based on δ13C and δ15N derived from collagen as well as δ13C and δ18O from tooth enamel. We use 87Sr/86Sr and Pb, also from tooth enamel, to interpret mobility. We consider the application of multiple interpretive methods, including using a 2σ local vs. non-local boundary and individual assignment using a recently published Sr isoscape for Anatolia. The isotope data are further contextualized through the re-assessment of early excavation records and new bioarchaeological observations. Together, this combined approach provides unique insight into the lived experiences of individuals from Alişar Höyük, including dimensions of their diet and mobility, which add richness and nuance to large scale archaeological and archaeogenetic interpretations.

4K. Life and Tradition around Sacred Mountains (Southwest Asia) (Tremont)

Chair(s): Gonca Dardeniz, Istanbul University; Randall W. Younker, Andrews University

Recent Archaeological Surveys around Mt. Ağrı (Türkiye)
Gonca Dardeniz[1]
[1] University of Istanbul

This talk presents the first results of archaeological surveys started in 2024 in the Doğubayazit and Diyadin districts of Ağrı. Mount Ağrı (also known as Mt. Ararat) is situated in eastern Türkiye near the border with Iran, Armenia, and Azerbaijan (Nakhchivan). With its 5137 m height (16854 ft), Mt. Ağrı is the iconic peak of Türkiye with its multifaceted significance encompassing archaeological, historical, geographical, ecological, and religious aspects. The Eastern Anatolian highlands form an archaeologically homogeneous culture zone with southern Caucasus and northern Iran. Shaped also with volcanic activity, the mountainous landscape of the region led the way to a dynamic highland-lowland settlement pattern aside from indigenous material culture from the 4th millennium BCE (i.e., Chalcolithic period) onwards. The preliminary results of the 5-years project provide new data on settlement patterns and subsistence economies of these ancient communities.

Agri Dagh: The History and Tradition of a Holy Mountain (Virtual)
Randall Younker[1], Elisabeth Lesnes[1]
[1] Andrews University

Agri Dagh is the Turkish name for one of the most famous mountains in the world—Mt. Ararat. It is of course celebrated around the world as the mountain upon which Noah's Ark landed as the Great Deluge subsided. However, through the ages the mountain has had many other names and many other sacred traditions have been attached to the mountain. The two-peaked volcano is depicted on Mesopotamian cylinder seals dating as early 2300 BCE. Many of these seals show the many gods of the Mesopotamian pantheon assembled at the top of the mountain exhibiting their unique supernatural powers. In the Gilgamesh Epic the mountain is called Māšu , and is the mountain to which Gilgamesh travels in his search for Utnapishtim, the Babylonian Noah, from whom Gilgamesh hoped to learn the secret of eternal life. Later peoples such as the Urartians, Armenians, etc. who lived on and around the mountain had their own understandings and traditions. In each case, the various people groups who have inhabited or visited the lands on and around this mountain have recognized it as a Holy Mountain, whose high peaks were close to the gods (or God), and thus, perhaps, provided access to the Divine. This has resulted in the mountain being a pilgrimage site for literally millennia. This paper will briefly review the fascinating history of Agri Dagh and how it was viewed as a Holy Mountain through the ages.

Archaeological Sequence of the Volcanoes of Highland of Eastern Anatolia: Süphan, Nemrut, Aladağ, Tendürek and Ağrı Mountains from the Paleolithic Period to the End of the Late Iron Age (Virtual)
Aynur Özfırat[1], Gencay Güloglu[1]
[1] Mardin Artuklu University

The paper aims to present the archaeological sequence of the volcanoes of Highland of Eastern Anatolia from the Paleolithic Period to the end of the Late Iron Age (Achaemenid) based on our field campaigns in the region. An extensive range of volcanoes, Nemrut, Süphan, Aladağ, Tendürek and Ağrı and high mountains are the characteristics of the landscape in the Highland of Eastern Anatolia, east of the Upper Euphrates Valley. The area contains the Lake Van basin and Middle Aras Valley between these mountains, which have an exceptional position culturally and geographically, owing to their location between the main communication routes of Anatolia, Mesopotamia, the Caucasus and Iran. The Highland of Eastern Anatolia shared a common geographical and cultural zone with the Southern Caucasus and Northwestern Iran. The most important characteristic of this mountainous terrain surrounding Greater Mesopotamia to the north is almost wholly covered with vast pasturelands. The settlement pattern of this wide mountainous area demonstrates a different, contrasting model to that of the mounds (höyüks, tepes, tells) in the core area of the Near East.

Sacred Peak Sites in Central Anatolia during the Late Bronze and Iron Ages (ca. 1650-700 BCE)
James F. Osborne[1], Michele Rüzgar Massa[2]
[1] University of Chicago, [2] Bilkent University

Mountain peaks and rocky outcrops have long been recognized to have been crucial components of the religious beliefs of people in Anatolia during the Late Bronze and Iron Ages. Archaeologically, however, sanctuaries that are associated with these features are much less understood. This paper considers what is known about Anatolian peak sites textually and archaeologically for the second and first millennia BCE. Assessing the evidence for continuity and innovation in peak-site usage across the two periods sheds new light on the Bronze to Iron Age transition. In particular, the Iron Age peak sanctuaries of Kızıldağ and Karadağ and the associated settlement of Türkmen-Karahöyük serve as a useful case study for the ways in which Late Bronze Age precedents were consciously adapted into new forms in the Iron Age.

Mountain Landscape from the Mountainous Eastern Anatolia, the Highland of the Near East: Case Study: The City of Ayanis, Founded by Rusa, Son of the Urartian King Argishti, in Front of the Sacred Mount Eiduri (Virtual)
Mehmet Işıklı[1]
[1] Atatürk University

The phrase "mountainous and difficult geography", which we encounter quite frequently, should probably be used for the "mountainous belt" in the north of the Near East, extending from where the Taurus and Zagros Mountains meet to the Caucasus Mountains in the north. This special area, which draws attention with its rugged topography, is an extraordinary habitat dominated by mountain ranges, high hills and plateaus, and river valleys and plains extending between mountain ranges. The regional archaeology of this special geography is also special. Since the prehistoric period, the elements that are determined by the mobility imposed by geography stand out in the cultures created by human communities. It is possible to see the dominant and strong traces of the mountain and its landscape in the communities living in these lands where mountains
are decisive and the cultures they created. In the cultures of the communities in the mountainous belt, there is the "shadow of the mountain" in almost every point of their cultural codes, from their livelihood strategies to their belief systems. The cultural process and civilization in which we can observe this situation most strongly is the Urartian Kingdom, a powerful political and cultural figure of the Iron Age. The Urartians, who first brought the civilized concepts of the urban communities of the plains, such as the central political structure, the tradition of statehood and the use of writing to the plateau, managed to be the sole rulers of this difficult geography for two hundred and fifty years.

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 20, 2025 | 8:15am–10:20am (EST)

5A. Archaeology of Egypt I (Grand Ballroom A)
Chair(s): Jordan Galczynski, University of California, Los Angeles; Robyn Price, Brown Univeristy

Reconsidering Connectivities between Egypt and the Northern Levant at the End of the Third Millennium BCE

Anna-Latifa Mourad[1], Julien Cooper[2], Karin Sowada[2]
[1] University of Chicago, [2] Macquarie University

Connectivities between Egypt and the Northern Levant were undoubtedly flourishing by the second half of the Third Millennium BCE. Royal and elite individuals seem to have invested significantly in such connections, benefiting from the resulting exchanges of prestigious and highly desired commodities. Our knowledge of the geographical reach of these royal courts continues to expand with increasing research on the available and newly discovered material. Recent interpretations of Eblaite texts, for instance, have raised the likelihood of expeditionary activity between Egypt and Ebla via a network that involved maritime voyages across the Mediterranean. The closest witness to this exchange is the Sixth Dynasty biography of Iny, which mentions reaching locales like Jbeil/Byblos. Soon after, however, royal courts in both Egypt and the Levant experienced momentous perturbations. Although these may not have been simultaneous, the collapse of the Old Kingdom state eventually contributed to the rise of a 'House of Khety' in its north, while the Levant experienced socio-political shifts that included the abandonment or destruction of several settlements. With such developments, their impact on long-distance connectivities remain to be elucidated. This paper reconsiders such connectivities. It proposes a new identification for a toponym attested in a First Intermediate Period biography from Qubbet el-Hawa, and compares this with a renewed reassessment of Egyptian-Levantine encounters at the end of the Third Millennium BCE. We will argue that exchanges across Egypt and the Northern Levant feasibly continued into this period, albeit as part of a transforming network.

Global Trade and Local Structures of Power in the Bronze Age: Contrasting Views from Egypt and Cyprus

Federico Zangani[1]
[1] University of Cambridge

This paper investigates the impact of Bronze Age global trade on local structures of political, social, and economic power, through a comparative approach to Egypt and Cyprus. While Egyptology remains dominated by a royal perspective based on textual and monumental evidence primarily from religious and funerary contexts, Cyprus is unique in its absence of evidence for kingship and the limited use of writing, and its sociopolitical development was strictly connected to copper metallurgy and trade. Therefore, Cyprus might allow a clearer and more realistic view of power, territoriality, and trade, and it may offer a contrasting view with Egypt, where power dynamics were concealed by the monumental expression of kingship in writing and iconography. This paper hypothesizes that Egypt and Cyprus might not have been as dissimilar as they superficially seem, with implications for our understanding of political and economic power across the Eastern Mediterranean. In particular, the economic power resulting from trade determined a dispersion and fragmentation of sociopolitical power, both territorially and across multiple stakeholders, in both Egypt and Cyprus. It will be suggested that Egypt was therefore on a trajectory of progressive economic decentralization towards increasingly freer forms of exchange, which, in Cyprus, had been a structural feature throughout the Bronze Age. This paper will focus particularly on forms of exchange, access to resources through networks, non-royal agents, the economic role of temples (surplus production, trade, metallurgy), and the interrelation of economics and religion across the Eastern Mediterranean.

Textiles in International Exchange Networks during the Egyptian New Kingdom

Jordan Galczynski[1]
[1] University of California, Los Angeles

The significance and role of textiles in international exchange networks have been underestimated in Egyptological studies. This contrasts with scholarship from scholars of the eastern Mediterranean and West Asia, where the trade of textiles in these regions is well-documented and thoroughly studied (Breniquet 2008; 2013; Lassen 2010; Lumb 2013; Michel 2017; Graslin-Thomé 2016). Although Egyptian documents do not discuss trade to the same extent as the Kanesh textile market, for example, we can still speculate about the level of exchange. This paper will utilize two sources—Theban tomb scenes and the Amarna letters—to examine the prevalence of textile exchange between Egypt, the eastern Mediterranean, and West Asia. From the evidence, we can make three critical observations: 1) garments are "branded" according to their ethnicity; 2) textiles make up a significant proportion of goods exchanged, particularly in high-value exchanges, such as those documented in the Amarna letters; and 3) textiles are highly valued compared to other products.

Gifts of Osiris: A Preliminary Analysis of Egypto-Nubian Drinking Practices on the Ancient Colonial Frontier

Emily K. Smith[1]
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Alcohols in the ancient world have been the subject of increased theoretical and methodological interest as analysis techniques grow in sophistication, but despite progress made in the field of chemical identification, identifying the presence/absence of alcohols in the archaeological record remains somewhat mixed. I present preliminary work on the use-alteration patterns attributed to alcohols on the ceramic assemblages of Askut and Tombos, well-documented ancient Egyptian colonial fortress sites along the Second and Third Cataracts of the Nile, targeting alcohol production, transport, and consumption across the period of Egyptian occupation and settlement of Lower Nubia. To address issues connected to organic preservation, ceramic use-alteration analysis can be used to identify attrition patterns reflect the presence of alcohols in archaeological contexts. The assemblages from Askut and Tombos, chronologically ranging from the Middle Kingdom through the Third Intermediate Period, allows for the investigation of alcohol use in the context of colonialism, where alcohol likely played a lubricating role in the day-to-day dynamics of intercultural interactions. Beer was central to the administration of lifeways across Egypt and Nubia; cross-cutting boundaries of use and linked to a broad series of categories reflective of its multivariate nature. Wine, while classically linked to elite consumption, also cross-cuts social boundaries in ritual contexts or specialized moments where the boundaries of access were broken down. Drinking practices have long been linked to the maintenance of identity within both specialized and daily affairs, and this study addresses the question of entangled alcohol usage practices on the Egyptian colonial frontier.

Monks Who Have a Lot on Their Pate. Pottery Production in the Egyptian Monasteries: A Case Study of Dayr Anba Hadra in Aswan
Katarzyna de Lellis-Danys[1]
[1] University of Warsaw

Studies of monastic economies in Late Antiquity have largely relied on textual sources, with limited attention given to material evidence of craftsmanship. This paper aims to present preliminary research on pottery-making in Egyptian monasteries, focusing on a case study of Dayr Anba Hadra in Aswan. This archaeological site, located on the west bank of the Nile, is one of the best-preserved ancient monastic complexes in Egypt and is currently being researched by a team from the German Archaeological Institute in Cairo. While monastic communities, which emerged in the 4th century CE, are often associated with religious devotion, archaeological evidence reveals their engagement in diverse economic activities, including pottery production. Despite references to monastic workshops in scholarly literature, in-depth analyses remain scarce. Although the pottery kilns at Dayr Anba Hadra have drawn researchers' attention, no comprehensive, published study exists. This paper seeks to address this gap by presenting preliminary research on the spatial organization of pottery workshops, with kilns as the most prominent archaeological evidence. By integrating archaeological and textual data, the study will assess the monastic economy, the role of pottery workshops within it, and their connections to external trade networks. Understanding these dynamics will contribute to broader discussions on monastic production and economic organization in Late Antique Egypt.

5B. Biblical Texts in Cultural Context I (Grand Ballroom B)

Chair(s): Christine Palmer, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary; Kristine Garroway, Hebrew Union C0llege

Caring for the Dead and the Living: Evidence from Tell en-Naṣbeh's Bench Tombs
Aaron Brody[1], Melissa S. Cradic
[1] Pacific School of Religion, Bade Museum

The Badè Museum of Archaeology at Pacific School of Religion in Berkeley, CA stewards a rich legacy collection of artifacts and archives from excavations carried out between 1926-1935 at the ancient settlement of Tell en-Naṣbeh. The site contains extramural cemeteries of rock-cut and natural cave tombs that were used extensively during the Iron Age II period by elite Judeans. This paper presents a subsample of Judean bench tombs from this legacy dataset, arguing that material and archival evidence from the late Iron Age tombs suggests that a strong and sustained practice of intergenerational mortuary commemoration was carried out at these burial sites. The study focuses on two aspects of mortuary ritual: inhumation practices and funerary feasting. Specifically, the paper will discuss secondary inhumation observed in the Naṣbeh tombs, which in many cases contained the fragmented, commingling skeletal remains of many individuals who were interred over prolonged periods. Moreover, pottery and faunal remains indicate that meals were being eaten within these household tombs as elements of the mortuary rituals performed for and with the newly deceased by living mourners and their comforters. Together, these archaeological traces indicate that the living carried out intergenerational mortuary rituals inside the tombs--among the remains of the dead--long after primary inhumation. This study addresses how the Naṣbeh tombs fit into broader cultural and regional patterns of "caring for the dead" across ancient Judah and the significance of these practices for further understanding ancestor commemoration.

The Embodiment and Monumentality of the Nefesh in Ancient Judaism
Jordan Barr[1]
[1] Florida State University

The soul has become thoroughly dematerialized across religious traditions and Western culture. Recent scholarship into ancient Israelite and other Levantine cultures has revealed how this later understanding of the soul predisposes us to misread ancient texts. Accordingly, in this paper I will build upon this theoretically robust work (Schaper 2020; Suriano 2018; Steiner 2015) that highlights the fascinating ways the nefesh could be embodied through funerary objects. I look to expand this examination of the materiality of the nefesh to include Jewish texts and monuments of the late-Hellenistic and early-Roman periods. Similar to how the nefesh can be localized within Iron Age funerary monuments, the remains of monumental tombs from the early centuries BCE also reveal how the nefesh becomes a materialized presence for the deceased. These Jewish tombs were lavishly decorated and constructed, often with a pyramid-like structure identified as a nefesh. Literary sources also mention how the erection of nefesh monuments for the deceased helped to indicate their social importance and to ensure their memory (1 Macc 13.27-30 and Josephus, Ag. Ap. 2.205). Through careful examination of funerary archaeology and textual sources, I will show how the nefesh could be conceptualized as more than an incorporeal entity assigned to an ethereal existence on some other metaphysical plane. Instead, ancient Jews were concerned with how their constructed monuments could both secure the memory of the dead and materialize their continued presence among the living. I want to use the insights of the cultural historian Laqueur to show how the lasting "work of the dead" is through their materialized presence among the living.

Gone, But Not Forgotten: Dead Children and Household Religion
Kristine Garroway[1]
[1] Hebrew Union College

Most studies on death in ancient Israel have approached death as something that happens to adults, which is unsurprising given the fact that the majority of skeletal remains are adult, and texts about the dead concern dead (male) adults. Studies assessing the dead (i.e. adults) struggle with the tension between what is assumed and what can be seen archaeologically. One topic for which this tension poses a particular problem is the role of the deceased in household religion. Where other neighboring cultures have adults buried in houses, and texts outlining rites for the dead within household religion, like kispu, societies living in the lands of ancient Israel do not. What we do have, and what has been overlooked in the conversation, are the burials of children. The fact that children have not played a bigger role in the conversation surrounding the role of the dead in household religion is ironic as studies on household religion agree that fertility and the continuation of the household was a key part of household religion. Using a materialities approach, this paper will take a fresh look at household religion by examining the burial patterns of children in ancient Israel from the MBA-IA II to suggest that Judahite elites made a concerted effort to distance themselves from a belief that children could be reborn and that burials could protect the house. In doing so, I look at jar burials, intramural burials, and rock-cut bench tombs.

The Mobile Dead: Exodus 13:19 and the Transportation of Mortal Remains and Mortuary Images in the World of Ancient Israel
Jonathan Greer[1]
[1] Grand Valley State University

When Israel went up from Egypt in the story of the exodus in the Hebrew Bible, we read that "Moses took with him the bones of Joseph…" (Exod 13:19), thus fulfilling an earlier oath of the long

dead patriarch (Gen 50:25). Then later we read that the bones are reinterred in Shechem as part of the inheritance of the Sons of Joseph (Josh 24:32). This paper considers this description of exhuming, transporting, and reburying the bones of Joseph in the context of the world of ancient Israel informed by archaeology and ancient Near Eastern texts. Parallel archaeological examples of transporting mortal remains and mortuary images will be highlighted in order to illuminate historical and cultural aspects of this practice as it pertains to migration and social identity.

Neighbors to the North: Sidonian Death Ways, ca. 1000-400 BCE
Helen Dixon[1]
[1] East Carolina University

This paper takes the burial grounds of the coastal city-state of Sidon (modern Saida, Lebanon) and its dependent territories as a case study in Levantine Phoenician mortuary practices and as a counterpoint for sites and narratives from the Hebrew Bible. While Sidon was in some ways the birthplace of the study of Phoenician death ways (with the 1855 discovery of the late 6th century BCE 'Eshmun'azor II sarcophagus), previous academic studies have tended to either (a) focus on an individual cemetery, tomb, or necropolis; or (b) attempt to characterize all Phoenician and Punic burial practices, a synthetic approach that glosses interesting differences in regional development. Looking at a single Phoenician city-state allows closer comparison with well-studied sites like Jerusalem in the Iron Age II-III periods. This brief study will lay out Sidonian death ways on three levels: that of the family tomb, the elite or royal tomb, and the cosmological level, through our current understanding of afterlife beliefs. The burial data from sites like Sarepta, Sidon-Dakerman, Tambourit, Aya'a, Magharat Abloun, 'Ain Hilweh, and Helalieh will inform the analysis, opening new directions for understanding ritual practice among the diverse polytheistic communities of the Levantine coast.

5C. Archaeology of Israel II (Georgian)

Chair(s): Boaz Gross, Israeli Institute of Archaeology and Tel Aviv University

Omrit's Journey from a Sacred Center to a Remote Periphery through the Lens of Fauna (Virtual)
Ram Bouchnick[1], Michael C. Nelson[2], Daniel Schowalter[3]
[1] Kinneret Academic College, [2] Queens College, [3] Carthage College in Kenosha

Horvat Omrit, located in northern Israel on the western slopes of Mount Hermon, conducted in the early 2000s, revealed impressive findings, including a sacred complex with a grand Roman temple built alongside the main road connecting Paneas (Banias) and Tiberias. The sacred precinct at the center of the hill was linked to the Roman road north of the site by a colonnaded street. As was common in the region during this period, remains of shops and industrial installations were discovered along the street. However, the colonnaded street, which is the focus of this study, was inhabited by various ethnic groups over the years, including Polytheists, Christians, and Muslims. At times, the residents left architectural evidence of their cultures, but in some periods, the scarcity of material remains made it difficult to establish clear evidence. Therefore, the animal remains found in the slaughterhouses, markets and kitchens serve as key evidence for both meat consumption patterns and dietary preferences, reflecting cultural and ethnic changes at Omrit over time. Cultural and ethnic differences were observed in diet, meat consumption, and butchery practices throughout the period. During the prosperity of the Roman era, meat consumption benefited from both local and international trade, whereas in later periods, the population relied solely on local supply and hunting.

The Contribution of Hadrian's Aureus Discovered at Khirbet Bet Netofa to Locating the Second Jewish Revolt in Galilee
David Hamidovic[1]
[1] University of Lausanne

The extension of the Second Jewish Revolt (132-136) in Galilee has been the subject of debate for over half a century, with no consensus emerging. Proponents of Galilean participation in the revolt (e.g., Eck, Shivtiel, Leibner) have long been at odds with the proponents of a revolt confined to Judea or even south of Jerusalem (e.g., Büchler, Foerster, Herr, Mor). The interpretation of Jewish Christian, and Roman literary sources diverges, particularly as regards the location of the sites cited. Inscriptions and the discovery of numerous refuge-caves in Galilee have also been analyzed in different ways. A bronze coin discovered at Sepphoris and another unearthed at Kfar a-Rama have been dated to the Second Jewish Revolt but refer to the First Jewish Revolt. In contrast, the Khirbet Ḥaman coins' treasure published in 2009 is contemporary with the Second Jewish Revolt, but no coins were minted by the rebels. During the archaeological excavation of Khirbet Bet Netofa in Galilee, led by David Hamidovic in 2023, several coins dating from the period of the Second Jewish Revolt were unearthed. One of these is exceptional: a Hadrian aureus - known from only four other examples - found in a refuge-cave. The archaeological data collected in and around this refuge-cave allow us to contextualize this coin and thus make a fresh contribution to the debate on whether or not Galilee participated in the Second Jewish Revolt.

An Egyptian Scarab in the Sennacherib Destruction at Tel Lachish: Chronological Considerations
Michael G. Hasel[1]
[1] Southern Adventist University

Over 10,000 mn-ḫpr-ra scarabs have been documented, spanning a long history from the early Dynasty 18 into Dynasty 27 and the Late Period. In his magisterial corpus and analysis, Bertrand Jaeger (1982) documented the history of mn-ḫpr-ra scarabs while attempting to deal with issues of chronology. This paper presents a new mn-ḫpr-ra scarab (Lachish scarab AA3544) discovered in 2016 at Tel Lachish (Level III) in the clear stratigraphic context of the eighth century Assyrian destruction of Sennacherib. Comparative analysis of over 40 parallel mn-ḫpr-ra scarabs, many found and published recently in stratified contexts, will provide further insights into the long use of this scarab type down to the end of the Iron Age.

Cooking Pots and Negotiating Identity: Material Culture and Adaptive Agency during the Egyptian Occupation of Beth She'an
Zhengfang/Aaren Zhou[1]
[1] New York University

Archaeological scholarship has long prioritized large-scale political shifts, yet quotidian objects—like cooking pots—reveal how power and identity were negotiated in daily life. At Beth Shean, an Egyptian garrison town, imperial dominance clashed with Canaanite traditions. While scholarship emphasizes top-down cultural imposition, this paper repositions material culture as an active agent in shaping lived experiences under empire. Prevailing studies of Beth Shean have fixated on Egyptian administrative structures and typological debates over pottery chronologies, reducing its inhabitants to passive recipients of foreign rule. Critical gaps persist: How did daily practices mediate cultural hybridity? Whose labor sustained imperial systems? Notably, interpretations of gendered work (Martin's claim that Canaanite women alone cooked for Egyptian men) rely on static binaries, overlooking the fluidity of identity in contested spaces. This study addresses these gaps through the CP71 cooking pot, a hybrid vessel unique to Beth Shean's occupation. Integrating typological, spatial, and feminist

analyses—use-wear (soot, carination), fish bone distributions, and Meskell's agency-focused critique—we reconstruct culinary practices that transcended ethnic and gendered divides. Material culture—epitomized by the CP71 cooking pot and its associated fish bone assemblages—emerges not as a passive reflection of human behavior but as an active bridge between Canaanite technological innovation and Egyptian culinary preference. Critically, CP71 dismantles Martin's gender binary, exposing collaborative production and consumption practices that redefined identity under occupation. These findings not only reframe hybridity as active negotiation but also reveal a bidirectional flow of influence, where Levantine forms may have shaped Egyptian Delta pottery. By centering material culture, this study reimagines imperial encounters as lived dialogue.

"Every pot in Jerusalem and Judah will be holy": An Assemblage of Stamped Cooking Pots from Tel Beit Mirsim

Michael Freikman[1], Igor Kreimerman[1]
[1] Hebrew University

In this paper, we present a significant assemblage of impressed and incised pottery vessels from the ongoing excavations at Tell Beit Mirsim. This site, originally excavated by W. F. Albright nearly a century ago, has been under renewed investigation since 2021 on behalf of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. Over the past four excavation seasons, a large architectural complex adjacent to the casemate city wall has been fully exposed. This complex includes a four-room house, an extensive oil-press facility, and a courtyard with a deep, private water tank. Among the numerous finds, a particularly notable collection of pottery vessels bearing various markings has been identified. These markings consist of incised signs, thumb impressions, and seal impressions, predominantly applied to the handles of cooking vessels. The occurrence of these markings in a domestic cooking and production context offers a valuable perspective on their function and significance. Although several hypotheses regarding the purpose of these marks have been proposed by various scholars, a comprehensive understanding remains elusive. In this presentation, we will discuss the marked vessels within the broader framework of late Iron Age Judah's economic, administrative, and domestic practices. Special emphasis will be placed on the phenomenon of stamping cooking ware, which appears to have flourished during a relatively brief period in the late Iron Age. This study aims to contribute to the ongoing discourse on the role of pottery marking systems and their implications for understanding production, ownership, and economic control in the region during this period.

5D. Archaeology and History of Feasting and Foodways I (Arlington)

Chair(s): Jacob C. Damm, College of the Holy Cross

Brewing Beer in the Ubaid…Maybe?

Marie H. Hopwood[1]
[1] Vancouver Island University

The importance of beer across the Ancient Near East is well attested in documentary evidence, seal imagery, drinking paraphernalia, and taverns. Some Earliest writing in Sumer already refer to beer as a beverage that has been enjoyed and brewed for centuries. Yet how do we recognize this evidence from deep time archaeology without written or glyptic records? The "silver bullet" of absorbed residue analysis for lipids have proven to be ineffective in identifying residues of beer brewing or consumption. Coupled with the early practice of washing ("ee gads") artifacts after excavation and before museum storage with agents ranging from water to boracic acid, mean that surface residues may be compromised at best. Excavations at the Ubaid Period village of Kenan Tepe, Turkey resulted in multiple lines of evidence that suggest the brewing and consumption of beer, but no conclusive evidence has yet been identified. Yeast, starch and bacterial analyses were conducted on a collection of sherds from Kenan Tepe with the goal of exploring the identification of beer brewing and consumption at the village5th millennium BCE. Results of this analysis will be presented.

Subsistence and Sustenance in the MBA Southern Levant

Susan Cohen[1]
[1] Montana State University

Sustenance—food and drink—is a basic human requirement. As such, understanding how humans organized and managed the necessary production of edible resources plays an integral role in examining human life in the past. When examined collectively, the wealth of environmental, climatic, floral, and faunal data produced during the past several decades of excavation in the southern Levant allows for an in-depth examination of human sustenance and subsistence strategies. This paper synthesizes data compiled from a range of Middle Bronze Age sites to further understand the ways and means in which humans in the MBA southern Levant organized, managed, and fulfilled their sustenance needs. It then further examines how these subsistence strategies created intraregional connections between sites in this era, thus furthering the development and formation of the "urban fabric" of the southern Levantine Middle Bronze Age.

Forging Canaanite Identity through Ritual Feasting

Jill C. Katz[1]
[1] Yeshiva University

What foods people eat and how and when they are prepared, served, and consumed are all considered types of identity work. Through these activities, people define for themselves and for others who they are socially and culturally. While the daily construction of social identity is affirmed around the household hearth, one of the most successful instruments for forging group identity and solidarity is through religious rituals, especially those involving food. In the context of Middle Bronze Age Canaan (and, in particular, at Tell Haror/Gerar), temples and their courtyards were loci for animal sacrifices and food and drink offerings. Without knowing the specific intention for each particular offering (as we lack written texts), it has been generally accepted that the purpose of these rituals was to establish and strengthen the relationship between the community and the divine. But the sacrifices and offerings were only part of the story. Alongside these professional activities supervised by priests, there was a secondary locus of activity that was more widely enjoyed by the people, that of ritual feasting. It will be argued here that it was specifically this communal feasting that gave the Canaanites their core identity that served as the foundation for successful group identity.

Household Olive Oil Production in the Southern Levant: The Invisible Archaeology of the Bronze and Iron Age Periods

Jeffrey R. Chadwick[1]
[1] Brigham Young University

A significant amount of data on industrial and commercial olive oil production in the Bronze and Iron Age periods has been produced from excavations and surveys in the regions of ancient Philistia (Tel Miqne/Ekron, Tell es-Safi/Gath) and Judah (Tell Beit Mirsim, Tel Beit Shemesh), as well as in Samaria (Khirbet Fassa) and the Galilee (Hazor), just to name a few sites. But recent estimates of maximum product output suggest that less than half of these regions' needs could be supplied by that production – the population of these regions in any period of the Bronze and Iron Ages would require over twice the amount of olive oil that all industrial and commercial efforts were supplying (Chadwick;

Freikman; Maeir; Tavger; Welch; the ASOR 2023 olive oil session). How was that deficit covered? Where did the oil come from, and how was it produced? This ASOR 2025 presentation will suggest that oil needs of individual households, including what was necessary for both culinary and lighting purposes, were met through simple domestic oil production rather than industrial or commercial sources. Similar to how households produced their own flour for their baking and bread, households were also producing their own olive oil. While the objects and methodology of ancient flour milling and baking are well understood, simple household production of olive oil has been largely invisible in modern archaeology, its implements and processes having not been recognized or replicated. These objects, procedures, and their potential output will be discussed in this presentation.

Feeding Urbanization? Reconsidering Agricultural Storage Practices in Late Bronze Age Cyprus

Rebecca Gerdes[1]
[1] Cornell University

One of the characteristics of the urban centers that developed in Cyprus during the Late Bronze Age (LBA) is the appearance, often in monumental buildings, of large-scale agricultural storage facilities. These storage facilities have long been associated with the large-scale production and storage of olive oil, yet a review of new and legacy archaeological organic residue evidence behind this "olive oil hypothesis" raises questions about whether such storage facilities were associated with a single product or whether a more diverse resource management strategy was at play. The answers to such questions have broader implications for understanding the agricultural practices and seasonal rhythms of the LBA Cypriot economy as well as the socioeconomic organization of urban communities in LBA Cyprus. Taking the Cypriot site of Kalavasos-Ayios Dhimitrios (1600-1150 BCE) as an example, this paper will explore the integration of a variety of approaches for investigating the products and functions of LBA Cypriot storage rooms toward better understanding the role of large-scale agricultural storage in daily life and in the restructuring of social hierarchies. Lines of evidence include organic residue data, contextual features, archaeobotanical assemblages, ethnographic and textual evidence for stages of agricultural storage and vessel handling, functional analysis of vessel shape, and published spatial and access analysis of monumental LBA buildings. In exploring a multidisciplinary, multiproxy approach to the phenomenon of LBA Cypriot storage, this paper also grapples with the broader challenge of synthesizing disparate lines of evidence toward addressing larger-scale questions about foodways and socioeconomic relations.

5E. Digital Archaeology and History III (Berkeley & Clarendon)

Chair(s): Leigh Anne Lieberman, Princeton University; Matthew Howland, Wichita State University

Transforming the Archaeological Archive: An Intergenerational and Intercultural Approach to Linked Open Data

Anne Chen[1], Kimiko J. Adler[2], Federica Cuccato[3]
[1] Bard College, [2] New York University, [3] University of Padua

Blockbuster 'Big Digs' from archaeology's early era in the MENA region bear a complex legacy. Excavations from the dawn of the discipline filled collections in the West and sourced finds that have stoked more than a century of scholarship in a variety of humanities disciplines. But imbalances in power and privilege at the time of excavation have also left deep inequities in access to the intellectual products descendant of foreign-run archaeological missions, and entrenched a dynamic that continues to exclude local stakeholders from processes of meaning-making. Emerging technologies, however, offer means to work more cooperatively and inclusively to begin mitigating these long-standing problems. This paper introduces the work of the International [Digital] Dura-Europos Archive (IDEA), an award-winning digital humanities initiative centered on a long-studied Syrian heritage site with deep interdisciplinary significance. IDEA is pioneering a creative use of the Wikimedia ecosystem to bridge accessibility gaps and knowledge silos that track back to unequal power dynamics and political structures in place at the time of the site's Mandate-era excavations. In particular, we will highlight the project's design as a learning laboratory whose 'cascading mentorship' creates hands-on learning opportunities for both students and professionals. This approach offers opportunities to build skills in data literacy, critical archival practice, and foundational research methods, and increase familiarity with emerging Linked Open Data (LOD) methods that are revolutionizing information management in the cultural heritage and GLAM sectors.

Artificial Intelligence and Applied Archaeology: A Revolution in Museum Experiences

Tamer Esmail[1]
[1] Ministry of Education, Egypt

This paper explores the integration of artificial intelligence (AI) in applied archaeology to enhance the preservation, study, and presentation of cultural heritage, with a particular focus on its applications in museums. The integration of artificial intelligence (AI) in applied archaeology has transformed the ways in which cultural heritage is preserved, interpreted, and presented in museums. AI-driven technologies allow researchers to analyze artifacts with unparalleled precision, enabling museums to create interactive and immersive experiences that engage visitors and deepen their understanding of history. One of the most significant applications of AI in museums is the restoration and reconstruction of artifacts. Machine learning algorithms analyze fragmented objects and predict their original shapes, assisting in restoration efforts. Additionally, advanced imaging techniques such as 3D scanning and virtual reality (VR) create digital replicas of artifacts, making historical collections accessible to a global audience. AI also plays a crucial role in curating exhibitions and personalizing museum visits. Smart recommendation systems tailor museum tours based on visitor preferences, while digital guides and virtual assistants provide in-depth historical insights, bridging the gap between experts and the public. In the field of applied archaeology, AI enhances the analysis of excavation sites by processing large datasets, identifying buried structures, and predicting archaeological hotspots using satellite imagery. Predictive models further assist researchers in understanding ancient civilizations by analyzing population distribution patterns and artifact locations. Despite these advancements, ethical concerns remain regarding AI's role in archaeology, including data accuracy, cultural sensitivities, and digital heritage ownership, requiring clear policies to ensure responsible implementation.

Enhancing Accessibility and Sustainability in Digital Humanities
Christian D. Casey[1], M. Xenia X. Kudela[1], Joudy S. Sido Bozan[1], Aibaniz Alieva[1]
[1] Freie Universitaet Berlin

Digital humanities projects focused on the ancient world often produce critical datasets, yet ensuring their long-term accessibility remains challenging. This presentation explores how analyzing data from multiple projects, particularly those involving non-Latin scripts, can reveal correlations between design choices and outcomes related to accessibility and sustainability. Using data from Closing the Gap in Non-Latin-Script Data, which tracks digital initiatives working with historical and premodern texts, we identify patterns that influence the long-term viability of these resources. Our mixed-methods approach—combining quantitative metrics and qualitative case studies—demonstrates that factors such as platform selection, funding structures, and data-sharing practices directly impact a project's accessibility after its funding ends. Projects employing open standards and collaborative infrastructures tend to have higher long-term availability, while those relying on proprietary tools or limited institutional support are more likely to become inaccessible. We propose a framework for improving digital preservation by aligning project design with proven practices for sustainability. This framework emphasizes the role of universities, funding agencies, and publishers in supporting accessible, durable digital resources. By adopting strategies that correlate with positive long-term outcomes, projects can better preserve scholarly contributions and cultural heritage. The presentation concludes with actionable recommendations for Closing the Gap and similar initiatives to foster a more sustainable future for digital humanities scholarship.

Storytelling Through Space and Time in Pure Concentration
Dominik Lengyel[1], Catherine Toulouse[2]
[1] BTU Brandenburg University of Technology Cottbus-Senftenberg, [2] Independent Researcher

3D modelling is often benchmarked by how accurately it replicates physical reality. Terms such as Digital Twin suggest that such models should create a virtual reality that is thoroughly aligned with physical reality. What is often overlooked is that virtual models are capable of much more, such as the selection of very specific aspects of archaeology. This case study of the ancient Roman amphitheatre of Dyrrachium is intended to show how a focus on spatial geometry and visitor flows can convey both construction and circulation within a scientifically based, virtually reconstructed geometric model to the viewer. The central starting point of this case study is the observation, taken from architecture, that abstract geometry (abstract modelling), too, is perceived as architecture, provided it is adequately projected (virtual photography). On this basis, the simulated natural movement through the access routes of the amphitheatre allows a memorable and at the same time scientifically based impression of space and time to be gained, without having to encounter any materiality that, although not completely unknown, is unknown in its concrete formulation in detail, in its tectonics, the composition of its elements, the construction and, above all, its actual materiality at the level of the individual element, stone, brick or wooden beam. In this way, the case study contributes to the broader debate in the digital humanities. The scientific interdisciplinary cooperation for this digital storytelling was carried out by active and former members and directors of the German Archaeological Institute.

5F. Ritual, Power, and the Power of Ritual in the Ancient Near East: Ritual and Kingship I (Studio 1)

Chair(s): Céline Debourse, Harvard University; Elizabeth Knott, College of the Holy Cross

Mesopotamian Scholars and Ritual Practitioners: Conflict or Identity?
Paul Delnero[1]
[1] Johns Hopkins University

Although there is an abundance of textual evidence relating to scribal education and ritual practice in ancient Mesopotamia, particularly in the early second millennium BCE, from which numerous scribal exercises as well as cultic texts such as hymns and laments survive, the two subjects are almost never considered together. One reason for this may be the consensus view that Mesopotamian scribal education served little practice purpose beyond the cultivation of an elite scholarly identity derived from texts written in the long-dead Sumerian language that were purportedly unknown outside the small groups of elites who learned them, in contrast to the education received by cultic practitioners, which is assumed to have been more practically-focused. In this paper, the question of whether elite scribal education and the specialized training assumed to be required for cultic practice were separate, and possibly even in conflict, will be considered by examining the points of contact and difference in the content and didactic functions of educational and cultic texts from the period.

Ritual, Text, and Power in First Millennium Mesopotamia
Céline Debourse[1]
[1] Harvard University

Why did ancient Mesopotamians write ritual texts? The answer is generally that they did so to provide instructions for the observance of rituals. However, ritual texts are not clear windows onto ritual performances. They present ritual in a certain way, and they were produced by particular people in specific circumstances. As such, ritual texts are markers of "ritual mastery" (C. Bell), and they do more than instruct. They reveal balances of power in their broader context of creation, whether by confirmation or subversion. Moreover, ritual texts themselves exerted power in a ritual setting and served as carriers of memory, knowledge, and authority. In this talk, I present several case studies from first millennium Mesopotamia that help us think about the power of ritual texts and what they do.

A Ritual for National Unity: Performing Resistance and Establishing Identity Under Hittite Hegemony at Ugarit
Shane Thompson[1]
[1] North Carolina Wesleyan Univeristy

RS 1.002, called a Ritual for National Unity, is a ritual text that has presented difficulties in interpretation. I have previously categorized this ritual as a form of counter-hegemony by the local inhabitants of Ugarit based on the interpretation of foreign entities named within the text. Here, I extend this discussion, examining the ritual through a performative lens. I argue that the likely public nature of this ritual is a method of identity formation which need only take place in the face of foreign rule. This interpretation assists in characterizing the nature of the relationship between Ugarit and Hatti.

Political Loyalties, Communal Ideals: Ritual Speech in Theory and Practice at Ugarit
Spencer J. Elliot[1]
[1] Ku Leuven Campus

At Ugarit, ritual speech was performed by a range of people, from both royal and non-royal perspectives. One enigmatic ritual specialist speaks to both a political and ritual role: the ṯāʿiyu. Comparisons with Akkadian colophons equate this official with a SUKKAL, and those who hold this title are cast in relation to the king

(RS 94.2483). But for whom does this official work? For one of these ṯāʿiyu's, Ur-tešub, it is possible to correlate texts containing ritual speech and the person himself. As a ṯāʿiyu, Ur-tešub had both a high-ranking political role within the city, as well as a ritual role on behalf of others, in both royal and elite settings (KTU 1.161, 1.178). However, other examples of written ritual speech at Ugarit imply a broader political perspective. In KTU 1.119, a prayer for the safety of the city under siege is not the responsibility of the king, but of a group of people. Here, the community is in view, and the king is only a participant in the whole. These examples demonstrate that the composition, copying, and preservation of texts related to ritual speech have multiple purposes at Ugarit, even in how they relate to established power in the city. These prayers or incantations could support the king, or they could support a more communal-focused understanding of civic welfare. Written ritual speech provided the space to not only represent ritual practice, but also to contemplate how their craft related to the city's political institutions.

The Subversive Power of First-Person Psalms in the Hebrew Bible
Davida Charney[1]
[1] University of Texas, Austin

Nowhere does the Hebrew Bible spell out the ritual contexts for psalms. However, in a recent JSOT article, "The Centrality of Individual Petitions," I argue that first-person petitionary psalms correspond in structure, topic, and vocabulary to the seven types of petitions authorized in Solomon's dedication of the Temple (1 Kgs 8). Solomon's own actions—well-being sacrifices, blessings, petition, and feasting—model the process by which individuals and the nation may appeal to God. First-person petitionary psalms are a means to adjust one's status in public as well as to call out oppressive opponents. They subvert social or political power in three ways: by denouncing elite and powerful opponents, by challenging God's apparent injustice, and by undermining a speaker's own claims of innocence. This talk includes examples of all three but focuses primarily on the third type. Psalms such as Ps. 7 and 109 undermine the credibility of the speaker with qualifiers and/or structural and semantic ambiguities. Unlike other first-person petitions, they implicate the psalmists themselves—presumably Levitical priests responding to commissions—in leaving the speaker in an untenable situation. My analysis of Solomon's dedication shows that individuals are authorized to petition when beset by inexplicable crises that cannot be attributed to sin. God's ability or willingness to uphold justice is tacitly acknowledged as imperfect. Yet by providing occasions for eloquent public protest, the psalms rehearse the social and moral values that God pledges in the covenant, inculcate habits of deferred gratification, and encourage loyalty.

5G. Once More With Feeling: Reading Emotions in Archaeological Objects (Workshop) (Studio 2)

Chair(s): Emily Miller Bonney, California State University, Fullerton; Leann Pace, Wake Forest University

Ashurbanipal's Lions and Other Creatures: Momentous Emotions
Allison K. Thomason[1]
[1] Southern Illinois University Edwardsville

The famed segment of a wall relief of the “Dying Lioness” (BM 124856) is one of several from the series of lion hunts from Ashurbanipal’s North Palace at Nineveh. For decades, scholars have considered the singular image due to its ability to elicit an empathic, emotional response in modern viewers, instigated by the clearly visible pain and realization of the imminent death of the magnificent animal (e.g. Reade 1983: 55). But how did the details of the lioness’ momentary experience of pain--her neck bulging with the last sinews of life, the blood spewing from her wounds, her paralyzed hind legs, and limp tail-- “work” emotionally on a Neo-Assyrian audience within the palace? If emotions were tugged by the image of this singular moment in the lioness’ life, which emotions, and how did they fit within the Neo-Assyrian world view? In this presentation, I will utilize the image of this animal in its pictorial context, as well as five comparative examples from Ashurbanipal’s corpus to show how a Neo-Assyrian audience may have experienced these reliefs of creatures in the throes of potentially emotional moments, comparing the lioness with other dying (and living) lions, with other animals, and perhaps, with scenes of humans in similar states of being. I seek to understand how these “emotional” scenes of pain and imminent danger might have functioned in an emic manner, and to analyze the significance of these vignettes within a Neo-Assyrian palatial or courtly context, thus considering Mesopotamian representations of emotion. Reade, J.E. 1983. Assyrian Sculpture. London: Trustees of the British Museum.

Enjoyment through Play: Traces from Ancient Egypt
Brent Davis[1]
[1] University of Melbourne

It is a quintessentially human characteristic of both children and adults to seek out and experience enjoyment and amusement through play. Of course, this was so in the ancient world as well... but it can be difficult to detect these emotions in ancient people, unless we are fortunate enough to discover pictorial or textual representations explicitly depicting or describing people at play. As is often the case, however, ancient Egypt is an exception, in that archaeology has uncovered the material remains of a range of Egyptian games and toys that yield substantial evidence as to how ancient Egyptian adults and children derived enjoyment and amusement through play. In this presentation, I survey this evidence, and illustrate how the Egyptians satisfied their desire for enjoyment and amusement through play in ways that seem remarkably familiar to us all.

A Cache of Valuables: Fear and Hope in the Biblical Negev
Fredric R. Brandfon[1]
[1] Independent Scholar

Building 2072 of Stratum VI at Tel Beer-Sheba was a large three room early Iron Age house. It was either the residence of the director of the work camp established to build the monumental city wall of Stratum V, or it was a single farmstead, all that was left of the earlier Stratum VII community that had disintegrated as a result of social fission. A cache of fifteen objects was found beneath the unpaved floor at the southeast corner of the building's central courtyard. The cache consisted of two cooking jugs, two black juglets, a fragment of a black-on-red juglet, a lamp, two iron sickle blades, a bronze toggle pin, three flints, a stone spindle whorl, and two shells, Murex trunculus and Conus mediterraneous. The cache had been placed carefully beneath the floor probably with the intention of preserving the objects against future depredations. That southeast corner of Building 2072 was eventually sealed beneath the massive Stratum V city wall. We do not know how many days, months or years transpired between the placing of the objects and the construction of the later fortification. Therefore, we also do not know if the person(s) who created the cache anticipated that the objects under the floor would be further and thoroughly sealed away. We may surmise that either the cache was created to protect the objects from immediate theft or thinking more long term, that they were hidden in the hope that they would be preserved for future generations. In either case, the objects appear to have been precious and had emotional value to their owner.

We’re All in This Together: Emotional Entanglement and the Uruk Vase
Sarah J. Scott[1]

[1] Wagner College

A favored and canonical object for scholars of visual and material culture, the Uruk Vase has been studied through myriad methodologies. Some approaches have sought to position this monument as a public form of documentation of community events. Others have positioned this object as a literal text – a denotive tool for recording specific concepts intended to be 'read' by literate and illiterate audiences. This short presentation will underscore some of these approaches, but will ask new questions about viewers' emotional responses to this object based on their daily, lived experiences. While the vase undoubtedly depicts aspects of life in early literate Mesopotamia, how did this object rely on emotional reactions that directly linked the viewer to these daily activities? In other words, what were the emotional mechanisms that made this a profoundly effective social tool? Why do we remain so entranced with this object still? How did the creators of this object tap into humankind's cognitive capacities so adeptly?

Late Bronze Age Handmade "Barbarian" Ware As More Than Just a Demographic Indicator

Frederick Winter[1]
[1] D.C. AIA

In the 1970s, Jeremy Rutter identified a class of handmade pottery from the Late Mycenaean era as originating in the Balkans. Handmade wares were unusual in the Mycenaean assemblage where wheel-made pottery predominated. Similar pottery was also identified at multiple sites in Greece and around the Aegean. Most archaeologists accepted Rutter's attribution. There was debate among those who accepted the Balkan identity as to where in the Balkans this ware originated. While handmade pottery was distributed extensively in the Balkans, there were local characteristics in the wares both there and in the Aegean. Arthur Bankoff and I identified central Serbia and the Morava Valley as one of the source regions for the pottery found in Greece. Subsequently, Bankoff and Mark Stefanovic, building on anthropological research into gender alignments in traditional pottery production, which identified handmade wares as predominantly made by women, and research I had conducted on the archaeology of slavery, suggested that the handmade pottery was likely to have been created by enslaved women, traded to the Mycenean world as part of the ongoing exchange between the Balkans and the Mediterranean. The differing regional characteristics of the handmade wares was thus seen as a reflection of the backroom choices made by female slaves, imported from different parts of southeast Europe, who used familiar forms to perform tasks whose completion was mandated by "owners" who cared about the finished products but not the manners in which the tasks were completed. Thus, this class of ceramics reflects the human dynamics of the Mycenaean economy, and not only the material interactions of adjacent Bronze Age societies.

Feeling the Depths: Below the Surface in the Late Bronze Age Aegean

Emily S. Anderson[1]
[1] Johns Hopkins University

This paper explores multiple aspects of experiencing depth in human experience, and how we might get at them through surviving material. I focus on novel engagements with the under-water and under-ground during the Late Bronze Age in the Aegean, and ask whether we have indications that particular feelings were associated with these spaces—emotional and bodily. I am working both with visual culture, including renderings of subsurface spaces and beings from within them (e.g., the sea and sea creatures), and archaeological evidence we have of people physically going below surfaces (e.g., to create and use subterranean burial places, or to collect materials from underwater or underground). By combining these two pathways for querying creative experiences of the subsurface, can we discern particular affective character? What sense did people have of these spaces (real or imagined), their contents, and the acts of reaching them? How might we reexamine familiar evidence through this dynamic lens of feeling?

"The Adventure of the Speckled Bird"

Linda Meiberg[1], Louise A. Hitchcock[2], Aren Maeir[3]
[1] Bridgewater State College, [2] Independent Researcher, [3] Aren M. Maeir

The 2017 field season at Tell es-Safi/Gath in Area A represented a ten-year culmination of the University of Melbourne's investigation, confined to the north end of the early Philistine sector of the site. In the second of five pits excavated, which contained ritual material, we discovered the fragment of an unusual and intriguing Philistine bird. Although the bird's body was iconically divided by a triglyph in the classical manner, the breast of the bird was atypically decorated with random dots. It was quickly dubbed the Speckled Bird in reference to the famous Sherlock Holmes story "The Adventure of the Speckled Band." Although extremely rare, this decorative pattern is not without parallels. A sherd bearing part of a Philistine 1 bird excavated from Tel Miqne-Ekron was decorated in the exact same manner, and other examples were discovered on Cyprus. The adventure of our speckled bird unintentionally resonates with the Sherlock Holmes tale in a couple of ways. Like the poisonous speckled snake in the story, the activities of our speckled bird take place in a confined space exemplifying what is known in literature as the locked-room motif. Much like the speckled band, the speckled bird also participates in a larger mystery of intriguing and exotic far-flung connections with the wider globalized world persisting through the end of the Bronze Age. In releasing the speckled bird from its confined space in a ritual pit in a small excavation area, our goal is to solve the mysteries of its decorative, chronological, geographical, and ritual biography.

Reading Archaeological Contexts with Empathy: A Case Study in Recovering Past Emotions

Megan Cifarelli[1]
[1] Manhattanville College

Many of us have been trained to approach the archaeological record in a dispassionate, detached manner, simultaneously suppressing our own humanity as we attempt to reconstruct the lives of humans in the past. In this brief paper, I will explore the potential of acknowledging the role of human emotions in both the creation of archaeological assemblages and their interpretation. The case study I will present involves the well-known "Lion Pins" from Hasanlu, Iran, and the impossibility of accessing their local significance at the site without considering the extreme and emotionally intense circumstances of their deposition. Nearly all were found in a single archaeological context in Burned Building II, on the bodies of children killed before and during the building's conflagration collapse. Replacing quasi-scientific detachment with empathy for the emotional lives of people in the past allows us to construct richer narratives about ancient peoples and their relationships to the artifacts we study, in this case illuminating the sacred and affective dimensions of objects often interpreted as status symbols.

5H. New Approaches to Ancient Animals I (The Loft)

Chair(s): Christine Mikeska, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill; Theo Kassebaum, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill

Contested Spaces: Hunting Imagery and Geopolitics during the Rise of Imperial Assyria

Glynnis Maynard[1]

[1] University of Cambridge

In ancient Southwest Asia, hunting wild animals was consistently used as a means of projecting royal and/or elite authority over the natural world. Assyrian royal depictions of the hunt were accordingly embedded within a specific visual culture that broadcasted a courtly interpretation of ritual behavior, political and social interactions, and the built environment. Yet, outside of royal spaces, hunting imagery equally proliferated in glyptic art, revealing a rich faunal landscape of wild animals, therianthropic, and zoomorphic beings confronting or fleeing from an armed figure. This repertoire of hunted fauna, while listed and described in glyptic publications, has been overlooked for its participation in Assyrian political narratives and the ways in which the physical environment and geographic landscape is both structured and bounded within the Assyrian oikoumene. By deliberately taking a zoocentric perspective, I consider here the role of hunted fauna in communicating ideas about the organization of society, animal-human relationships, and (super)natural landscapes. By tracking visual depictions of hunted and dominated fauna on glyptic throughout the Neo-Assyrian period (9th-7th centuries BCE), I show how fauna have a direct iconographic value in representing the geographies with which they are literally and metaphorically associated. With the expansion of the Assyrian empire, hunted fauna consequently become increasingly incorporated into an imperial vision of geopolitical dominance, articulated in miniature.

Walking Walls: Herds, Enclosures and the Making of the Late Bronze Age Landscape in the South Caucasus

Alexander Symons[1]
[1] Cornell University

This paper presents a theoretical model for understanding the role played by livestock herds (sheep, goat, cattle, pig) in the renegotiated human-land relationship that emerged in the Late Bronze (LBA) and Early Iron Age (EIA) in the South Caucasus. Herds interact with settlement enclosures in the experience, perception, and imagination of landscapes as territories of power and control. The LBA/EIA South Caucasus is an ideal context to explore these herd-enclosure dynamics, as settlement enclosures emerged in an historical landscape shaped by animal pastoralism rather than settled agriculture. Zooarchaeological and isotopic analyses are used to reconstruct herd behaviour from faunal remains excavated at Dmanisis Gora, Georgia and Gegharot, Armenia. These herds are then emplaced in the enclosure landscape by exploring the intervisibility and interconnectivity of pastureland and settlements, allowing us to access how people would have perceived the animals which made their worlds. Finally, the imagined relationship between people and domestic herd animals is investigated through the published repertoire of representational imagery depicting livestock. By investigating how herds create and recreate landscapes, which I term herdscapes, I seek to offer a comprehensive view of the role of herds in the emergence of enclosure landscapes and establish a model for the analysis of herds as units of socio-political action.

Reassessing Human-Camelid Relationships in Central Asia: An Interdisciplinary Approach to Multispecies Worlds

Emily H. Everest-Phillips[1], Delphine Decruyenaere[2], Fabrice Bray[3], Sören Stark[1], Noel Amano[4], Marjan Mashkour[2]
[1] New York University, [2] Muséum national d'Histoire naturelle, [3] University of Lille, [4] Max Planck Institute of Geoanthropology

Historical relationships between human Central Asian populations and camelids (camelus Bactrianus and later, camelus dromedarius), have thus far almost exclusively centred around their utilisation as pack-animals along trade routes of the ancient so-called 'Silk Roads', an impression shaped by the testaments of outsiders and the modern popular imagination alike. Moreover, while the evolutionary history and domestication of Old World camels have become a popular topic in recent years thanks to biomolecular analysis, their later distribution and the timing of the dromedary's arrival in the region remains poorly documented. This paper presents the preliminary results of an interdisciplinary collaboration that reconstructs some key episodes in the relationship between human populations and camelids in the historical region in southern Central Asia (modern day Uzbekistan and Tajikistan) from antiquity to the middle ages (1st century BCE - 13th century CE). New zooarchaeological data from sites in the Samarkand, Bukhara and Khorezm oases, with paleoproteomic analyses using MALDI FT-ICR mass spectrometry, refines our chronological understanding of large camelid exploitation and distribution. The study simultaneously considers historical, cultural and ontological dimensions to these relationships through the analysis of extant historical evidence and material culture. An ethnographic survey also contextualises these finds within modern human-environmental relationships in the region. This study demonstrates how human-camelid interactions have both shaped and reflect complex social, economic and cultural relationships in a region intensively entangled within polysemic and shifting trans-Eurasian networks in the premodern world.

The Will of the Herd: A Social Zooarchaeological Reexamination of Anau North, Turkmenistan

Jackson Clark[1]
[1] University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill

The use of identified faunal remains has maintained utility throughout the 20th and 21st century as one of the primary archaeological methods to generate insight into ancient environment and foodways. However, as the field has evolved, it has become necessary to retread old collections and analyses with new eyes (Chazin, 2024). This paper explores one such collection of observations and interpretations: J. U. Duerst's (1908) examination of Anau North in the Kopet Dag region of Turkmenistan. Anau Depe, a site of preeminent importance for the Central Asian prehistoric period, has not been excavated or thoroughly analyzed in well over 30 years (Hiebert & Kurbansakhatov, 2011). A reexamination of faunal material from the North trench that incorporates broader anthropological theories has the potential to redefine our interpretation of this integral site. Incorporating social zooarchaeological and broader anthropological frameworks, this paper explores human-animal relationships and shift the anthropocentric retelling of Anau Depe toward a more inclusive narrative cognizant of the role that animals play in policy-making and risk-taking, not as mere instruments but as active participants.

The "End" in Context: Long-term Change and the Collapse of the Hittite Empire

Sarah E. Adcock[1]
[1] Depaul University

Over the past decade, the environment has become a major focus in the study of the Hittite collapse, and recent evidence (e.g., Manning et al. 2023) suggests that the end of the Hittite empire coincided with a period of climate crisis. However, the implications of this evidence have been undertheorized. This paper uses primary and published zooarchaeological data from the Hittite capital Hattuşa as well as from two rural centers (Çadır Höyük and Kaman-Kalehöyük) to explore what happens if we unmoor the first millennium paleoclimate reconstructions from the assumptions we typically make about social and environmental collapse. In doing so, this research examines intersections between human behavior and the particular ethologies of different animal bodies, drawing on theoretical frameworks in anthropology and in animal studies which have long questioned the division between nature and culture. Ultimately, this paper argues that the faunal data at these three sites speak to a continued need to move away from grand narratives about the past and toward approaches that pay attention to the details of multispecies lives.

5I. Crossing Eurasia: Bronze and Iron Age Human Mobility between Arabian Sea and Eastern Mediterranean (Workshop) (Whittier)

Chair: Marco Ramazzotti, Sapienza University of Rome

Architectures for the Dead at Wadi al-Ma'awil (Oman) (Virtual)

Alessandro Di Ludovico[1], Dario Rose[2]
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Two archaeological survey and excavation campaigns in the area of Wadi al-Ma'awil (South Batinah, Sultanate of Oman), carried out within the framework of the MASPAG project, have led to the detection and partial excavation of traces of dense human activity in the area over a period of at least four millennia. Excavations in campaigns 2023 and 2024 focused on three main areas. Two of these – Area B and Area C – are among those with the highest concentration of burials. The general subject of analysis and discussion here will be the construction techniques of some of the tombs identified and studied in areas B and C. The appearance of the structures and the state of preservation of these tombs will be related to the characteristics of the natural context. The main objective of this work is to identify the technical and cultural factors that had the greatest influence on the solutions adopted between the third and first millennia for the construction of the dwellings of the deceased. These first approaches concern a small number of tombs, but they will serve as a starting point for future research, which promises to be particularly rich and stimulating, given the quantity and morphological variety of tombs recognised in these areas.

Navigating Complexity: Mobility, Environment, and Social Change in Southeastern Arabia (4th–3rd Millennium BCE) (Virtual)

Letizia Cecere[1]
[1] Sapienza University of Rome

The emergence of complex societies in Southeastern Arabia was shaped by interactions between mobile groups and early urban centers. Nomadic and semi-nomadic populations influenced territorial organization, resource management, and socio-political structures between the fourth and third millennium BCE. The transition from Hafit to Umm an-Nar mortuary practices, alongside settlement changes, reveals a dynamic negotiation between mobility and sedentarism, challenging models of state formation based solely on urban primacy. By integrating archaeological and paleoenvironmental data, it becomes clear that climate fluctuations, including the 4.2 ka BP event, played a crucial role in water management and economic networks. These communities responded to shifting landscapes, fostering new forms of social organization, and a comparative perspective links the Oman Peninsula to state formation in Mesopotamia and Egypt, revealing distinct pathways to complexity. While Mesopotamian cities relied on riverine resources and Egypt on Nile inundation, Southeastern Arabian communities developed strategies to cope with arid landscapes. Reframing state formation as an adaptive process offers new insights into human-environment interactions and socio-economic mechanisms, leading to a broader understanding of mobility's role in shaping political structures across the ancient world.

Necropolis C of Wadi al-Ma'awil: diachronic history through material culture (Virtual)

Federico Abbatiello[1]
[1] Sapienza University of Rome

This paper presents a comprehensive review of the chlorite materials from tombs G1 and G2 of the necropolis C of Wadi al-Ma'awil (Oman, South Batinah) excavated by the Sapienza Archaeological Mission in the Arabian Peninsula and the Gulf (MASPAG) during the 2023-2024 campaigns. This review aims to relate the chlorite materials excavated at Wadi al-Ma'awil to those excavated at other sites in Eastern Arabia, in order to have a complete panorama of the material and human culture on the coasts of the Persian Gulf during the Wadi Suq Period (2000-1300 BC) and the Early Iron Age (1200-1000 BC). The material analysis will be carried out starting from the decoration and, if possible, through their physiognomy, in order to understand not only the period of their manufacture, but also to define in detail the frequentation and use of tombs G1 and G2. Keywords: Chlorite, Eastern Arabia, Wadi Suq, Iron Age, Wadi al-Ma'awil.

An Interdisciplinary Methodology applied to an Ex-Novo context: The Use of Remote Sensing and Spatial Studies to the Study of Landscape Archaeology in Oman

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[1] Sapienza University of Rome

Studying an ex-novo context such as the area of Wadi al Ma'awil in the Sultanate of Oman provides the perfect scenario to test new methodological approaches to the study of Landscapes and their impact on the mobility of semi-nomadic societies. By understanding the funerary remains, in terms of morphology and distribution, and the mineralogical context one can draw conclusions that address the movement and interaction of societies with their environment. Therefore, an interdisciplinary methodology that combines Remote Sensing, in the form of Aerial Images and Hyperspectral Studies, and the Spatial studies, Spatial Statistics and Machine Learning, could provide a valid framework to study the funerary remains in the area. With the Remote sensing, particularly a Hyperspectral study, mineralogical relevant point of interest can be identified and located in the landscape, thus providing a point of reference to where these raw materials could have be found by the semi-nomadic societies and consequently how the location of these minerals determined their movement across the landscape. While this is a global vision of movement societies to understand the local archaeological context, in the form of funerary elements, a Spatial Statistics approach paired with the use of Machine Learning algorithms allow the morphological understanding of these tombs and the underlying patterns of spatial distribution behind the formation of the identified cemeteries in the area. Therefore, both of these approaches offer a multiscalar view of the interaction between the semi-nomadic societies and the landscape in terms of mobility.

Last Station of Nomadic People in Wadi al-Ma'awil (Oman): Funerary Results

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[1]Sapienza University of Rome

Tracing the archaeological remains of nomadic peoples presents significant challenges due to the transient nature of their lifestyles. However, burial sites offer the most substantial evidence of their rituals and practices, as these places served as final resting grounds for their loved ones. Between 2022 and 2023, hundreds of graves were identified in Wadi al-Ma'awil, located approximately 50 km from the coast. These graves appear in diverse forms and locations, reflecting the diachronic evolution of burial practices. Spread across varied landscapes—from mountain peaks to hills between wadis—these burial sites span from the Bronze Age to the Iron Age. Excavations conducted in 2023 and 2024 have provided valuable insights into the daily lives and customs of the people who used these burial sites. By examining these burial practices and the associated material culture, this research contributes to a deeper understanding of nomadic societies in the region, shedding light on their social structures and customs over time. This contribution presents the archaeological and anthropological findings from a selection of graves, exploring burial practices and aspects of nomadic life in this region over millennia.

5J. Archaeology of Islamic Society I (White Hill)

Chair(s): Ian W. N. Jones, University of California, San Diego; Tasha Vorderstrasse, University of Chicago

Socializing Terraces: Tall Hisban and its Agricultural Fields in the Islamic Era

Bethany J. Walker[1], Catreena Hamarneh[2]
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Terraces are arguably the most readily recognizable human intervention in the landscape. Although adopted for soil protection and flood mitigation, amongst others functions, terraces are used mainly for cultivation. Recent studies of agricultural terraces suggest that the construction (and maintenance) of terraces is a choice made by peasants and landowners, based on a range of considerations. However, the decision-making process and the mechanisms of intensification and abatement of agricultural fields in general, and terraces in particular, have, until now, not been systematically addressed. When dated with confidence, agricultural terraces can serve as windows on the environmental, social, economic, and political systems of the past. This paper presents the results of the 2024 and 2025 field seasons in the upper Wadi Hisban and at Tall Hisban. The simultaneous excavation of terraced fields and what is believed to have been their supporting settlement is part of a larger study of Islamic-era agriculture, the factors impacting the decision to cultivate in this labour-heavy fashion, and the ways in which rural communities evolved in tandem with their fields and cultivation practices. For the first time, OSL-dating of terraces has been conducted in the Wadi Hisban. Soil and plant sciences, landscape and household archaeology, archaeometry, textual analysis, and agent-based modelling (ABM) are combined to document the development of terraced systems against the background of social, economic, environmental, and political factors that came to play in this form of agricultural landscape development.

The Development of Rural Networks in Middle Islamic Southern Syria (data set: materiality of the ceramic record)

Salama Kassem[1]
[1] University of Bonn

Exploring how villages in the southern Levant integrated into the political and economic frameworks of the Mamluk period can provide valuable insights. To comprehensively understand these communities, it is essential to examine daily life and the development of economic and social relations, which remain relatively obscure. This involves analysing the economic and social significance of pottery styles produced and popularized at the time. Additionally, it's crucial to investigate whether the consumption of specific pottery types was associated with particular social classes. Furthermore, considering the role of workshops and markets in shaping the social dynamics of rural villages can offer a clearer picture of their social spaces. This paper is concerned with the archaeometrical study of Mamluk pottery. It combines materials (lab work) with archaeological records and textual analysis to reconstruct the social and economic ties and understand the evolution of these networks locally and regionally between late-medieval rural archaeological sites-Hisban and other archaeological sites in the southern Levant. Historical sources, such as chronicles, geographies, and tax registers, only indicate a village structure (village and family names, economics, locations and names of local markets, road systems, agricultural land, and rural real estate), and they do not provide details on the intensity or nature of the relations between and within small communities (villages) alone. While the archaeological record provides direct information on historically overlooked communities by allowing us to retrieve the rural material culture from various contexts (citadel/village, domestic/military, rural/urban, etc.). The analysis of written sources, archaeological fieldwork, and materials analysis (geo-chemical analysis) answer different kinds of questions about social behaviour and rural societies.

The Second Season of Balu'a Regional Archaeology Project (BRAP) Excavations in the Islamic Village at Khirbat al-Balu'a

Ian W. Jones[1]
[1] New York University

This paper presents the preliminary results of the 2025 excavation of the large (ca. 3.5 ha) Islamic period village in the southwestern portion of Khirbat al-Balu'a in central Jordan, conducted as part of the Balu'a Regional Archaeology Project (BRAP). The first season of the Islamic Village excavations focused on the Khan, a large, square building (ca. 40 x 40 m) with a central courtyard, which we tentatively identify as a medieval khan/road inn. These excavations revealed early Ottoman period (ca. 16th-17th century AD) remodeling and reuse of the structure for storage, interpreted as evidence of agricultural intensification as the hajj route was moved eastward from the Karak Plateau into the desert. The second season of excavations continues work in the Khan to reveal earlier phases of use and construction and expands excavations into a nearby domestic structure. This paper uses data from the second season of excavations to clarify our understanding of the Khan's construction, identification, and functions, to explore the relationship between the village and the Khan, and to evaluate socioeconomic shifts in the village of Khirbat al-Balu'a between the 13th and 17th centuries AD, notably its changing relationship to travel on the nearby King's Highway and the potential intensification of agricultural activities during the early Ottoman period.

Out of the Depths: Strategies for an Improved Timeline of Maritime Exchange during the Byzantine-Early Islamic Transition
Bria Lorentzen[1]
[1] University of Georgia

Maritime transport played a significant role in facilitating social, economic, and technological exchange during the Early Islamic Period, with recent scholarship (including a series of ASOR workshops) increasingly demonstrating the breadth and vitality of Islamic maritime networks in the Mediterranean and beyond. While it may no longer viewed as an era of commercial and social decline, clear understanding of the dynamics of coastal settlement, shipbuilding, and exchange during the Byzantine-Early Islamic transition remains hampered by uncertain dating schemes for both terrestrial and maritime archaeological sites and material culture. Using mid-1st millennium CE ship remains from Dor-Tantura Lagoon and Ma'agan Mikhael as case studies, I discuss here the latest advances in how Bayesian chronological modeling combining scientific dates from dendrochronology and radiocarbon with prior knowledge from archaeological/contextual information provides one critical source of independent, high-precision chronological data for reconstructing maritime connectivity and exchange during the Early Islamic Period. I also discuss unique pitfalls and opportunities for tree-ring and 14C dating maritime material culture during the Byzantine-Islamic transition, and scope for expanding the corpus of maritime and coastal terrestrial sites dated with similar high-precision dating techniques.

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 20, 2025 | 10:40am–12:45am (EST)

6A. Archaeology of Egypt II (Grand Ballroom A)

Chair(s): Jordan Galczynski, University of California, Los Angeles; Robyn Price, Brown University

Rethinking Royal Prominence: Food Storage, Production, and Consumption in Middle Kingdom Settlements
Leah R. Neiman[1]
[1] Brown University

The Middle Kingdom (c.2050-1750 BCE) has produced a proliferation of archaeologically attested settlements that have been traditionally taken as evidence for the direct involvement and authority of the king in shaping the daily lives of Egyptians. Integral to such narratives is the assumption that Egyptians were dependent on grain distribution by a centralized royal administration. This paper investigates archaeological evidence for food storage, production, and consumption at Middle Kingdom settlement sites across the Nile Valley. This study present results from an ongoing doctoral dissertation project that challenges assumptions about the totality of royal power and its omnipresence in daily life within Middle Kingdom settlements by approaching the study of settlements as, first and foremost, locally specific phenomena. Spatial analysis of the organization of storage structure and food production activities at multiple settlements supports the hypothesis that inhabitants engaged in subsistence activities and modified architecture in ways that reflect their immediate social, political, and environmental factors rather than external direction from the royal administration. This paper demonstrates that taking a data-driven, archaeological approach to understanding the evolution of Middle Kingdom settlements allows patterns to emerge that attest to ways of life without being filtered through the lens of kingship – either by ancient records or modern scholars.

The Ahmose Cemetery: Insight into the Funerary Practices of the Early New Kingdom in Upper Egypt
Emily Smith-Sangster[1]
[1] Princeton University

In early 2023, the Abydos South Project (ASP) began its inaugural season working on a plot of land to the local north of the Ahmose Pyramid. The goal of the season was to explore this area of the concession in the hopes of better understanding its use history. This area, previously unexcavated save for shallow test trenching in 1966 by the EAO, and surface collection in 1993 by the Ahmose and Tetisheri Project, had been identified as the possible location of the Ahmose Pyramid Town. ASP's excavations, however, discovered that this area was, in fact, a large and unique necropolis used for an exceedingly brief period of time. The analysis of this data, which has been the focus of three additional study seasons as of 2025, has demonstrated that this discovery offers significant data that will help to develop our understanding of memory, community, and identity in the cemeteries of Abydos, while also allowing us to further contextualize non-royal activity at this site within the wider history of the early New Kingdom. This lecture will discuss these excavations and resulting discoveries, while also highlighting the impact this discovery will have on our understanding of the Ahmose period at Abydos and throughout the wider Egyptian Empire.

Life & Death at el-Hibeh: Preliminary Results of the 2024 Field Season of the UC Berkeley El-Hibeh Project (Beni Suef, Egypt)
Jason Silvestri[1], Jessica Nitschke[2]
[1] University of California, Berkeley, [2] Stellenbosch University

This paper presents the preliminary results of the UC Berkeley El-Hibeh Project's 2024 field season at the 1st millennium BCE/CE site of El-Hibeh, in Beni Suef Governorate. The season addressed two areas of the settlement tell--the South Angled Wall (SAW), which constituted a disturbed midden abutting the settlement's enclosure wall, and the North High Plateau (NHP). Previous survey work determined that a single period occupancy in the Third Intermediate Period is most likely for the NHP area. As one of the goals of the UC Berkeley El-Hibeh Project is to make a meaningful contribution to the archaeological understanding of Third Intermediate Period urbanism and pottery sequences, this area was selected for exploration during the 2024 season to confirm (a) the presence and nature of a settlement, and (b) the probable period of occupation. Two squares were opened, revealing a variety of domestic architecture (including storage silos) and multiple phases of occupation, dating from the end of the Third Intermediate Period (ca. 8th/7th cent. BCE) to the early Late Period (7th/6th cent. BCE), according to preliminary analysis. Excavation of the structures yielded significant depositions of ceramics and daily life objects, including a woven sandal, two leather shoes, textiles, rope, weights, and bone, metal, and wooden tools, suggesting this may be an area of textile production. The area also contained several intrusive burials of varying degrees of preservation, three of which appear to re-use one of the storage silos as a grave structure.

The Search for Pharaoh Taharqa's Funerary Temple: Reisner's Temple 400 at Nuri (Sudan)
James K. Hoffmeier[1]
[1] Trinity International University

For reasons that remain unclear, George Andrew Reisner's work on and around the pyramid of Taharqa at Nuri, no funerary temple was identified. This is surprising given the vital importance of such a temple for the funerary cult, coupled with the fact that Taharqa was the most powerful and Pharaoh of the 25th Dynasties who reigned 26 years. Archaeological investigations at Nuri reconvened in 2017, a century after Reisner worked at the site. He had uncovered a series of temples associated with the Kushite pyramid field, including temples NU 400, 500 and 600. NU 400 contained, Reisner reported, "traces of crude relief scenes and inscriptions." He, however, offered no description or analysis of them. Only a few poor-quality B&W images were made of the southwestern side of NU 402. He thought

the temple dated to the later Kushite period, too late to belong Taharqa. During the 2021 season we successfully relocated Temple NU 400, which had been completely covered by wind-blown sand. Not until the 2023 season were we able to clear the sand and expose the decorated walls. Since then I have carefully studied and analyzed the decorations in preparation for the forthcoming publication of the first five season at Nuri. Provisionally I believe the temple decorations are early Kushite rather than later in the epoch as Reisner proposed.

Mapping the Dead: A Social Profile of Tomb Reuse in Ptolemaic Thebes

Lauren Dogaer[1]
[1] University of Oxford

The reuse of monumental rock-cut tombs in the Theban necropolis during the Ptolemaic period (especially 4th–2nd centuries BCE) provides key insights into burial practices, social organization, and economic mobility. While tomb (re)use in earlier periods, such as the New Kingdom and Late Period, has been widely studied, the Ptolemaic context remains underexplored. This paper examines how Ptolemaic tomb reuse reflects broader societal changes by integrating archaeological, epigraphic, and papyrological evidence to reconstruct the social profiles of individuals interred in the necropolis. The bilingual archives (Demotic-Greek) of the Theban choachytai ("water-pourers")—mortuary priests responsible for maintaining the cult of the dead—offer valuable evidence on tomb reuse and spatial organization, documenting burial rights, mummy lists, and contracts referencing tomb owners and their "neighbors." These records, alongside priestly and administrative titles attested in burial equipment and graffiti, suggest that tomb allocation was influenced by professional, familial, and economic factors rather than rigid social hierarchies. While some individuals, such as a builder and a smith, were buried in family tombs, others, like a third prophet of Amun, were interred in collective burials, reflecting a more flexible approach to tomb reuse than in earlier periods. Using GIS-based spatial analysis and prosopographical research, this paper combines spatial mapping with documentary evidence to identify patterns of tomb allocation and assess the extent to which the Ptolemaic period witnessed increasing social diversification in the Theban necropolis.

6B. Biblical Texts in Cultural Context II (Grand Ballroom B)

Chair(s): Christine Palmer, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary; Kristine Garroway, Hebrew Union College

The Israelite Tabernacle at Shiloh: An Archaeological and Textual Exploration

Abigail Van Huss[1]
[1] Independent Scholar

According to Joshua 18:1, the Israelites set up a tabernacle at Shiloh. 1 Samuel 1:3; 2:14 suggests that the Israelite ritual sacrificial system associated with the tabernacle functioned at Shiloh over a long period. According to Exodus 26:1, the Israelite tabernacle was originally a tent. However, several historical texts provide clues suggesting that the tabernacle at Shiloh was different. These texts include Seder Olam Rabbah 8, Mishnah Zevachim 14:6, and 1 Samuel 3:3, 15. They suggest that the tabernacle at Shiloh consisted of permanent stone walls covered with a tent-like roof. Archaeological excavations at Tel Shiloh have revealed the remains of a monumental stone structure dating to the Late Bronze Age. The size, orientation, and layout of the structure as well as the related archaeological findings suggest that the structure was likely cultic in nature. A nearby cultic favissa may represent the remains of the sacrificial ritual associated with the monumental structure. This paper examines the textual references to the tabernacle and its associated rituals to create a criterial screen for what archaeological remains might result from the Israelite's cultic presence at Shiloh. It then examines the archaeological findings associated with the monumental building at Tel Shiloh. It explores the similarities between the monumental building at Tel Shiloh and the Israelite tabernacle at Shiloh as described in the historical literature to consider the possibility of the monumental structure at Tel Shiloh being the remains of the Israelite tabernacle at Shiloh.

The Mount Out of the Mound: The Geographical Nature of Iron Age Cultic Sites in Jerusalem and Environs

Aharon Tavger[1]
[1] Independent Scholar

During the Late Bronze Age and in some cases even during the Iron Age I, temples were a widespread phenomenon in the southern Levant. Archaeological excavations exposed the existence of one or more temples in almost every city that was occupied during this period (e.g. Lachish, Megiddo, Shechem, Tell Mevorakh, Beth Shean, Naharia, Hazor). Surprisingly, this phenomenon is not prevalent during the Iron Age II. In contrast to neighboring entities, excavations at Iron II sites in Israel and Judah failed to reveal such temples, excluding Dan, Arad and Motza. In this paper I wish to suggest an explanation to the almost complete absence of Temples in Israel and Judah during the Iron Age II. A careful reading of the biblical texts concerning the main cultic sites, taking the geographical settings in account, indicates that the cultic sites should be looked for outside of the cities. The geographic location of the sanctuaries of Jerusalem and Bethel on a high hill above the city, together with other archaeological and biblical examples, enable a better understanding of the nature of the cult practiced in Israel and Judah during the Iron Age.

Priestly Ordination in Light of Mesopotamian Cult Animation Rites

Christine Palmer[1]
[1] Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary

As prescribed by the biblical text, the ordination of Israel's high priest fashions his body through consecration rites and ceremonial investiture to qualify him to serve in the divine dwelling 'before YHWH.' These rites bear strong affinity with the installation of ancient Near Eastern cult images that are birthed and enlivened for ritual performance in sacred space. When compared with the Mesopotamian mīs pî, pīt pî rites that animate an image's sensory organs for intercession in the sacred precincts, the high priest's installation evidences multiple points of similarity: his body is birthed on holy ground, it is fashioned along the highest order of purity and holiness, and it is inscribed with the names of the twelve tribes to represent Israel's corporate body. His role is portrayed as analogous to a ṣalmu, a dedicated ritual substitute that presences the worshiper in the sanctuary's inaccessible realms. The ordination rite draws from a familiar cultural background to conceptually liken the high priest to a dedicated 'image' through whom the nation has immediate and permanent audience before YHWH.

The Hierarchy of Ritual Personnel in Priestly Texts and the Neo-Babylonian Period

Bruce Wells[1]
[1] University of Texas, Austin

This paper compares what is said about ritual personnel (priest, Levites, and others) in texts from Numbers, Ezekiel, Ezra-Nehemiah, and Chronicles with evidence concerning temple personnel from the Neo-Babylonian and early Persian periods. This evidence has been largely overlooked, but clear affinities between the two sets of material stand out. I argue that all of the biblical texts under analysis—Numbers 8 and 18, Ezekiel 44, Ezra 8, Nehemiah 10–12, and 1 Chronicles 23–26—draw on the Babylonian system in particular ways, especially to indicate favored and unfavored groups. The texts from Numbers, for example, place the Levites into the subordinate role of the Babylonian temple oblates (širkū), while those from Ezra-Nehemiah have the nətînîm ("temple servants") assume that position. Those from Ezekiel and Chronicles raise the status of the Levites to that of lower-ranking Babylonian prebendaries and seek to secure for them greater remuneration. The Babylonian evidence also explains why Chronicles includes officers over the various treasuries (e.g., "of God," "of Yhwh's house") and refers to brothers within a priestly family as "the second" or "the third." The arrangement of personnel in each text has implications for who could perform certain ritual actions and enter higher levels of sacred space. The Babylonian system was thus adapted by each text to serve its own purposes and is crucial to a fuller understanding of the biblical authors' goals.

Analysis of Indexing to Enrich Understanding of Ancient Israelite Rituals Against Their Ancient Near Eastern Backgrounds

Roy Gane[1]
[1] Andrews University

Past scholarship on the ancient Israelite cult prescribed and described in the Bible has focused on symbolic meaning. However, this approach is limited by the paucity of explanations regarding symbolic meaning in the biblical text. Therefore, some scholars are now looking more closely at indexical meaning. The present paper explores the methodology of analyzing "indices" in Israelite ritual against its ancient Near Eastern background as a tool for eanhancing interpretation of a wider variety of ritual phenomena and for facilitating intercultural comparisons by expanding the scope of available signification beyond that which is expressed by symbols. This study breaks new ground for analysis of Israelite and ANE cults by taking into fuller account factors such as (1) differentiation between kinds of indices (e.g., still or active, human or non-human), (2) degrees of indexicality (e.g., involving degrees of physical proximity and cognition required to recognize an index), (3) how textual representation affects analysis of indices, (4) how indices interact with symbols, and (5) how to assess comparison and contrast between analogous Israelite and ANE ritual phenomena. Based on analysis of instances attested by biblical and ANE ritual texts, the study finds that indices are abundant and essential elements in Israelite and ANE ritual systems. Although they are usually taken for granted or treated as symbols, attention to them as indices can fill gaps in symbolic signification, help to resolve some questions concerning ritual meaning, and illuminate relationships between ritual phenomena in different religious cultures.

6C. Archaeology of Israel III (Georgian)

Chair(s): Boaz Gross, Israeli Institute of Archaeology and Tel Aviv University

A New Interpretation of the Early Iron Age Sites in the Negev Highlands

Erez Ben-Yosef[1]
[1] Tel Aviv University

During the early Iron Age, hundreds of sites emerged in the Negev Highlands of southern Israel. Traditionally interpreted as part of a southern Israelite district, the Edomite kingdom, or other frameworks, this paper argues that they instead represent the northwestern frontier of a nomadic (or polymorphous) tribal kingdom controlling a vast region, including the Arabah Valley and the southern Transjordanian Plateau. This kingdom, though largely archaeologically invisible, becomes detectable through its engagement in copper production—an activity that left substantial remains in the Arabah Valley. I propose that the Negev Highland sites were directly tied to this economy, serving as trading hubs and boundary markers—"permanent structures of transient people" (A. Negev). The exceptionality of these sites underscores a broader issue: nomadic polities exerted significant territorial control yet left little archaeological trace beyond function-specific sites. This interpretation, and its implications for the identification of this kingdom with biblical Edom, is supported by recent studies on chronology, pottery, and microarchaeology, which will be discussed in this presentation.

Egyptian Monumentality and Aegypto-Levantine Relations within Iron IIA State Formation in the Jezreel–Beth-Shean Valleys

John Will Rice[1]
[1] Tel Aviv University

In light of the recent reinterpretation of the Sheshonq fragment at Megiddo as part of a building inscription rather than victory stele (Ben-Dor Evian/Finkelstein, BASOR 2023), this paper investigates the role of "Egyptian" monumentality in Iron IIA state formation processes in the Jezreel–Beth-Shean Valleys. In particular, this paper sets the creation of a locally produced monumental Egyptian inscription at (presumably) Megiddo V within the context of the earlier destruction of Beth-Shean Lower V's Egyptian monument courtyard. It accepts the equation of the HUJ S-1a/S-1b sequence with the UM Upper V/Lower V sequence (Arie, FS Finklestein 2017) and the placement of the Level S-1a destruction sometime in the late tenth century BCE (Vaknin et al., FS Levy 2023, 68% confidence; also Kleiman et al., AJA 2019). In this context, the intentional burial of the Lower V monument courtyard immediately before Level S-1a, and the S-1a destruction sometime around the appearance of the Sheshonq inscription at Megiddo, suggest that the polity in control of Beth-Shean Level S-1a (and its hippo-jar administrative system, attested in Building A) may represent an anti-Egyptian posturing within the northern valleys that was temporary and exceptional for these phases of the Iron IIA. This, in turn, suggests that ambivalent reckonings with the region's—and Beth-Shean's and Rehov's, in particular—historical ties to Egypt played a significant public role within processes of state formation in the region.

Herod's Harbor: A More Complete Reconstruction

Patrick S. Smith[1]
[1] World History Encyclopedia

Over two thousand years ago (22-10 BC), on the windswept coast of the eastern Mediterranean, with Roman engineering and largesse, Herod the Great accomplished a remarkable feat by constructing a whole metropolis known as Caesarea Maritima. But just as remarkable - using formed pozzolana hydraulic concrete - Herod built a colossal harbor at the foot of the city, housing 40 acres of water. As it directly adjoined the city and was an engineering feat and visual wonder of the world, two vital considerations went into

its construction: military and hydrodynamic. Regarding its military aspects, using on-site archaeological surveys and known Roman construction techniques, with reference to Herodian fortification work at Jerusalem and Masada, physical features will reveal a harbor built like a fortress-at-sea. Moreover, considering the meteorological conditions with which the harbor engineers faced - of strong counter-clockwise Mediterranean currents combined with considerable north directed winds and waves - when it comes to hydrodynamic effects on form and function, three structural features will be discussed: The overall morphology of the harbor itself; the form and function of the structure at the south end of the harbor known as Procumatia or breaker of the waves; and, with extreme eddy effect on form and function, the free-standing edifices at the harbor's entrance to the north. With these factors interpreted, a more complete reconstruction of the harbor will be offered in collaboration with Lithodomos.

Labor, Surplus, and the Negotiation of Authority at Ḥorvat Tevet
Jonathan Schmidt-Swartz [1]
[1] New York University
The economic structure of Ḥorvat Tevet in the Iron IIA (9th century BCE) has been framed as a royal estate, where surplus was extracted and redistributed through elite control. This model, however, assumes a rigid, top-down hierarchy, overlooking the role of negotiated labor and reciprocal obligations. This paper reassesses the site's economic organization, arguing that surplus production was mediated through social networks rather than elite expropriation. Evidence from Level 8 (Iron I) suggests that before the emergence of large-scale storage in Levels 7–5, Ḥorvat Tevet functioned as an autonomous agrarian settlement, where labor obligations were structured through kinship-based exchange and negotiated participation. Rather than a direct continuation of Late Bronze agrarian estates, the site reflects a transition to locally managed surplus production. The absence of permanent worker housing and the presence of high-quality provisioning suggest that labor was structured through seasonal participation and work feasts, paralleling broader patterns in ancient Western Asia where surplus accumulation relied on negotiated obligations rather than coercive extraction. By shifting focus from elite administration to decentralized economic strategies, this study challenges prevailing assumptions about economic hierarchy in early Israel. It argues that the economic transformation of Ḥorvat Tevet was not a simple reinstatement of Bronze Age control but an adaptation of Iron Age labor strategies in response to shifting political conditions. This reassessment offers a more dynamic model of how polities in the southern Levant structured labor and resource distribution in the wake of imperial collapse.

Ionians Abroad: New Evidence for Greek Mercenaries in the Levant
Aaron A. Burke[1]
[1] University of California, Los Angeles
Since the publication of the late seventh century BCE East Greek (EG) ceramic corpus at Mezad Hashavyahu in 2001, considerable debate has existed regarding the associations of the EG corpus at southern Levantine sites, namely, with either mercantile or mercenary activities. While more recently published remains from Ashkelon (2011) have been brandished as evidence of trade, a strong case still remains to be made for the association of this assemblage with a short-lived occupation by Greek mercenaries. This paper presents a reassessment of the contexts from which EG wares have been recovered at Ashkelon, which along with Mezad Hashavyahu has produced one of two of the largest corpora to date. It is argued that the EG wares did, in fact, belong to a broader "Ionian" assemblage, which has not been fully articulated, and that it went out of use around 610 BCE—a pattern consistent with the evidence from other sites with EG assemblages in the southern Levant. On this basis, it is shown that not only had the EG assemblage gone out of use well in advance of the Babylonian conquest (ca. 604 BCE), but that it did so because of its immediate association with Ionian mercenaries, who were thereafter led to Carchemish by Necho II in 610 BCE. Thus, any mercantile association of these EG wares is only relevant in the context of the resupplying of Ionian mercenaries stationed at Ashkelon and other sites, but who had unequivocally departed prior to the destructions of these sites.

6D. Archaeology and History of Feasting and Foodways II (Arlington)
Chair(s): Jacob C. Damm, College of the Holy Cross

Foraged Food in the Levant Past and Present
David Ilan[1]
[1] Hebrew Union College
Archaeological research concerning plant diet usually focuses on cultivars rather than on foraged plants (the analysis of prehistoric floral remains tends to be more comprehensive because there are no cultivars). But ethnographic studies carried out in the Levant and Mediterranean basin suggest that foraging was critical to sustenance, especially in times of stress. In this paper I will survey the variety of edible plants currently available, and their identification, or lack thereof, in selected paleobotanical studies. Some recent studies have provided tantalizing information about the archaeological contexts of certain plant remains.

From Head to Toe: Reconstructing Foodways and Animal Economy at Hellenistic Tel Shimron
Alexander T. Dorr[1], Kate Birney[2]
[1] Boston University, [2] Wesleyan University
The excavations at Tel Shimron have revealed a concentration of Hellenistic occupation at the base of the tel, largely represented by material and contexts dating to the Seleucid era (c. 200 BCE-140 BCE). The fauna recovered from this area, seemingly an industrial zone, allows for the reconstruction of animal economy and activities occurring at the tel and in the surrounding Jezreel Valley. Analysis of the fauna, and the abundance of different bone elements, have provided insights into different consumption practices between taxa. By situating these remains in context and comparing them to other published Seleucid assemblages from neighboring sites, this paper aims to clarify animal economy on the local scale and situate patterns at Shimron within the larger regional context of animal management practices and industries. This paper concludes with a brief attempt at putting the faunal remains in conversation with the analyzed botanical assemblage. In doing so, we seek to illustrate how these datasets might work together to reveal the specific economic activities that occurred at the site, and how plant and animal management and consumption practices were in conversation with each other.

"Bringing forth Bread from the Land" (Psalms 104): The Socio-economic Organization of Food Production in Roman Palestine
Hadass R. Shambadal[1]
[1] Hebrew University

Bread was a staple of the Roman diet and played a crucial role in the economy and society, as reflected in the phrase panem et circenses ("bread and circuses"). This talk examines bread production as an economic sector and its influence on daily life in Roman Galilee (63 BCE–4th century CE). Through spatial analysis of querns, mills, ovens, and storage facilities at various archaeological sites, I explore how bread production and trade were organized at different levels of social and communal life. By comparing rural and urban sites, I address key questions: Did households bake their own bread, or did they rely on professional bakeries? Where were these bakeries located? Did milling and baking necessarily occur in the same setting? I also assess chronological and regional variations in these patterns. Archaeological findings will be examined alongside insights from Rabbinic literature, particularly regarding the roles of professional bakers and other figures involved in bread production. This interdisciplinary approach sheds light on the economic structures, labor organization, and societal norms surrounding one of the most essential foodstuffs of the Roman world.

Karkade: A Bridge Between Then and Now
Nicole Lombard[1], Laurel Renner[1], Nathalie Gonzalez[1], Christen Li[1]
[1] Andrews University

Tea and tea ritual has been present in middle east for millennia, even longer in other areas of the world. It is a feature in almost every culture in the ancient near east and takes on a number of forms. Especially popular in Egypt is karkade, a tea brewed with the flowers of a hibiscus plant and usually served cold. This strong purple drink has taken on a myriad of roles throughout Egyptian history, from love potion to medicine to its current role as a representation of hospitality and rest, but has, throughout it all, been a staple of Egyptian culture. We explore here the roles that hibiscus tea has taken throughout Egyptian history, and how that has changed with the changing culture and needs of Egypt.

6E. Archaeology of Cyprus I (Berkeley & Clarendon)

Chair(s): Kevin Fisher, University of British Columbia; Catherine Kearns, University of Chicago

The Industrial Complex at Kissonerga-Skalia at the Transition to the Late Cypriot Bronze Age (Virtual)
Lindy Crewe[1]
[1] Cyprus American Archaeological Research Institue Director

The coastal Bronze Age settlement at Kissonerga Skalia in western Cyprus was a site of exceptional longevity. It remained occupied from the Philia, c. 2500 BC, through the entire Early–Middle Cypriot Bronze Age until c. 1600 BC, the threshold of the Late Cypriot Bronze Age. During the final phase, a large building complex was constructed over earlier domestic structures. The complex comprises large open spaces delineated by a monumental wall and industrial-scale cooking/heating facilities. This paper will report on the 2025 season of excavations as we work towards exposing further features.

Between the Highlands and the Coast: Settlement and Landscape Dynamics from the Iron Age to Late Antiquity – Insights from Four Seasons of the Hala Sultan Tekke Hinterland Survey Project in Southeastern Cyprus
Polte de Weirdt[1], Dries Daems[2], Philip Bes[3], Frixos Markou[4], Jan Coenaerts[1], Ralf Vandam[1]
[1] Vrije Unversiteit Brussel, [2] Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, [3] Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, [4] University of Cyprus

The coastal lowlands surrounding the Larnaca salt lake, located in southeastern Cyprus, is a region of rich archaeological importance. This dynamic landscape has undergone continuous transformations driven by both natural and cultural forces, providing valuable diachronic insights into human-environment interactions in the long durée. While the Late Bronze Age remains in this region—particularly at the archaeological site complex of Hala Sultan Tekke—have been extensively studied, many questions remain lingering regarding occupation and land use in post-Bronze Age chronologies. For this reason, the Hala Sultan Tekke Hinterland Project was initiated by the Vrije Universiteit Brussel in 2021, employing a diachronic approach to document settlement patterns, mobility, and resource exploitation. Recent survey work has provided valuable new insights into the extent and nature of Iron Age through Late Roman activity. Within the coastal lowlands surrounding the Late Bronze Age site complex, the project has identified major evidence of Classical, Hellenistic, Roman, and Late Antique occupation, along with indications of Iron Age and Late Antique presence in the highlands around Pyrga-Kato Linos. These findings uncovered a more complex and dynamic diachronic landscape than previously assumed, with shifting occupation patterns reflecting broader regional transformations. By integrating intensive surface survey, GIS-based spatial analyses, and environmental data, the project is refining our understanding of post-Bronze Age landscape development in southeastern Cyprus. Synthesizing results from four seasons of fieldwork with preliminary findings from the 2025 survey, this research contributes to a broader discourse on long-term settlement continuity, disruption, and reconfiguration in Southeastern Cyprus.

The Kalavasos and Maroni Built Environments Project (Cyprus). Results of the 2025 Excavations at Kalavasos Ayios Dhimitrios and Maroni Vournes
Kevin D. Fisher[1], Sturt W. Manning[2], Georgia M. Andreou[3]
[1] University of British Columbia, [2] Cornell University, [3] University of Southampton

This paper reports the results from our 2025 fieldwork at the Late Bronze Age (ca. 1700-1100 BCE) urban centres of Kalavasos Ayios Dhimitrios, and Maroni Vournes. This work is part of the Kalavasos and Maroni Built Environments (KAMBE) Project, a collaborative and interdisciplinary investigation of the relationship between urban landscapes, social interaction, and social change in south-central Cyprus. Our excavations at Maroni Vournes are aimed at elucidating the chronology and function of a massive wall that aligns with the extant Ashlar Building. At Kalavasos, our excavations are focusing on two areas, one of which is Building XVI, a monumental, court-centred structure originally mapped during our 2012 ground-penetrating radar (GPR) survey. We have excavated part of its bench-lined central court and adjoining spaces, which are yielding possible evidence for ritual activities that included feasting. We are also excavating the area where the city's major north-south street approaches Building X, revealing the monumentalization of this symbolically charged space through time. Our investigations also include palaeobotantical, faunal and geoarchaeological data collection aimed at obtaining high-resolution information on the use of particular spaces and site formation processes, as well as the use of high resolution GPR survey and other geophysical methods in order to reconstruct how previous and current excavation areas were integrated into a complete urban plan. These investigations are providing new insights into the production of social space at these important sites and the social dynamics of Late Bronze Age landscapes on Cyprus.

End of an Era? Closing in on the Later Middle Cypriot Period in the Vasilikos Valley

Mara T. Horowitz[1]
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The transition from Middle to Late Cypriot Bronze Age in the 17th century BC brought major and rapid social changes throughout the island. Disagreement has persisted about the primary drivers of this change, including external influence, climate change, acceleration of the mining industry, population increase, and internal social competition. In the Vasilikos Valley, the K-LAARP project has completed four years of fieldwork on the MC Kalavasos-Laroumena/Arkhangelos settlement site high on a limestone ridge. Results suggest new dimensions to this period of MC II-III, from very large food storage and preparation facilities to the early appearance of Canaanite jars and possibly a major earthquake. Experiments in architecture coincide with an increase in scale, both in structures and site size. While primary settlement on the ridge seems to have ceased in the 17th century, there is still evidence of use throughout the Late Cypriot period that suggests continuity and also illuminates the relationship between urban centers and their hinterlands at that time. Taking a landscape approach to the Vasilikos Valley made possible by the VVP survey, the Middle Cypriot begins to come into focus as a time of both continuity and change, replication and ingenuity, incremental development and sudden events.

The Kourion Urban Space Project's Final Excavation Season, 2024: Building 4 and its Environs

Laura Swantek[1], Erin Beatty[2], Lucas Grimsley[3], Ian Randall[4], Thomas W. Davis[5]
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The Kourion Urban Space Project (KUSP) began excavations within the city of Kourion on the southern coast of Cyprus in 2012 and completed fieldwork in summer of 2024. During the 2024 field season, KUSP completed excavations in Building 4, a large, elaborately decorated structure destroyed by the earthquake storms that hit the Mediterranean in the mid-4th century CE that sealed the archaeological deposit below a thick layer of construction debris. The 2024 excavations revealed the floor deposits in five spaces including a richly decorated room with a geometric mosaic floor, marble revetment, and a marble statue of Artemis. In another room, figurative frescoes of red, blue, turquoise, orange and black, including the eye and sideburn of an individual's face is preserved along with possible dipinti inscriptions. The remains of four individuals were found in the center of the building, each wearing gold or iron jewelry, some holding iron and copper keys and lamps suggesting the earthquake struck in the evening or early morning before sunrise. A possible storage room and food preparation room were also identified. This paper will describe the function of each of these rooms and present a preliminary analysis of the artifacts in relation to the overall use of this building and its situation in a neighborhood composed of the Earthquake House and Market Building, significantly less opulent structures.

Soft(stone) Power: Ritual and Crafting in the Inscription of Chloritite Vessels from 3rd Millennium Mesopotamia

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Throughout Mesopotamia, stone vessels feature prominently in kingly ritual repertoires from the Early Dynastic to Neo-Assyrian periods. Many stone vessels uncovered in excavations bear inscriptions that evoke their votive and dedicatory function, often with reference to the Sumerian ritual bur-gi4, in which the king offered a stone bowl to the temple. However, the specific stone types and attendant crafting techniques of these inscribed vessels have not been evaluated in the context of increased trade relations that accompanied the rise of Mesopotamian states in the 3rd millennium. With increased access to the vast and variegated stone resources of the Arabian Peninsula, craftsmen arguably broadened the spectrum of techniques used to prepare and transform stone into ritual objects. One such material that was introduced through trade with Arabia and Iran is chloritite, the rock form of the mineral chlorite, a "softstone" that was inscribed by Mesopotamian craftsmen alongside other vessels comprised of harder stones. This presentation will explore the ritual crafting of inscribed vessels that can be squarely associated with sourcing in the Arabian Peninsula. Through a material-textual analysis of the operational sequences and long-distance acquisition behind these inscriptions, I demonstrate that the distinct materiality of softstone – its colour, fragility, and foreigness – enhanced its ritual efficacy. More broadly, this diachronic case study of objects suggests that the affordances of stone could wield power within rituals in Mesopotamia, as was understood by the craftsman who prefigured this through inscription.

Ritual as a Social Cohesive: A Perspective from a Small Middle Bronze Age Village in the Southern Levant

Matthew N. Susnow[1]
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This paper will investigate the role ritual plays at a small, rural village during the Middle Bronze Age in the southern Levant. While rituals are often explored through the lens of power relations, control and manipulation, in this study, I will argue that ritual can function as a bonding mechanism that forges social cohesion and shared group identity. As a case study, I will look at the small, unfortified MB settlement of Givat Sharett, presenting various finds and their distribution at the site. I will specifically focus on the site's small shrine and the domestic spaces, demonstrating how ritual was a force that brought together the settlement's inhabitants in commensal, open, settings. To accomplish this, I will engage various concepts of ritual, ritual performance and ritual transmission alongside the notion of habitus, and I will then broaden the study by comparing some of the observations from Givat Sharett both to other contemporary rural sites with evidence of ritual as well as to urban settlements of the MB that have a different overall complexion of ritual. This paper ultimately will underscore the unique role that ritual played at Givat Sharett: ritual was not something creating and reinforcing social distinctions and hierarchies, but rather, it forged distinct individuals into a bound group with a shared identity.

6F. Ritual, Power, and the Power of Ritual in the Ancient Near East: Ritual and Kingship II (Studio 1)

Chair(s): Céline Debourse, Harvard University; Elizabeth Knott, College of the Holy Cross

Artistic Process, Specialized Knowledge, Ritualized Labor: Faience Clay Molds in the Brooklyn Museum

Kathy Zurek-Doule[1]
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Ancient Egyptian rulers and their subjects dedicated much of their time and labor gaining the favor and protection of the gods. They decorated their buildings, animals, and bodies with visual reminders of their devotion. The smallest of these reminders are understood to be amulets and jewelry elements. During the New Kingdom's Amarna Period, these small amuletic objects were created en masse using Egyptian faience, and a technology repurposed for speedier production, clay molds. The Brooklyn Museum has recently assessed over 500 ancient Egyptian clay molds in its collection. The majority of these never-before studied objects were donated by the family of the Egyptologist Charles Edwin Wilbour, who collected them in Egypt in the late nineteenth century. Upon closer examination, we've learned that the majority of these objects match the types that were excavated by W. Flinders Petrie at Tell el-Amarna, a very important site of faience production. The sheer volume of molds discovered from the Amarna period (ca. 1352-1336 B.C.E.) are indicative of the importance of these small, readily accessible devotional items to the ancient Egyptian people, and to the large workforce that must have contributed to this industry. This paper will examine how these clay molds relate to kingship and the demand for production, and what can we learn from them about ritualized labor practices, artistic processes, and the specialized knowledge it takes to create amuletic objects of faience.

The Royal Scepter that Expands the Borders: Assyrian Coronation Rituals as a Source of Sovereignty and Drive for Supremacy

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"With your just scepter expand your land!" This brief command was part of a blessing uttered by Assyrian magnates and royal eunuchs during the crowning of the Middle-Assyrian monarch Tukulti-Ninurta I. The inscription that records this blessing (SAA 20, no. 7) has long been a source for studies of Assyrian kingship, because it prompts important questions. Did the coronation ritual precede Tukulti-Ninurta I or did he produce it? Did the ritual really endure until Ashurbanipal's reign, as claimed by his coronation hymn (SAA 3, no. 11)? This paper will approach these and other such questions by applying theories concerning sacred kingship, drawn from works in the fields of anthropology, sociology, and history. The content and performance of ritual form a key focal point in these discussions. Ritual is comprised of key participants performing vital actions, whose primary functions are to preserve the cosmos and the cultural memory of pre-modern societies. This paper will demonstrate how coronations are rituals of cosmic proportions and intent on preserving cultural memory. Ancient Mesopotamian tradition transmitted the understanding that kingship, royal paraphernalia, and other cultic and administrative offices were critical elements of the cosmic order. Theories concerning sacred kingship, therefore, provide key insights to this order in Assyria proper. The references in Assyrian material to the divine bestowal of the scepter on sovereigns constituted more than mere adherence to textual tradition. This act, in combination with verifiable and purported deeds of kings, evidences the impact that the Assyrian coronation ceremony had both domestically as well as abroad.

The Construction of a Pure Ritual Actor through the "Negative Confessions"

Forrest Martin[1]
[1] Emory University

The traditional interpretation of Book of the Dead Spell 125 epitomizes the construal of the BD as a whole. Under traditional models, BD 125 encapsulates the moment of post-mortem judgment that the deceased must undergo to reach the idyllic afterlife successfully. Alongside the famous weighing of the heart, the deceased must perform the "negative confessions" (also termed the "oath of innocence")—sayings that relay a sinless life so that hellish destruction can be avoided. In contrast to this traditional model, this paper will argue for the ritual uses of negative confessions in temple settings, especially those of initiation and access. Scholars have recently argued for the relationship between ritual texts from the Ptolemaic period and the content of BD 125. The paper will assess these proposals and proceed to consider the rhetoric of the negative confessions. What role does negation play in the function of the ritual(s)? The denial of impurity creates a space for the speaker to emerge as an ideal ritualist, one who is relieved of corrupting baggage and who can then enter spaces of purity and power. In this sense, the ritual speech invests power in the speaker, enabling access to divine/royal spaces and constructs authority to be exercised in them. The paper will conclude by bringing the findings to bear on the rhetoric of negative confessions in texts outside the Book of the Dead.

6G. Archaeology of Anatolia I (Studio 2)

Chair(s): Nancy Amelia Highcock, Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford; Oya Topçuoğlu, Northwestern University

Building Six Millennia of Culture History: Continued Work at Çadır Höyük

Sharon R. R. Steadman[1], Burcu Yıldırım[2], Deniz Erdem[3], Jennifer C. Ross[4]
[1] SUNY Cortland, [2] Leiden University, [3] Middle East Technical University, [4] Hood College

Work at Çadır Höyük continued in 2025 on the building six millennia of occupational history at this rural site on the Anatolian plateau. How residents managed socioeconomic resources and strategies during the multiple climate events over these millennia remains a focus. Three major periods were explored in the 2025 season. We continued investigation of the southern slope Lower Town exposure fourth millennium BCE domestic quarters. Previous seasons of work have suggested that the 5.9 kya climate event precipitated a substantial socioeconomic reorganization of the community. The Upper Town was also an important area of interest where we seek to understand when this higher terraced area of the fourth millennium occupation was established. We continued our renewed work on the second millennium occupation both on the Upper Southern Slope and in the eastern Step Trench. In addition to better understanding Çadır's role in the Hittite Empire, we also gathered data on the socioeconomy in this pre-3.2 kya period in order to compare it to a growing database on the post 3.2 kya Iron Age periods. Work continued on the mound summit with particular attention to the Late Antique occupation while also exploring the interior areas of the Byzantine occupation inside of the massive defensive all. We also continued documentation of traditional farming methods in the region over the last century. These data will allow us insights into farming practices in previous millennia, as well as into how rural farmers in the region navigated multiple instances of significant variable climate periods.

Polatlı Landscape Archaeology and Survey Project (PLAS) 2025 Season (Virutal)

Müge Durusu-Tanrıöver[1], Ege Dagbasi[2], M. Ali Akman[3], Damla B. Tug[1]

[1] Temple University, [2] Julius-Maximilians-Universität Würzburg, [3] Brown University

Since 2019, Polatlı Landscape Archaeology and Survey Project (PLAS) has investigated the imperial strategies of the Hittite Empire in its western border. As the first project to systematically study the second millennium BCE in Polatlı (Ankara)—an area primarily known for its first millennium BCE Phrygian sites—PLAS aims to trace the presence and impact of the Hittite Empire in this part of its western frontier. In this paper, we present the results of our 2025 fieldwork, which focuses mainly on the southernmost portion of Polatlı—an area we are exploring for the first time. A defining factor of this area is the southern orientation, shaped by mobility corridors following the tributaries of the Sakarya River, such as Ilicaozu Deresi. This pattern contrasts with the rest of Polatlı, where dominant connections followed an east-west axis. We examine how this difference is reflected in the settlement patterns and material culture of Polatlı, as well as on larger connections established with the surrounding regions in the Bronze Age.

Remote Sensing in Challenging Terrains: Multitemporal Sentinel-2 Analysis of Archaeological Landscapes in North-Central Anatolia

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[1]Brown University

Remote sensing methods for archaeological survey need to be adjusted to local geography, as terrain strongly influences the visibility of surface features in satellite imagery. Most archaeological remote sensing research has focused on flat plains—such as northern Syria or southern regions of Anatolia like Cilicia and the Konya Plain. In contrast, remote sensing methods for the hilly and mountainous landscapes of North Central Anatolia remain largely understudied. This study, conducted within the framework of the Polatlı Landscape Archaeology and Survey Project (PLAS), aims to develop a method for identifying archaeological sites in this more challenging terrain. Using Google Earth Engine, the study processes multitemporal, multi-spectral Sentinel-2 imagery (2020–2024). Known archaeological sites are compared with nearby non-archaeological areas to evaluate which satellite bands and vegetation indexes most effectively distinguish potential archaeological features. In particular, the study highlights the utility of the Normalized Difference Moisture Index (NDMI) during the hot, dry months of August and September, and the Normalized Difference Vegetation Index (NDVI) during early spring, when rainfall increases but temperatures remain low. Because single images often fail to reveal subsurface features clearly, the study explores image aggregation techniques—such as median and minimum composites—to enhance visibility. This multitemporal approach leads to the identification of over 50 new potential archaeological sites in Polatlı, Ankara.

The 2025 Season of the Kerkenes Project

Jessica Robkin[1], Scott Branting[1], Joseph W. Lehner[2], Sevil B. Baltalı Tırpan[3], Gokce Yaziioglu[4], Dominique Langis-Barsetti[5], Tuna Kalaycı[6], Sarah R. Graff[7], Nilüfer B. Baturayoğlu Yöney[1], Amanda Groff[1], Soran Avcıl[1], Tim Brown[1], Canan Cakirlar[8], Lucas Proctor[9], Laurien Folkerts[8],
Tanya Schnare[10], Atakan Atabas[1]

[1] University of Central Florida, [2] University of Sydney, [3] Istanbul Technical University, [4] Simon Fraser University, [5] University of Laval, [6] Leiden University, [7] Arizona State University, [8] University of Groningen, [9] Utah State University, [10] Tanya Schnare

For 33 years the Kerkenes Project (kerkenesproject.org) has sought to understand the very large late Iron Age city located in Yozgat Province of central Turkey. The short-lived city likely dates to the late 7th to mid-6th century BCE. The project, since its inception, has been known for combining the large-scale use of technology to guide and to leverage the results of excavation methodologies. This report will detail the results of the planned geophysical surveys, excavations, and finds processing as part of the 2025 campaign. It will also detail ongoing work in community engagement, material science, cultural heritage monitoring, modeling and simulation, robotics, and augmented reality.

Türkmen-Karahöyük, a New 2nd- and 1st-millennia BCE Urban Site in Central Anatolia (Türkiye)

Michele Rüzgar Massa[1], James F. Osborne

[1] Bilkent University, [2] University of Chicago

The Türkmen-Karahöyük Archaeological Project is a new research program aiming to investigate one of the largest pre-Roman sites in central Anatolia (Türkiye), occupied between ca 3000 and 100 BCE. Previous intensive survey, as well as geoarchaeological and geophysical analyses targeting the complex morphology of the settlement, already revealed it to be a regional center during the 2nd and 1st millennia BCE, until its destruction and subsequent abandonment at the time of the Roman conquest of the region. The paper will present the results of the first season of excavation, which focused on the Middle Bronze Age (ca 1800-1650 cal BCE) and Late Hellenistic (ca 150-50 cal BCE) levels, and contextualize Türkmen-Karahöyük's role within the regional and supraregional dynamics emerging from archaeological and historical data.

6H. New Approaches to Ancient Animals II (The Loft)

Chair(s): Christine Mikeska, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill; Theo Kassebaum, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill

Monsters in the Ancient Near East: A Bridge Between the Terrestrial and the Divine

Ilona Rashkow[1]

[1] State University of New York Stony Brook

Imaginary or fantastic creatures combining naturally occurring anatomical parts in an unnatural manner making them appear monstrous or demonic are found frequently in Ancient Near Eastern art. For example, the simple addition of wings to an animal such as a lion transformed it into a fantastic creature. Each of these various beasts embodied supernatural power. In some this power was harmful, in others it was protective. While the specific identity of most of these creatures is not known, their function is often suggested by their appearance or by the context in which they are portrayed. Some took on protective powers against the evil that they or other creatures represented; others were positive and helpful spirits. Today these creatures are often referred to as monsters or demons, although these modern terms do not fully and accurately describe how the people of the ancient Near East would have viewed them. This paper explores some of these Ancient Near East artifacts in light of the Hebrew Bible.

Horns, Beards, and Hybrids: Animal Crossings in Mesopotamian Art,
ca. 2700-2500 BCE

David N. Mulder[1]

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The second quarter of the third millennium BCE saw significant transformations in the repertoire of animal figures in southern Mesopotamian artworks. New human-animal hybrids or therianthropes proliferated on cylinder seals depicting multispecies

combat scenes. These same seals adopted a new compositional style that fused human, animal, and composite bodies into interlocking friezes, blurring the formal distinctions between different types of being. Around the same time, the adoption of bovine horns as a divine attribute provided a new way of marking anthropomorphic figures as gods and goddesses. By bringing together artistic developments that have normally been considered separately—divine representations, animal combat seals, and other depictions of composite beings—this paper seeks new understandings of the process of making hybrids or composites beyond the inherited taxonomies of iconography and medium. It contextualizes these practices of depicting composite bodies amid the various practices of crossing attested in cuneiform documents of the same period, including attempts at standardizing administrative recording across city-states, material and mythological engagements with the Zagros highlands and the Iranian plateau, and interbreeding of herded and captured animals. The fantastical and divine figures created by hybridization, I argue, project fantasies of generating vitality and vigor by traversing bodily and geographic boundaries that governed both the realities and the mythic imaginaries of Early Dynastic Mesopotamia.

Expanding Sexing Enamel Amelogenin (SEAMS) in Caprines

Melina Seabrook[1]
[1] Harvard University

Sex demographic information for caprine herds from teeth would allow us to better understand transitions from hunting to pastoral economies and differential management strategies in the absence of other sexually dimorphic elements. Sexing enamel amelogenin (SEAMS) has the potential to expand our resolution of the genetic sex of caprines. The amelogenin gene differs on the X and Y chromosomes, creating female-specific and male-specific protein isoforms that are also expressed at different levels. Mass spectrometry allows us to identify peptides specific to the male isoform to confirm an animal is male. The successful application will elucidate patterns in herd management influenced by sex, species, and age. To date, SEAMS has been used primarily on humans, and only recently have scholars begun exploring its applicability in cattle. We conduct a pilot study to determine the feasibility of further expanding the method to sheep and goats at Tepe Yahya. For this, we assess the method's ability to accurately determine sex for a panel of archaeological cattle, sheep, and goat remains with genetically determined sex.

Animal Metaphors in Ancient Near Eastern Diplomatic Texts

Ziting Wang[1]
[1] Pennsylvania State University

During the Late Bronze Age, Near Eastern rulers infused their correspondence with striking animal metaphors to communicate political tensions and power dynamics. Vassal kings denounced treacherous neighbors as “dogs” in letters to their overlords, while those in desperate situations likened themselves to “birds in a trap.” In the 1st millennium BCE, Neo-Assyrian treaties employed vivid animal imagery in their curse clauses, warning vassals of the dire consequences of breaking sacred oaths. This presentation explores how these metaphors functioned as powerful tools in intercultural communication, bridging linguistic and cultural divides by conveying messages in familiar, evocative terms. By tapping into shared symbolic meanings, metaphors fostered empathy, reinforced political hierarchies, and made diplomatic discourse more memorable and persuasive. Yet, their meaning was often fluid, shaped by context and intent. For example, in the Amarna Letters, the term “dog” carried both negative and positive connotations. Rib-Hadda of Byblos weaponized it to vilify his enemies as dishonorable, while Abdi-Aširta of Amurru strategically used the same metaphor to signal loyalty to Pharaoh Amenhotep III, capitalizing on Egyptian reverence for dogs as faithful companions. By analyzing these nuanced usages, this paper reveals how metaphorical language shaped political relationships, reflected shifting power dynamics, and served as a flexible instrument of persuasion in the diplomatic landscape of the ancient Near East.

Boundaries and Animal Bodies: Naturecultures, Social Zooarchaeology, and Faunal Remains from Inönü Cave, NW Türkiye

Benjamin Arbuckle[1], Hamza Ekmen[2], Gulden Ekmen[2]
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In traditional archaeological approaches, animal bodies are perceived as representations of (animal) economies, which in turn structure culture history frameworks and the perception of historical processes and ‘cultural sequences’. Here, we examine animal bodies through the analysis of archaeofaunal assemblages from Inönü Cave (NW Türkiye), a region poorly documented archaeologically and weakly integrated into regional culture history frameworks which center narratives of domestication, intensification and urban polities. We approach bodies and boundaries through Haraway’s notion of Naturecultures as a way to acknowledge the hybrid connectivity between species. We are interested in asking if there are specific forms of connectivity between human and animal bodies characteristic of the Pontic region of Anatolian peninsula (Chalcolithic-Iron Age) and if so can we perceive boundaries between these and other ways of dwelling and can we map them in space and time? Do these boundaries reflect distinctive and persistent Naturecultures operating in the Pontic (Kaska) region? This approach represents an attempt to apply the principles of a new social zooarchaeology and to identify other narratives in regions and temporalities ‘peripheral’ to those dominant in SW Asian archaeology.

6I. Archaeology of Arabia (Whittier)

Chair(s): Jennifer Swerida, University of Pennsylvania

Investigating Middle and Late Neolithic Occupational Sites in the Southern Al-Hajar Piedmont. Results from the First Season of the HERDS iN Oman Project

Lucas S. Proctor[1], Maria Pia Maiorano[2], Joseph Harris[3], Jakez Moreau[4], Paige Paulson[5], Petra M. Creamer[6]
[1] Utah State University, [2] Institute of Archaeology, Czech Academy of Sciences, [3] University of Chicago, [4] Paul Valéry University of Montpellier, [5] Johns Hopkins University, [6] Emory University

Survey and excavation conducted during the inaugural season of the Human Environmental Resilience and Desert Subsistence in Neolithic Oman (HERDS iN Oman) project has produced evidence for substantial Neolithic activity in the Wadi Samad of north central Oman. The KHS complex, located 4 km east of the modern oasis of Al-Khashbah, consists of several lithic procurement sites and at least two occupational sites situated on relict terraces overlooking the wadi, the largest of which is KHS-A. Initial test excavations at KHS-A in 2022–2023 provided radiocarbon dates for a minimum of two occupations at the site dating to the middle sixth and early fourth millennia BCE and documented intact sub-surface archaeological deposits. Building on these initial findings, the HERDS project was established to explore evidence for Inland Neolithic mobility and resilience, with a focus on further surveying the area and conducting intensive excavations of the KHS-A site. Survey and mapping of the site have demonstrated that KHS-A is considerably larger than initially estimated, with surface features covering an area of over 15000 m2, making it one of the largest identified Neolithic sites in the region. The site increasingly appears consistent with a repeatedly occupied “persistent place” in use over at least a

millennium. In addition to discussing excavation and survey results, this presentation will discuss early results of material studies (including lithics, bone, and shell ornaments) and their implications for understanding Middle and Late Neolithic subsistence, long-distance mobility, and resource procurement strategies.

Metallurgical Analysis of Selected Copper/Bronze Objects from Ras Al-Hadd HD-1 (Sultanate of Oman): Excavations 2016-2018

Lucas Wirick[1], Jonathan Mark M. Kenoyer[1], Dennys Frenez[2], Maurizio Cattani[2]

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Metallurgical analysis of selected copper/bronze objects from the coastal Umm an-Nar site HD-1 at Ras Al-Hadd, Sultanate of Oman, will be presented. Excavations by the Italian-American "Joint Hadd Project" led by Maurizio Cattani (University of Bologna) and J. Mark Kenoyer (University of Wisconsin-Madison), under the auspices of the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism of Oman, recovered over 1150 copper-based artifacts. Many of the copper/bronze objects were tools associated with maritime subsistence activities. The presence and scattered distribution of scrap metal, crucibles, and mold fragments indicate the recycling of copper in different areas of the site. The technological and chemical characterization of selected samples of various types of broken artifacts and possible manufacturing scraps is presented here. The major and minor trace elements of each sample were documented along with the lead isotope signature. Polished sections of selected samples were studied using optical microscopy and SEM-EDS. Preliminary results confirm the use of both cold and hot hammering along with some remelting and casting. Additional details of the copper microstructure will be discussed and compared with published and ongoing studies of copper objects from other areas of Southeastern Arabia, Baluchistan and Sindh. Comparative analyses of the metallurgy of these adjacent regions will contribute to a better understanding of the unique aspects and possible origins of the metallurgical traditions of Southeastern Arabia.

Carnelian Beads from Settlement HAS1, Khor Rori, Sultanate of Oman (4th century BC to 2nd century AD): Provenience and Technological Studies

Jonathan Mark M. Kenoyer[1], Randall W. Law[1], Laurie Dussubieux[2], Dennys Frenez[3], Silvia Lischi[4]

[1] University of Wisconsin-Madison, [2] The Field Museum, [3] University of Bologna, Italy, [4] University Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne & CNRS

The settlement of HAS1, located on the Inqitat Promontory at the mouth of Wadi Darbat, has revealed the presence of an important indigenous occupation in the Khor Rori area from approximately 400 BC to AD 200, thus predating and partially overlapping with the Hadrami trading outpost of Sumhuram. Excavations begun in 2016 by the Dhofar Map & Inqitat Archaeological Project (DHOMIAP) have recovered numerous beads of glass, carnelian and other materials from the site. This study focuses on the analysis of a selection of 20 beads (18 carnelian and 2 serpentine), which were documented using digital and scanning electron microscopy to examine manufacturing traces, particularly drilling techniques. Most of the beads appear to have been drilled using the double diamond drilling technology, historically associated with workshops in South Asia (present-day India and Pakistan), but some were perforated with metal drills and abrasives and show unique surface modifications. The carnelian beads were also analyzed using Laser Ablation Inductively-Coupled Plasma Mass Spectrometry (LA-ICP-MS) to determine their chemical composition. Based on comparisons with a large database of geologically sourced carnelian, most of the beads from HAS1 were traced to regions of peninsular South Asia (India), though the composition of at least two beads is more similar to carnelian from Yemen. The variations in manufacturing technology and bead shapes along with the sourcing of the carnelian require some new interpretive models to explain trade patterns and technological transfer during the Late Iron Age in Southwestern Arabia.

Archaeological Mission of Wadi Hasid, An Iron Age Hilltop Site in the Omani Ja'alan

Christophe Sevin Allouet[1]

[1] Eveha International

The discovery of a hilltop Iron Age site in the remote region of Ja'alan, Oman, opens up promising avenues for archaeological research. This area has traditionally been considered peripheral to the major transformations that occurred during this period in the Emirates and central Oman. The first millennium BCE in the Oman Peninsula is marked by significant technological and economic developments. These include the introduction of the falaj irrigation system, which revitalized oasis agriculture; the domestication of the dromedary, which facilitated long-distance trade; and a notable increase in copper production. Such innovations point to the emergence of a more complex social organization. This complexity is especially evident in the appearance of fortified hilltop settlements, as well as public religious architecture, both of which suggest the existence of strong centralized authority. The present project, of which the initial findings are outlined here, seeks to understand the function of this fortified site, located just a few kilometers from the coast. The investigation is approached at two levels: locally, through comparisons with other contemporary sites—mostly situated in central Oman—and regionally, by exploring the site's potential role in exchange networks with neighboring regions, primarily the Indus Valley, Persia, and Mesopotamia. This presentation aims to discuss the main stakes of the project within its regional context, and to share some of its preliminary results.

Contextualizing Oases in the Archaeology and History of Arabia

Jennifer L. Swerida[1], Aila Santi[1]

[1] University of Leiden

In archaeological studies of Arabia, oases are central to interpretations of past cultures, economies, and sociopolitical organizations. Beginning with the Early Bronze Age, oases are viewed as pivotal nodes of concentrated resources and social interactions in the arid Arabian landscape that served as stages for fundamental developments in social complexity. Deeply entrenched in archaeological narratives of the region, this oasis-centered model of proto and early historic Arabia is further enshrined in the popular and scholarly consciousness by vast investments heritage-based tourism around oasis sites. However, there is limited archaeological or epigraphic evidence to support a direct analogy between ancient sites and traditional (modern) Arabian oasis communities. In this paper, we discuss Arabian oases in the context of the available archaeological and ecological evidence. Additionally, we examine classical Islamic literature to assess whether and how oases were conceptualized and portrayed in historical discourse. Notably, the classical Arabic word for 'oasis'—wāḥa—is a borrowing from Coptic, which may suggest that the concept was not indigenous to the Arabian Peninsula. Drawing especially on research in southeast Arabia, we consider resistance to "extra-oasis" narratives and the ways in which the over-emphasis on oases limits scholarly understanding of the resilient history of early Arabian societies.

6J. Archaeology of Islamic Society II (White Hill)

Chair(s): Ian W. N. Jones, University of California, San Diego; Tasha Vorderstrasse, University of Chicago

From Cityscape to Landscape: Urban Dynamics and Settlement Resilience Throughout the Later Phases of Sijilmassa (Morocco)

Lorenzo de Lellis[1], Lahcen Taouchikht[2], Maksym Mackiewicz[3], Mustapha Atki[4], Roberto Montagnetti[5], El Mehdi M. Benyassine[2], Wihad Oitache[2]

[1] Polish Centre of Mediterranean Archaeology, [2] Institut Nationale des Sciences de l'Archéologie et du Patrimoine, Rabat, [3] Independent Researcher, [4] Hassan II University of Casblanca, [5] Universitá dell'Aquila

Founded in the mid-8th century at the hearth of the Tafilalt oasis, Sijilmassa rapidly emerged as one of the most important commercial entrepôt of the medieval world, supported by the wealth drawn from sub-Saharan trade. Between 14th and 15th century, political turmoil and the waning of the trans-Saharan trade lead to an irreversible crisis that resulted in the fragmentation of the original urban settlement into a series of fortified villages (qsur) dispersed across the oasis. After its abandonment, the former urban area was eventually repurposed for activities associated with the local settlements that emerged in the area. Within the broader framework of the joint Moroccan-Polish Sijilmassa Research Project, the later phases of occupation of the site, previously unexplored archaeologically, have been the object of recent research focusing on a geophysics and photogrammetry. This paper presents the results of the initial survey, shedding light on the post-urban phases of Sijilmassa. This new data challenges the prevailing narrative of abrupt decline and abandonment, revealing instead a nuanced scenario of gradual transformation and adaptation. Rather than being abandoned, the former urban area appears to have transitioned into a hub of industrial and agricultural activities. This continued human presence in the area underscores the resilience of local communities and the adaptability of settlement patterns, shaped by the enduring significance of the oasis's agricultural system. Viewed through a diachronic archaeological lens, the relationship between environmental resources and settlement dynamics emerges as a complex, evolving process that transcends the mere presence or absence of urban features.

The Rest-stop and Manara of Umm Al-Qurun on the Darb Zubaydah

Rajwan F. Al-Maiyali[1], Richard Wilding[2]

[1] University of Al-Qadisiyah, [2] Independent Researcher

The pilgrim trail from Kufa to Makkah grew in importance during the first hundred years of the Abbasid Caliphate. This route became known as the Darb Zubaydah in honour of Zubaydah bint Jafar, recognising enhancements made to infrastructure under her patronage. The Darb Zubaydah is now a transnational nomination for UNESCO World Heritage Site status, jointly submitted by Iraq and Saudi Arabia. The pilgrim station of Umm Al-Qurun is the first surviving rest-stop heading south from Kufa. It includes a unique example of a manara, or lighthouse, built to guide pilgrims travelling by night. Funding from ASOR has allowed a project team led by Rajwan Al-Maiyali from the University of Al-Qadisiyah and heritage consultant Richard Wilding to complete emergency protection of the manara. The team has also undertaken documentation of all structures at Umm Al-Qurun in their current state of preservation, and community engagement with local stakeholders. The next stage of this project will include surveys to assess the options for stabilisation and restoration of structures at Umm Al-Qurun. The team will build relationships with local industry to source authentic building materials and expertise, and also undertake surveys of intangible cultural heritage along the Darb Zubaydah route. In addition to reviewing the work being undertaken on the Darb Zubaydah route in Iraq, this paper also looks at restoration, revitalisation and public outreach initiatives in Saudi Arabia, examining the potential for similar activities in Iraq.

Trikala Under Ottoman Rule: Urban Change, Ceramic Production, and Historical Insights

Anastasia Thamnopoulou[1]

[1] University of Bonn

The Ottoman annexation of Thessaly, located in central-northern Greece, in the late 14th century initiated a gradual transformation of the region. Under Ottoman administration, the city of Trikala was designated as the seat of a provincial administrative unit (sanjak). Referred to as Tirhala during this period, the city's urban landscape underwent significant modifications, primarily driven by the construction of public and the spatial organization of neighborhoods. These changes reflected the diverse ethnoreligious composition of the population residing within the city. Contemporary written sources, including travelers' accounts and tax registers, indicate the gradual process of the city's 'Ottomanization', reinforcing its significance as the administrative center of a sanjak. Archaeological excavations conducted in the modern city center, specifically at the multi-period site known as 'Asklipieion', have uncovered material remains associated with Trikala's Ottoman past. The discovery of a ceramic workshop at the site provides valuable insights into local ceramic production and its distinctive characteristics. For a more comprehensive understanding of this rather understudied period in Greece, a multidisciplinary approach is employed, integrating historical research, archaeological investigation, and material science analysis. The examination of written records concerning Trikala, along with the findings from the field project at 'Asklipieion', is further complemented by laboratory analyses. These include compositional and chemical examination of ceramic artifacts to provide deeper insights into local production and trade. This methodological framework aims to illuminate a lesser-explored phase of the region's history and contribute to the broader academic discourse on Ottoman archaeology in Greece.

Al-Lajjun, Palestine: Late Islamic Rural Archaeology its Historical Context

Roy Marom[1], Matthew J. Adams[2], Yotam Tepper[3]

[1] W.F. Albright Institute of Archaeological Research, [2] The Center for the Mediterranean World, [3] Independent Researcher

Until the 1960s, the population of the Levant (Bilād al-Shām) mostly resided in villages and tribal communities. For over a century, archaeologists and historians have focused on cities, with rural studies largely confined by disciplinary, spatial, or chronological boundaries. This lecture proposes an interdisciplinary approach to Late Islamic rural archaeology—one that integrates physical remains, written sources, and oral histories while emphasizing local viewpoints and the perspectives of residents. The lecture will examine al-Lajjun in the Jezreel Valley/Marj ibn 'Amir: a Mamluk town, one of Palestine's provincial capitals, and a prosperous Late Ottoman and British Mandate Palestinian village. Al-Lajjun's archaeology embodies the interplay between transformative processes at imperial and transregional levels and the local social, demographic, and economic fabrics of nomads and fellahin alike. A combination of an archaeological survey undertaken by Jezreel Valley Regional Project (JVRP), Ottoman imperial edicts, cadastral and population surveys, Sharia court records, family archives, and oral histories reveals al-Lajjun's rise to regional ascendancy under the Turabay Dynasty (1517–1688 CE), its decline in the 18th century, and its eventual demise in the 19th century due to shifting commercial routes, nomadic raids, and migration to the new coastal cities of Haifa and Acre. Following the Tanzimat reforms, global

economic integration, and regional migrations, al-Lajjun was resettled by a new population from Hebron, becoming the most important satellite village of neighboring Umm al-Fahm. Its material culture exemplifies modernity, presenting a vivid picture of the flourishing of Palestinian rural society before 1948.

6K. Archaeology of Iran (Tremont)

Chair(s): Kyle Gregory Olson, Washington University in St. Louis

Kura-Araxes Communities Dispersal Area and Kura-Araxes Differences Cultural Zone Based Fresh Data in the Northwest Iran

Ghader Ebrahimi[1]
[1] University of Mohaghegh Ardabili

In the Middle of the fourth millennium B.C. the lands between the Kura and Araxes Rivers Basin under occupation of new cultural communities that known Kura-Araxes Culture Tradition. Archaeologists concerned with the fourth and third millennium BCE in the southern Caucasus, eastern Anatolia, northwestern and western Iran, and the Levant have debated the nature of the Kura-Araxes cultural tradition and genesis of this Phenomenon. The Kura-Araxes Communities was distributed along vast areas beyond the heartland includes northwest Iran, west Iran, eastern Anatolia, and extends as far as the southern Levant. The fresh data of recently excavations and surveys in the northwest of Iran (especially Ardabil Region) have illuminated new dimensions of these societies about the distribution range of these communities and their cultural characteristics, including architectural features, pottery traditions, and their way of life. This contribution reflects a brief review of the Kura-Araxes Communities dispersal area in the Northwest of Iran. The main focus of the paper, the reconstruction of the different cultural zones of Kura-Araxes communities is based on their cultural characteristics, especially the different pottery traditions among these communities in the northwest of Iran.

Naming Your Enemy: Labelling as a Tactic of Imperial Control

Hilary Gopnik[1]
[1] Monash University

This paper will explore the power relationships between the Neo-Assyrian imperial center and the more mobile pastoral or agropastoral communities to the east that it sought to control. Using both textual and archaeological evidence, it will examine how the Assyrians understood power dynamics in these groups and how those dynamics may have actually played out on the ground. This paper will interrogate the use of the term "tribal" by modern scholarship, and argue that its imperialist burden is structurally similar to the Assyrian use of terms for political leaders (nasiku, ra'su, bel alu) in its application to unfamiliar community structures. Which factors that have traditionally been included in our vision of "tribal" organization (lineages, pastoralism, mobility) were identified by Assyrians as central to their goal of controlling these groups? How does the archaeological evidence from Iran add texture to the controllers' vision of the controlled?

Women's Role in Politics and Religion in Ancient Iran: An Archaeological and Historical Analysis from Elam to the End of the Sasanian Era

Mahta Sheikhi[1]
[1] Memorial University Of Newfoundland

The role of women in Iranian history, particularly in politics and religion, is complex and has evolved over millennia. Contrary to conventional narratives that marginalize their contributions, archaeological and historical evidence reveals their pivotal role in governance, religious institutions, and dynastic legitimacy. This role, embedded in Iranian culture since the Elamite period (2700 BCE), continues to influence society. Women's influence in religion and politics—two key pillars of Iranian civilization—is reflected in archaeological data, historical texts, and intangible heritage. While ancient non-Iranian historians (e.g., Greek authors) and modern scholars have analyzed these roles, their interpretations often reflect historical biases or nationalist perspectives. This study critically examines such perspectives through archaeological and historical analyses, providing a nuanced understanding of women's political and religious agency from Elam to the Sasanian era (651 CE). Findings indicate that in Elam, royal women wielded significant political and religious power, a tradition that persisted in the Achaemenid era, where figures like Atossa reinforced dynastic rule and religious traditions. During the Parthian and Sasanian periods, women influenced court politics, occasionally ruled as sovereigns, and held intermediary roles within the Zoroastrian religious hierarchy. This study highlights that women in ancient Iran were never fully excluded from power; rather, their roles evolved with shifting political and social landscapes. By reassessing historical and archaeological sources, this research offers a deeper understanding of the long-standing presence and influence of women in shaping Iranian political and religious institutions.

Zooarchaeological Approach to Early Bronze Age Subsistence in Northwestern Iran based on Qale Yeri Kuraim Excavation

Sepideh Majidkhah[1], Rahmat A. Abbasnejad Seresti[2]
[1] University of Mohaghegh Ardabili, [2] University of Mazandaran

The onset of the Early Bronze Age (EBA) in northwestern Iran is associated with general changes in subsistence strategies, settlement patterns, and cultural materials. Based on some scalars, factors such as geographical location and regional potential are causes of these changes during 3rd millennium B.C. (Known as Kura-Araxes Culture). To illuminate this issue, we need to understand Kura-Araxes Groups relationships with the environment through the reconstruction of subsistence. Due to the paucity of information about the subsistence of the Kura-Araxes Communities in the NW Iran, we studied the early Bronze age faunal remains of the Qale Yeri Kuraim located in Ardabil Province. This paper focus based on a preliminary analysis of EBA pastoralist economies in northwestern Iran, which, by comparing sites such as KÖhne Shahar and Kül Tepe Sarein, shows some degree of uniformity of Subsistence in northwestern Iran during this period.

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 20, 2025 | 2:00pm–4:05pm (EST)

7A. Archaeology of Egypt III (Grand Ballroom A)

Chair(s): Jordan Galczynski, University of California, Loas Angeles; Robyn Price, Brown University

Archaizing the Boat: Shifting Ideas on "Old" in Pharaonic Egypt

Traci Lynn Andrews[1]
[1] Texas A&M University

Throughout the Pharaonic Period, the construction of Egyptian ships and their associated equipment like sails and steering oars, went through various morphological changes. Each shift in construction practices can be tracked through the iconography of individual time periods, allowing for a chronological evaluation of the individual phases of Egyptian boat-building practices. However, in depictions and inscriptions of ritual nautical activities, like the traveling of solar barques, sacred vessels are not "updated" like their earthly counterparts. Instead, the artisans left them appearing in an "old" style. This practice occurred in both the iconographic representations of boats, as well as in the design of hieroglyphic signs for these vessels. Additionally, both old and updated boats appeared alongside each other within the same inscriptions and reliefs. This appears to be an intentional practice of archaizing

sacred ships. However, each subsequent period's artisans had a different concept of what aspects of ships were new vs. old, creating a shifting artistic convention on what was archaized within specific nautical settings. Old Kingdom-style sacred watercraft appeared alongside updated Middle Kingdom ships and then Middle Kingdom-appearing boats were depicted at New Kingdom sites, indicating that the time depth of the Egyptian civilization impacted their conceptualization of their own past and, by extension, how they envisioned their own sacred world.

Schiaparelli's Rough Coffins: Re-examining the Potential of an Uninscribed Wooden Coffin from Ancient Egypt (Virtual)
Caroline Arbuckle MacLeod[1]
[1] University of Saskatchewan

In the 19th and early 20th centuries, excavators in Egypt were stunned at the incredible preservation and richness of the tombs they found buried in the sands. Spoiled for choice, they were able to select the finest, decorated examples to bring back to museums in Egypt, throughout Europe, and in other foreign countries. The less elaborate goods were often forgotten, described briefly before being reburied or destroyed. From 1911 to 1913, Ernesto Schiaparelli was uncovering dozens of tombs in Asyut, bringing objects back to fill the collections of the Museo Egizio in Turin. Unfortunately, his lack of attention to detailed find contexts has limited our ability to fully understand the significance of many of his finds, particularly those that were uninscribed or received limited decoration. While it is somewhat remarkable that a handful of "rough coffins" were retrieved at all, his practices certainly represent, as one scholar puts it, "a deplorable and irreversible loss of information". Due to their perceived inferior aesthetic, many of the undecorated coffins have remained unstudied and unpublished in storage for over a century; however, reconstructing a partial story of these objects may not be as impossible as it seems. By focusing on the anonymous coffin S.14452 from the Museo Egizio as a case study, this paper will show how a focus on the material history of these objects can help bring them back into the light.

The Spinning-Bowl Connection: Exploring Multicraft Interactions Between Pottery and Textile Production in Ancient Egypt
Heidi Hilliker[1]
[1] University of Michigan

Scholarship often approaches craft production industries—textiles, woodwork, or ceramics—as siloed systems. However, in practice, these activities were shaped by interactions among different industries. Not only did ancient Egyptian artisans co-craft to produce composite finished products, but they also relied on tools and materials sourced from other craft activities, creating dynamic interdependent systems of production. This study uses ceramic spinning-bowls—specialized tools used for plying linen thread—to explore the intersection of textile and pottery production in the New Kingdom. How were these tools produced, and how did they come into the hands of spinners? What can these tools tell us about the organization of textile craft production in ancient Egypt? To address these questions, this study examines two small collections of spinning-bowls from Deir el-Medina and Tell Edfu. The diversity in form and material composition of these spinning-bowls suggests multiple sources for this class of tool and demonstrates the multifaceted relationships between potters and textile workers. This highlights not only the flexibility of production but also the ways in which craft knowledge, materials, and tools circulated across industries. Furthermore, it provides evidence for the state's role in managing textile craft production. By integrating new analysis with published data, this study offers a broad view of spinning-bowl production and its implications for understanding multi-craft interactions. The findings contribute to wider discussions on the organization of spinning labor, the social networks of craftspeople, and the interconnected nature of ancient Egyptian craft economies.

The Golden Tongues from the Quesna Necropolis
Ahmed H. Elbadwy[1]
[1] Ministry of Antiquities and Tourism

The discovery of individuals with golden tongues at the Quesna necropolis, located in the Nile Delta, offers profound insights into ancient Egyptian funerary customs. Initial findings at this site date back to 1993, with subsequent excavations in 2021 revealing additional golden tongues of diverse dimensions and configurations. Comparable discoveries at the Taposiris Magna, Alexandria and the Al-Bahnasa necropolis, Minya, indicate the continuity of this ritual across various epochs and locales in ancient Egypt. At Quesna, a golden tongue was discovered inside the oral cavity of an adult female interred alone in a prominent burial chamber, indicating her elevated social status. In addition, the excavations revealed two male skeletons dating back to the late roman era, each presenting the same indication of their social status, the golden tongue. The tongues found in the adult males were long and narrow, contrasting with the broad and short tongue found in the female skeleton The selection of gold for these tongues transcended mere ornamentation, embodying profound symbolism. In ancient Egyptian culture, gold was revered as the flesh of the gods, epitomizing divine power and eternity. Its indestructibility and brilliance were intimately associated with the sun god Ra, the giver of life, rendering gold a tangible manifestation of immortality. This intrinsic connection between Ra, the deity of the sun, and Osiris, the sovereign of the underworld, implies that the incorporation of gold enabled the deceased to transcend darkness and to ensure the ability to speak in the afterlife in front of the god Osiris.

7B. Art, Archaeology, and History of Central Asia I (Grand Ballroom B)

Chair(s): Harrison Morin, University of Chicago; Mitchell Allen, University of California, Berkeley

There I Made Another Their Leader: Traces of Achaemenid Imperialism on the Eurasian Steppe
James Scherrer[1]
[1] University of California, Los Angeles

Darius' campaign against the group he calls "the Saka who wear pointed hats," preserved in the Bisitun inscription, represents the first entry of the pastoral populations of Central Asia into the written historical record. However, despite the Saka presence in the Bisitun inscription, and persistence among later Achaemenid inscriptions as some of the many nations listed as subject to the empire, little has been done to explain how the nomadic populations of Central Asia were integrated as part of the empire. A fundamental assumption persists that, despite their appearance on the inscriptions, the Saka lay beyond the formal scope of the empire; their itinerant lifeways rendering them incompatible with the administration of the predominantly settled Achaemenid Empire. However, the formal literary elements of this passage in the Bisitun inscription, when paired with other traces in the corpus of Achaemenid inscriptions, reveals an imperial interest in governing the pastoral populations of Central Asia and challenges the confrontational relationship preserved in Achaemenid glyptic and other arts. Rather, the textual record of Achaemenid interactions with nomadic populations demonstrates both an openness to engaging with nomadic state institutions and sufficient knowledge to manipulate these institutions towards their own ends. Building on work that has been done to understand nomadic state power in Inner Asia, we can reevaluate the texts of the Achaemenid Empire to

gain a better idea of how Achaemenid imperial power extended not just to the city and town, but the pastoral communities of Central Asia as well.

Achaemenid and Hellenistic Administrative Koines from Egypt to Bactria

Brian Muhs[1], Tasha Vorderstrasse[1]
[1] University of Chicago

It will be argued here that the Achaemenid, Hellenistic, and Parthian empires encouraged their institutions and officials to use standardized accounting systems for transparency and accountability, thereby creating administrative 'koines' or communities of practice that extended into Central Asia. Transfer accounting systems employ orders for payment and receipts for payment to document individual transfers, which were summarized in running accounts and balanced accounts. They have a long history in Egypt and Mesopotamia, but in the Achaemenid Period they became more widely distributed geographically. Examples can be found in the Demotic temple archive from Ayn Manawir in the Kharga Oasis in the Egyptian Western Desert, in the Persepolis Fortification and Treasury Archives, and in the Aramaic documents from Bactria. Institutions across the Hellenistic world employed similar accounting systems, in Greek and Demotic from royal banks and temples in Ptolemaic Egypt, and in Greek and Aramaic documents from Bactria and Ai Khanoum. Such accounting systems continued to be used in the post-Hellenistic Parthian Empire as indicated by the Parthian-language ostraca from Nisa in Parthia (modern Turkmenistan) and the Akkadian tablets of the Raḫimesu archive, which were found in the 19th century outside of controlled archaeological excavations but appear to be from Babylon. This paper will compare the evidence for transfer accounting systems from Central Asia with better known examples from Egypt and Mesopotamia, to argue for state-sponsored spread of their use.

Klearchos and the Delphic Maxims of Ai Khanoum (northeast Afghanistan)

Jeffrey D. Lerner[1]
[1] Wake Forest University

The oldest monument found at the Hellenistic Baktrian site of Ai Khanoum was the temenos of the city's presumed founder Kineas. Two inscriptions from the monument were recovered: a dedicatory epigram made by a certain Klearchos, the second contains a stele with the Delphic maxims. The standard interpretation of the identity of Klearchos holds that he was a philosopher from Soloi and disciple of Aristotle. He is believed to have visited the city while on a mission to dispense morality and Hellenic culture. I argue that this reconstruction of Klearchos' supposed journey to the easternmost limits of the Hellenistic world is hardly convincing. There is simply no evidence that the Delphic aphorisms were engraved at Ai Khanoum and other cities yet to be found, as the result of the famed philosopher's visit, simply because he had a passing interest in the morality. Had he in fact made such an expedition, we should expect that some author who preserved his work, like Josephos or Diogenes, would have remarked on it, but nothing of the kind exists. I propose a different identification of this Klearchos and consequently of his relationship to Ai Khanoum. The result likewise leads to a new date for when Klearchos lived as well as when he might have set up his epigram and the Delphic maxims.

Golden Monsters and 'Monstrous' Bodies: A Trans Archaeology of the Tillya Tepe Burials and Its Implications for Identity amongst Steppic Cultures

Charlotte Howley[1], James Scherrer[1]
[1] University of California, Los Angeles

The 1978-9 discovery of the Tillya-tepe burials in northern Afghanistan occasioned much debate, due to richness of their grave goods and the breadth of cultural influences represented, with glassware from the Mediterranean, mirrors from China, and four-lobed daggers from the Altai. This has led many interpretations of the ethnicity of these graves, from "Scytho-Bactrians" to "Yuehzhi proto-Kushans". The genders of these burials are also much debated, especially following Davis-Kimball's (2000) interpretation that graves 1; 5 and 6 contained "priestesses" and graves 2 and 3 "warrior-priestesses". Most strikingly she assigns the status "eunuch warrior-priest/enaree" to burial 4, connecting it to "the orgiastic cult of… Aphrodite Ourania-Astarte". This exemplifies Stryker's concept of the "monstrous body", where bodies departing from imposed binary gender systems are othered and fetishised. We contend that Tillya-tepe represents an ideal case study for reinterpretation, based on Weismantel's 'Transgender Archaeology' (2013). This calls for a radical 'ungendering' of the archaeological record, where a binary world of men and women is not imposed upon the past through anthropological sexing. Moreover, this methodology suggests an ancient conception of the body as "a hybrid creation, assembled after birth and multiple in its identities and origins…". Perhaps, like the hybrid 'monsters' of the Tillya-tepe gold, we should view these burials as bodies in flux, generating gendered and ethnic identities in real time, in the liminal space between nomadic and settled lifeways, between the Parthian and Kushan empires.

The Stoltikoff Plate: Who is the Lady in the Middle?

JoAnn Scurlock[1]
[1] Elmhurst College

The Stoltikoff plate is a Bactrian Silver plate now housed in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris (Inv. 56.366). The alignment of the Stoltikoff plate's iconography with the calendar has been ably performed by Franz Grenet and it is revealed as a cycle of the seasons in a calendar originally beginning in Spring and continuing round to the next Spring following the trajectory of the sun. But a number of problems remain including not only the exact identification of the figures round the edges of the plate but also any viable suggestion as to the identity of the female figure in the center of the plate. Several suggestions have been made: Anahita (the traditional interpretation), Spandarmad or Spenta Armaiti (Boris Marshak), and most recently Nanaya (Judith Lerner). She is, I will argue none of the above, but instead another goddess altogether, who is depicted on Kushan coins and in a sculpture found in Ghandara.

7C. What's Up With That?: Museum Objects that Defy Interpretation (Workshop) (Georgian)

Chair(s): Ashley Arico, Art Institute of Chicago; Carl Walsh, New York University; Jen Thum, Harvard Art Museums

Artifacts from the Storeroom: Antioch's Material Culture at the Harvard Art Museums

Nicole Berlin[1], Caitlin Clerkin[2]
[1] The David Museum at Wellesley College, [2] Harvard Art Museums

The Excavating Antioch: The Archaeology of an Ancient City project seeks to reconnect artifacts from ancient Antioch, which have been largely stored in museum storerooms for nearly a century without further analysis, with their corresponding excavation archive at Princeton University. Among these objects are three particularly enigmatic items housed at the Harvard Art Museums: an inscribed amulet, a stamp seal (?), and a terracotta disc adorned with gold leaf. In this brief talk, we will present these artifacts and invite the audience to share their insights regarding their dating and function. Two of these objects originate from sealed contexts at Antioch, further enhancing their potential to illuminate daily life in

the ancient city. Through this collaborative exploration, we aim to deepen our understanding of Antioch's material culture and foster meaningful discussions about its historical significance.

A Mysterious Shield Boss (?) from the David-Weill Collection

Lynley J. McAlpine[1]
[1] San Antonio Museum of Art

The 1972 sale of David David-Weill's collection of Luristan bronzes included a bronze "plaque" along with the following comment: "This plaque, of which we know no other example, does not seem to originate from Luristan, although it may have been brought there by some Mongol warrior." After the object was donated to the San Antonio Museum of Art in 1991, it was exhibited with a label describing it as, "Shield boss decorated with a gorgon head, Etruscan, ca. 7th-5th century B.C." The decoration of the slightly convex bronze object depicts the face of a monster resembling, in some details, gorgons' heads known from ancient Mediterranean art. Nonetheless, we have found no parallel for its dot-engraving technique in Greek, Roman, or Etruscan craftsmanship. Specialists in Asian art have similarly expressed doubts that it came from Western or Central Asia. Identifying the type of tool used to engrave the design could assist us in understanding its origins. This unusual object may provide a useful illustration of the fact that a supposedly "good pedigree" from an old, well-known collection is no guarantee of authenticity.

This Boot ain't Made for Walking

Amy E Barron[1]
[1] Fleming College

Ceramic boot vessels, seriously, what are these things? Throughout the regions of Anatolia and Northwestern Iran, dating from 1800-800 BCE, have been found a range of small clay vessels designed to look like boots with upturned toes. While the individual items may vary quite a bit, they can be grouped into a range of typologies, and though rare, exist tucked away in the collections of many large museums. Trying to discover the meaning of these odd items is made even more problematic by the fact that few come from archaeological contexts, much more commonly appearing direct from the hands of antique dealers and collectors. What clues can excavations and textual material give us to the purpose of these artifacts? Are they funerary objects for libation or burning (yes, the dreaded 'ritualistic' purposes)? Or could that have a legal connotation to seal a deal? Is there a greater symbolism that we are missing? And, most concerningly, for an uncommon type of artifact with unclear purpose, design, and provenance, can we even be certain that every example in our museums is a legitimate artifact at all?

A Sacred Relic or a Modern Misunderstanding? The Curious Case of TKSM 21/676

Lauren Cook[1]
[1] Johns Hopkins University

21/676, a Neo-Assyrian tablet on display in the Sacred Treasury, a museum of sacred relics in Istanbul's Topkapı Palace, stands out visually and historically from the reliquaries, swords, and banners that make up this didactic and devotional space. The tablet which contains a letter written to the Neo-Assyrian king Esarhaddon is labeled as a dry ablution stone, but its status as a religious artifact remains contested. In my presentation, I will discuss its conflicting provenience histories and explore what its origin narratives tell us about the development of The Sacred Treasury as a public space and the relationship between the Islamic and pre-Islamic Middle East. Some of the available literature on the tablet reasserts its sacred nature, claiming that it was used by the Prophet Muhammed for dry ablution during the ghaza. Within this provenience narrative one is called to interrogate whether the tablet's materiality made it suitable for use in religious rites. Other analyses of the tablet have claimed that its current display in The Sacred Treasury can be owed to archival errors made in nineteenth century prior to the establishment of the Istanbul Archaeological Museum. This provenience narrative leads one to ask questions around the circulation of tablets prior to the foundation of bureaucratic apparatuses which dealt with the excavation, analysis and display of ancient material. Nevertheless, both narratives lead us to the tantalizing question of how the object ended up on display in Istanbul. My presentation explores how we can approach objects with conflicting provenience histories.

Egyptian or Nubian? Puzzling Through A Curious Painted Vase from the the Royal Cemetery at Kerma

Carl R. Walsh[1], Elizabeth J. Minor[2]
[1] New York University, [2] Cal Poly San Luis Obispo

In researching some of the painted pottery from one of the final royal tumuli at Kerma, the authors encountered a strange painted vase that is unlike anything seen at the site and in Bronze Age Nubia. Now in the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, the pot seems to be Egyptian in shape and fabric, but features painted decoration that is highly unusual and which the authors have struggled to find good comparanda for. We present the pot and hope someone can help us identify the ware and any possible comparisons!

A Blue Jackal-headed Jar Stopper at the Art Institute of Chicago

Ashley Arico[1]
[1] Art Institute of Chicago

In 1942, a jar stopper in the form of a jackal's head (AIC 1942.642) entered the Art Institute of Chicago's collection as part of a large accession of ancient glass objects. Although the stopper's shape resembles that of canopic jars topped with the head of Duamutef (one of the Four Sons of Horus responsible for protecting the deceased's organs), its medium—a vitreous blue material—does not. A handful of blue glass "Egyptian" jar stoppers in the shape of animal heads from other collections have been identified as fakes, but thus far an exact parallel for the Art Institute stopper has not been identified. Scholars' comments in the object file come down on both sides of the debate—that it is a true antiquity or an early 1900s CE fabrication. This presentation will seek answers to the questions of when this object was made and for what purpose. It will also reflect on the challenges of researching dubious objects when many remain unpublished in largely inaccessible museum storerooms, making it difficult to identify comparanda that could in turn shed light on the market for "antiquities" during the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

"A Salve for Your Snake Bites"? An Enigmatic 'Cippus' at the Harvard Art Museums

Jen Thum[1]
[1] Harvard University

In the depths of the Covid-19 pandemic, when we all had health and wellness on our minds, I took some time to do some at-home research on a much-loved object at the Harvard Art Museums. On view since the museums' renovation in 2014, this Horus on the Crocodiles "Magical Stela" had been a mainstay in my university-level teaching as well as public tours about ancient Egypt. I had many questions about it, because it seemed quite unlike other examples of this type. The more I looked, the more unique features I found. I wrote a matter-of-fact sounding online article for the museums' website about this stela and gave a live online talk. And I nearly published it in a Festschrift before I thought to myself: how many things have to be "unique" before you get suspicious about an artifact? So, did I almost publish a fake? Would that matter? Was

part of the problem that I was spending time "with" the stela online, rather than up-close and in person? How does this jive with what we know of the provenance of this object--that it was bequeathed by Harvard alumnus Gerhardt Liebmann in 1991, along with several other works, some "suspicious" and some not? Help me solve the mystery of whether it's even worth looking further into the authenticity of this artifact--for pedagogical, Egyptological, or provenance-related reasons all!

An Ancient Egyptian Toy? (Virtual)
Georgia Barker[1]
[1] British Museum

Among the ancient Egyptian artefacts in the British Museum is a moveable wooden figure of a dog leaping over a bound human which is currently classified as a toy (EA26254). Other examples of animal figures with at least one moving component are known, though they are few in number, with examples including a cat with a string to open and close the mouth (EA15671), a mouse with a moving lower jaw and tail (EA65512), and a leaping dog with mouth operated by a lever (MMA 40.2.1). Their similarity with toys today has regularly caused them to be classified as toys. However, there is limited research and contextual documentation for such figures, causing their classification to be uncertain. The British Museum's dog and bound figure is distinct from these others as it is the only known moveable figure to show an animal in a dominant position over a human. Is this figure a toy that could have been played with by children? Or is it a religious or ritual object associated with the symbolism of the destruction of enemies? This paper will present the results of new research on animal figures with moveable components and will seek comparanda from other cultures in order to gain insight into the significance and purpose of moveable figures as well as ideas about how to correctly categorise toys among archaeological finds.

The "Kassite Handle" of the Turin Museum of Antiquities: An Enigmatic Object and Its Epigraphic Parallels (Virtual)
Elena Devecchi[1]
[1] Università degli Studi di Torino

The Museum of Antiquities in Turin houses a limestone alabaster artifact inscribed with a cuneiform text, commonly referred to as the "Kassite handle." Originally part of the Egyptian Museum's collection, its provenance remains obscure, with no clear archival evidence linking it to known acquisitions. Previously identified as either a mace-head or a handle, its precise purpose remains undetermined. As first observed by Alfonso Archi, the artifact's three-line inscription closely resembles Kassite-period seal legends. Recent research has further established a direct parallel with the legend of a Kassite cylinder seal in the British Museum. By reexamining the inscription and incorporating new analyses of the object itself, this study aims to provide new insights into the object's interpretation and cultural significance.

General Discussion

7D. Experiments in Critical Reading: Ancient Literature and Modern Theory I (Arlington)

Chair(s): Jane Gordon, University of Chicago; Margaret Geoga, University of Chicago

"Was the Narrow-Canal not its shining canal… was the Honey-Well not its well of sweet fluid?" Erotic Haunting in Nippur's Riverine and Agricultural Landscape in Enlil & Ninlil ll.1-12
Ishbell Russell[1]
[1] Johns Hopkins University

When does a landscape become haunted? And how can we think of eroticism as a kind of haunting? This paper explores these questions through the 12-line prologue of the Sumerian literary text Enlil & Ninlil. Across a series of parallel rhetorically marked nominal clauses, this prologue lays out the city's riverine and agricultural landscape of canals, quays, wells, and fields. It highlights some features well known from Nippur's historical geography, such as the kar-ĝeštin-na ('quay of wine'), alongside others that are otherwise unattested and incorporate rare or esoteric writings, such as kar-a-sar (perhaps 'Quay-(of)-pursuing-waters'). Considering recent work on Sumerian erotic metaphor, I argue the names and descriptions of these features convey significant erotic subtext through allusions to penetration, sexual organs, and the fluid products of both male and female sexual arousal. But what does it mean to 'eroticise' a landscape, particularly in the prologue of a text which depicts non-normative, and arguably violent, sexual activity? Here, I look to contemporary critical approaches to 'hauntology' and the confluence of eroticism and 'monstrosity,' particularly Jack Halberstam's work on sexual perversion and the gothic mode. Ultimately, by reading these lines in dialogue with modern gothic eroticism, I suggest they have a potent erotic charge which may 'haunt' the text with sexualised foreboding and situate the sexual transgression in the narrative proper within an 'eerily' erotic environment.

Contemporary Transmedia Storytelling and the Problem of Egyptian Mythical Tradition
Andreas Pries[1]
[1] University of Würzburg

It is not only since Eliade's research that myths have been understood as narratives in illo tempore that link the archetypal world of the gods with the realities of people's lives and attempt to explain them. In critical continuation of the approaches of the myth and ritual school, the focus of today's research is primarily on the function of myths – and its recording form is, indeed, often that of an "applied narrative" (Walter Burkert). As for the text artefacts that pass on Egyptian myths, it is obvious that they were composed for "practical" purposes such as drama and ritual or, debatebly, also for mundane storytelling. The set of mythèmes on which the prominent Horus myth is based was used for texts (and images) of varying materiality and mediality. Concepts of authorship did not play a role. Mutatis mutandis, the circumstances of ancient text production and transmission appear comparable to modern transmedia storytelling, which is also a new trend in media studies research. An introductory overview is M. Schiller, Transmedia Storytelling: New Practices and Audiences, in Stories: Screen Narrative in the Digital Era, ed. I. Christie /A. van den Oever, Amsterdam 2018. This will be contrasted with the Horus myth and its varying instantiations, especially with The Contendings of Horus and Seth, a long and convoluted narrative on papyrus and The Great Myth of Horus, a cult drama inscribed as a kind of "graphic novel" on the enclosing wall of the main temple of Edfu. Where necessary, this evidence will be supported by other texts.

Response
Madadh Richey[1]
[1] Brandeis University

Approaching Hypertextuality in Old Babylonian Encounters with Sumerian Literature
Jana Matuszak[1]
[1] University of Chicago

This experimental parallel reading of Gerard Genette's wonderfully lucid Palimpsests: Literature in the Second Degree and the wonderfully obscure Sumerian mock hymn The Evil Mouth

explores what insights we can derive from pairings of ancient texts and modern theory that do not easily seem to match. Although Genette takes a remarkably detailed and comprehensive approach to hypertextuality that allows for several permutations of moods and relations to the hypotext (parody, pastiche, travesty, caricature, transposition, and forgery), The Evil Mouth still does not squarely fit into any of these categories – and why should it? For the purpose of this talk, I will largely leave aside the obvious complicating factors that hamper our understanding of a text as unusual (or dare I say unique?) as The Evil Mouth: lacking context, we will quite simply never be able to securely determine its function, purpose, or intention. However, it was clearly composed in response to various 'traditional' Sumerian texts and genres, making it 'palimpsestuous' in the Genettian/Lejeunian sense. Rather than trying to locate The Evil Mouth in one of Genette's half-serious, half-ironic diagrams, I take inspiration from his taxonomic approach to tease out the hypertextual permutations specific to this Sumerian text. Considering aspects of all six forms of hypertextuality indicated above, I probe whether they can help us define a distinctly Sumero-Babylonian 'poetics of subversion' that accounts for the critical, creative, and likely humorous ways in which Old Babylonian scholar-poets read and wrote Sumerian poetry.

Word|Doubt: Pragmatics of Singular Semantics in Papyrus Berlin 3024"

Amr El Hawary[1]
[1] University of Bonn

The Dispute of a Man with His Ba" is a remarkable text, unique in its exploration of life's value and the nature of death within a single papyrus. Its reflective, philosophical language, rich in vocabulary and abstraction, presents significant challenges for translation and interpretation. The text's singularity complicates its contextualization within Middle Kingdom literature. For two centuries, Egyptological research has struggled to contextualize such texts. Traditional philological and historical approaches and linguistic structuralism have proven insufficient. Scholars like Richard Parkinson have explored social energy and the materiality of the text through new philology, while Gerald Moers has investigated Egyptian literature's fictionality from a literary anthropological perspective. The text embodies a postcolonial dilemma, confronting us with its otherness. Whether the context for understanding its words lies within the sentence or beyond the text is still debated. Modern interpretations often frame the text philosophically, potentially imposing a Western lens. Fragmentation, rare vocabulary, and the topic's isolation have led to interpretations suggesting foreign influences regarding themes of despair. These discussions are often driven by translating individual words through modern expectations. My contribution offers a lexical investigation, examining the text's emic Egyptian pragmatic semantics. I aim to demonstrate how scribes innovatively created lexemes from minimal units of meaning (sign/morpheme/phoneme), contrasting with the modern focus on the sentence. By analyzing how these signs harmonize to create meaning and engaging with the text's isotopies (Eco), I employ a deconstructive approach (Derrida) to uncover meaning from within, interpreting the words as expressions of a desire for meaningful existence.

Response

Sophus Helle[1]
[1] Independent Researcher

7E. Archaeology of Cyprus II (Berkeley & Clarendon)

Chair(s): Kevin Fisher, University of British Columbia; Catherine Kearns, University of Chicago

An Urban Landscape Under the Microscope: a Multi-method Geoarchaeological Analysis of Lime Production in Late Bronze Age Cyprus

Hannah M. Herrick[1]
[1] Simon Fraser University

Pre-industrial lime products (such as lime plasters and mortars) are frequently encountered at archaeological sites in West Asia, North Africa, and the wider Mediterranean region. Investigating the archaeological remains of lime products or their production sites opens up a wide range of analytical possibilities. In this case study, we demonstrate the application of petrographic analysis and Fourier-transform infrared microscopy (micro-FTIR) on archaeological lime plasters and mortars from Late Bronze Age (LBA) Kalavasos-Ayios Dhimitrios (K-AD), Cyprus—by analyzing experimental lime plasters created from local geological materials alongside archaeological samples, we can attempt to reconstruct the raw materials, process, and conditions (such as firing temperature, chemical efficiency, etc.) used by LBA builders in constructing the anthropogenic landscape at K-AD. This paper will discuss the recent results of this study, and the evidence suggesting that LBA builders selectively exploited the area's geological resources to facilitate the creation of a diverse range of lime plaster "recipes".

Erimi-Pitharka in the Kouris Valley in the Late Bronze Age: A Comparative Ceramic Analysis

Brigid A. Clark[1], Lærke Recht[2]
[1] University of Haifa, [2] University of Cambridge

The Kouris Valley in south-central Cyprus has been extensively surveyed and excavated throughout the 19th and 20th centuries. The valley, formed around the now-dry Kouris River, is rich in archaeological sites, spanning from the Neolithic, through the Chalcolithic and the Bronze Age up to the Roman and Byzantine city of Kourion on the coast. The valley was an active settlement and burial area in the Late Bronze Age, and important sites include Erimi-Pitharka, Alassa (Paliotaverna and Mano Mantilaris), Episkopi-Bamboula, Episkopi-Phaneromeni, and some activity at Erimi-Kafkalla. Through a comparative ceramic analysis, this paper will examine the role of Erimi-Pitharka and other Late Bronze Age sites in the Kouris Valley. Preliminary analysis of the Erimi-Pitharka ceramic assemblage demonstrates a predominance of vessel shapes and wares associated with production and storage, while fine tablewares are less common. Along with the archaeological contexts, architecture and workshop installations, this suggests a site dedicated to agricultural production and storage. This will be compared to the known ceramic assemblages from other Late Bronze Age sites in the Kouris Valley to understand their relations and roles within the valley.

Technologies of Tradition: A Compositional, Technological and Experimental Investigation into Utilitarian Ceramics from Late Bronze Age Enkomi, Cyprus

Chase Minos[1]
[1] The Cyprus Institute

The Late Bronze Age (c. 1650 to 1200 BCE) is typified by major social, economic and political changes on the island of Cyprus, including the establishment of coastal trading hubs as well as the development of ceramic technology including the introduction of the potter's wheel. At the site of Enkomi, one of these prominent trading centers, previous research into the ceramics of the site have tended to focus on the finely decorated wares such as White Slip, Bichrome, Base Ring or White Painted Wheelmade Ware III, and much less on the utilitarian pottery. This research then focuses on legacy material from the site of Enkomi, at which and to date, there has been no exhaustive archaeometric study of utilitarian pottery from the site. As such this paper presents part of my PhD research

which is a technological and compositional investigation into the raw materials used to produce Plain White and Red/Black Slip ware from the Late Cypriot I-IIB period (c. 1650-1450 BCE). In order to study these wares it employed the combination of ceramic petrography and geochemical methods (hh-XRF, SEM-EDS, ICP-MS) with experimental archaeology, the results of which are a comprehensive analysis of utilitarian pottery. By focusing on the earlier stages of the chaîne opératoire (raw material selection and processing), this paper will explore the role of the environment in the evolving potting technologies on the island of Cyprus for the production of the understudied plain or utilitarian ceramics during the Late Bronze age.

Bridging the Gaps: Archaeometric Investigations into the Late Iron Age Pottery Production in the Region of Paphos

Genevieve Maachou[1], Lara Maritan[2]
[1] Brown University, [2] University of Padua

This paper focuses on the later phases of the Cypriot Iron Age in Paphos (ca. 750-310 BCE), which is located in southwestern Cyprus. Despite the significance of this era, the scarcity of excavated domestic contexts, particularly for the Cypro-Archaic and Classical periods, poses significant challenges in reconstructing everyday life and establishing comprehensive ceramic technologies. This study addresses the gap by focusing on an assemblage of Late Iron Age ceramics recovered from stratigraphic contexts beneath the Hellenistic foundation layers of Nea Paphos, specifically in the residential district of Maloutena, and in the Agora. While the city of Nea Paphos is well-documented from the Hellenistic period onward, knowledge about its earlier phases remains sparse. This research aims to bridge that gap by employing archaeometric methods and the chaîne opératoire approach to study craft production during this understudied period. Through scientific analyses, it seeks to shed light onto the technological practices and the socio-economic dynamics of the city-kingdom of Paphos. By situating these findings within the broader network of Palaepaphos and Nea Paphos, this paper will contribute to our understanding of the cultural and technological mechanisms of the Late Iron Age. It explores potential continuities or discontinuities between this period at the onset of the Hellenistic era, challenging assumptions that major changes occurred primarily with the arrival of the Ptolemies. Ultimately, it highlights the agency of local communities in shaping transitions before external influences took hold.

Recycling Paphos From Hellenism to Tourism: A diachronic archaeological investigation of architectural reuse in Nea Paphos Cyprus (Virtual)

Candace Richards[1]
[1] University of Sydney

Throughout the 20th century, considerable research has been undertaken within the ancient city limits of Nea Paphos, Cyprus, and its related necropolises, unearthing significant monuments of Hellenistic, Roman, Byzantine, Umayyad, Crusader, Venetian, and Ottoman period occupation of the area. While it has long been known that architectural fragments and other materials have moved around the ancient city, reused for the construction or renovations of civic and religious monuments, there has, to date, been no comprehensive study of architectural reuse throughout the town and little in-depth research to understand the practicalities, motivations and culture of reuse and recycling of Nea Paphos throughout its history. This paper introduces the 'Recycling Paphos' research project that aims to address this gap in the scholarship. The 'Recycling Paphos' research project employs new methodologies to identify and record the life-cycle of artefacts in the field, to quantify the extent of reuse practices in the ancient city of Nea Paphos from its Hellenistic foundation to its present day. To date, this project has catalogued over 600 instances of reuse and recycling, assessing both in-situ and floating architectural elements with a focus on determining how many times a single item might be reused. This paper will discuss the methodologies behind this research and reveal how new studies in reuse and recycling go beyond spolia studies and site taphonomy analyses, to understand reuse as a continuing cultural practice and reframe how we think about reuse and recycling activities as part of circular economy networks in the pre-modern world.

7F. Interdisciplinary Approaches to Seals, Sealing Practices, and Administration I (Worksho)p (Studio 1)

Chair(s): Pınar Durgun, The Morgan Library and Museum

A View through Clay Sealings—Defining Administrative Space and Boundaries in Eshnunna's Palace of the Rulers

Clemens D. Reichel[1]
[1] University of Toronto

For studies of ancient administrative contexts clay sealings have provided a wide array of informational components. Impressions on their backs can reveal their primary functions as container or door sealings while seals impressed on their fronts, through legends or visual narratives, can identify the agents behind production and commodity movements, or administrators that controlled storage space. In addition to such elements attached to the objects themselves archaeological data—notably their places of recovery in either primary or discarded contexts—can employ sealings in the detection of the physical layout of an administration in a building, revealing otherwise invisible spatial boundaries between administrative units and the movements of commodities between them associated with specific agents. This study will look at the Palace of the Rulers at Eshnunna (modern Tell Asmar). Built around 2,070 BC as the Ur III governor's residence it remained the seat of the city's rulers for 200 years following its independence from Ur in 2026 BC. Aside from 1,200 tablets spread across seven major palace levels some 200 clay sealings were found in it. This paper will discuss their quantitative and spatial distribution across these levels, their association with architectural units, revealing how their data allows inferences on spatial boundaries between administrative spaces and the authorities that controlled them and interacted with them. The emerging picture, which suggests significant changes in space management over time, will be evaluated for its merits, its limitations, and its potential to form a template for similar case studies.

Ties that Bind: Sealing, Bodies, and Violence in Early Mesopotamia

Sarah J. Scott[1]
[1] Wagner College

Acts of violence to the body, such as impalement, branding, tattooing, and flaying all of which are amply evidenced in ancient Mesopotamia, were directly linked to the destruction and production of identity beyond the physical being. Focusing on later fourth and third millennium visual and textual evidence, this paper will present the relationship between the enactment of bodily violence and the social practice of sealing as essential components of material culture informing the social memory of ancient Mesopotamia. Cylinder seals and sealings have served as artifacts of inquiry to probe ancient Mesopotamian visual culture, administrative practice, and history. However, as wearable objects and impressions on lumps of clay that 'locked' mobile containers such as jars, baskets, bags, and storerooms, as well as on clay cuneiform documents seals and sealings are ubiquitous objects, carrying encyclopedic visual information, embedded within the social matrix of ancient Mesopotamia. Informed by Hamilakis' theory of sensorial archaeology and affective multi-temporal practice, I will examine sealing practices and imagery not solely as carriers of visual information or as artifacts of administration, but as sites of violence and active agents in the production of community.

Inanna's Conquest of a Mountain: Another Connection Between Akkadian/Sargonic Cylinder Seals and Sumerian Literary Texts

Jayme Capazo[1]
[1] University of California, Los Angeles

Scholars have previously argued that three cylinder seals from the Akkadian/Sargonic period (2350-2150 B.C.E.) depict scenes from the Sumerian myth Inanna and Ebiḫ. This text recounts how the goddess Inanna defeats a mountain god Ebiḫ for refusing to show her reverence. This argument is complicated both by the fact that the textual tradition of Inanna and Ebiḫ is not attested until later in the Old Babylonian Period (1894-1595 B.C.E.), and also by its reliance on an unclear methodology. However, Piotr Steinkeller has proposed a way forward for determining the relationship between early seal motifs and later literary texts. Using Steinkeller's method, this paper will conduct an iconographical analysis of cylinder seals that depict the goddess Inanna and a conquered mountain deity. It will then compare the visual narrative with the textual one to argue that while they are related, they do exhibit important differences. Throughout this paper, I will consider the difficulties in applying Steinkeller's approach and reiterate the need for more studies exploring connections between glyptic and texts.

Props and Scenery: Understanding the Role of Inanimate Elements in the Seals, Sealings, and Tablets of the Indus Civilization

Marta Ameri[1]
[1] Colby College

While the cities of the Indus valley lack the monumental architecture or large-scale sculpture found in contemporary Egypt and Mesopotamia, their artistic production is defined by their extensive corpus of miniature arts — seals, seal impressions and molded tablets — found at sites throughout the Greater Indus Valley. The iconography found on these tiny, but exceptionally modeled, artifacts consists primarily of standardized representations of a single-horned bovine commonly referred to as the Harappan "unicorn", similarly standardized images of other animals found in South Asia and a number of mysterious creatures, scenes, and narratives that have to date defied interpretation. While the human, animal, and hybrid representations found on these materials have been examined in some depth, less attention has been paid to the inanimate imagery that often accompanies them. These motifs range from the deeply mysterious elements like the multi-part stands placed in front of the Indus unicorns to seemingly inconspicuous objects like trees and feeding troughs. Yet the tiny surface of a seal or molded tablet, as well as the role they seem to play in conveying the visual language of the Indus Civilization, means that even the smallest element must have been chosen and placed for a reason. This paper considers the inanimate elements found on Indus seals, sealings, and molded tablets as the props and scenery that set the stage for the living beings that inhabit the visual worlds created in the glyptic of the Harappan world.

7G. Archaeology of Anatolia II (Studio 2)

Chair(s): Nancy Amelia Highcock, Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford; Oya Topçuoğlu, Northwestern University

An EBIV Burial Ground at Oylum Höyük

Sarah E. Harrington[1], Elizabeth F. Carter[1]
[1] University of California, Los Angeles

A large number of burials from squares Y-Z-8-9 at Oylum Höyük near Kilis in southeastern Türkiye were excavated in 1989-1990 by Carter at the invitation of the project director at that time, Prof. Engin Özgen. They range in date from the Early Bronze III to the Late Bronze Age II and are in the process of being published. This presentation focuses on a burial ground of jar and pithos burials adjacent to a megalithic tomb of EB IV date found during those excavations. The stone-built tomb was looted, but the examination of local ceramic collections, and toggle pins, shells, and fragmentary skeletal remains found during cleaning confirmed its identification. Directly south of the tomb, a rich pithos burial of a man abuts the megalithic tomb. Five meters farther to the south, a collection of burials are densely packed. Skeletal analysis by Ayşen Açıkkol of

Sivas Cumhuriyet University identifies four of these burials as females ranging in age from 8 to 45. One male pithos burial lies separated to the west. The character of these tombs, where pithoi burials surround a stone built tomb, is attested at nearby Tell Jerablus and at Gre Virike on the Euphrates. Grave goods, including ceramics, jewelry, and cylinder seals are consistent with other sites in the Middle Euphrates Valley and show ties to the larger region of EBA Syro-Anatolia. The finds and characteristics of the Oylum EBIV burials provide a window into local funerary customs and social relationships in the late third millennium BCE.

Megacity Adaptation to Megadrought on the Anatolian Plateau

Katherine Burge[1], Harvey Weiss[2], Fikri Kulakoğlu[3]
[1] University of Michigan, [2] Yale University, [3] Ankara University

The Yale-Ankara Kültepe project (YAK) conducted the first two seasons of excavations on the acropolis of 300-hectare Kültepe in 2024 and 2025 to analyze megacity adaptive responses to the 4.2 ka BP megadrought. The occupational sequence from the late Early Bronze Age to the early Middle Bronze Age, ca. 2400-1800 BCE, has been redefined with (1) ca. 2400 BCE monumental public buildings, including the "Kerpiç Palace", (2) ca. 2200 BCE abandonment and modest reoccupation, (3) ca. 1950 BCE robust Middle Bronze Age resettlement, similar to the occupational sequences in adjacent northern Mesopotamia and the Levant. The Kültepe abandonment and reoccupation coincide with the onset and the termination of the 4.2 ka BP megadrought documented in high-resolution paleoclimate proxies from the western to the eastern Mediterranean, across the Anatolian plateau, to the Iranian plateau. The new YAK project excavations thereby provide the contexts for high-resolution radiocarbon dating and stable isotope analyses of the sequential abandonment, collapse, and eventual megacity adaptive agricultural strategies.

Karaköy Kale Tepesi: A Hittite Fortress and Urban Settlement in the Southwestern Borderlands

Omur Harmansah[1], Peri Johnson[1]
[1] University of Illinois at Chicago

Since 2010, the Yalburt Yaylası Archaeological Landscape Project has surveyed the southwestern borderlands of the Hittite Empire in the districts of Ilgın and Kadınhanı of Konya Province in Turkey. During the survey, Karaköy Kale Tepesi (Ilgın) was identified as a well-preserved Late Bronze Age fortress with a substantial lower town overlooking the narrows of the Bulasan River Valley, connecting the Ilgın and Atlantı plains. Its fortress is constructed of monumental ashlar blocks right above a copious spring; its water management system and the monumental structures surrounding the fortress present a new urban form for understanding Hittite regional centers. The team also documented the Hittite marl quarry of Yıldıztepe on a ridge connected by a saddle to the Kale Tepesi outcrop and only 1.2 km south-southeast of the fortress and the adjacent settlement of Bağlar Mevkii, which allowed the dating the construction of the fortress to 16th or early 15th century BCE. The proximity of this urban settlement to the Köylütolu Earthen Dam (known to have been built by the Hittite Great King Tudhaliya IV based on its Hieroglyphic Luwian inscription), confirmed that this is a key urban site for the entire region during the Late Bronze Age. In this paper, we report on the results of fieldwork carried out at Karaköy Kale Tepesi, using non-invasive methods of urban survey and landscape archaeology during the 2021 and 2025 seasons.

Sagalassos/Ağlasun: A Critical Public Archaeology Framework

Esma Demiryürek[1]
[1] Brown University

Since its inception in 1990, the Sagalassos Archaeological Research Project (Burdur, Türkiye) has been closely connected with the modern district of Ağlasun and its people. The Project adopted new considerations since the first decade of the 2000s in line with the changing paradigms within archaeology and emerging questions, such as to whom archaeology serves, who has the decisive power in issues regarding an archaeological site, and whether archaeologists should have responsibilities towards the general public. Thus, several initiatives were designed, developed, and implemented at Sagalassos and Ağlasun to organize and facilitate the relationship between archaeology and people. In this paper, which is based on my M.A. thesis (2025), these initiatives undertaken by the Project will be examined within the theoretical public archaeology framework as proposed by Matsuda and Okamura (2011). How economic, political, and social factors impacted the process and aftermath of these initiatives will be scrutinized in light of the interviews I conducted with people from Ağlasun in the 2024 excavation season, and with governmental actors in early 2025. Finally, I will discuss how follow-up research can be key to future archaeological project design.

7H. New Approaches to Ancient Animals III (The Loft)

Chair(s): Christine Mikeska, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill; Theo Kassebaum, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill

Handicap and Animals in Mesopotamia

Laura Battini[1]
[1] French Centre for Scientific Researches

When we talk about handicap and animals, we more often think of the important help of animals for disabled humans than of the handicap of the animal itself, reflecting our anthropocentric view. But like human beings, animals can also suffer from handicaps. Even the study of animals of the past cannot evade the issue of handicap. This is a difficult research topic, because neither texts nor images are plentiful. But handicap was (and still is) part of life on earth. Starting with the Šumma izbu, this paper investigates the problem of animal handicap in Mesopotamia.

The Goddess Gula and Her Dog

Trudy S. Kawami[1]
[1] Independent Researcher

The Akkadian goddess Gula and her Sumerian aspect Ninisina (Lady of Isin) have been associated in southern Mesopotamia with healing and with dogs since at least the early 2nd mill BCE. However, representations of the goddess with her dog are extremely rare in this period, so it is not clear what type of dog accompanied her. Only in the Kassite period (ca. 1495-1155 BCE) is Gula clearly shown, usually on kudurru, where she is enthroned in profile with outstretched arms, the head or forequarters of her dog often visible at the far side of her throne. The dog, which also appears by itself on Kassite seals, seems to be of moderate size having a compact body with slender legs, and a tail curving above the hindquarters. The dog has flat coat, upright ears and a narrow, almost pointed muzzle. Gula's supportive nature is emphasized by the fact that her animal is neither a powerful predator nor a magical mischwessen, but a normal-appearing domestic animal. Gula and/or her dog appear in Babylonian personal art (seals and figurines) in the first mill BCE, but rarely to the north in Assyria. This raises the possibility that her cultic imagery may have had regional or political aspects. Two unusual Neo-Assyrian cylinder seals show dogs in proximity to sick people, suggesting the presence of dogs in Assyrian curing rituals. This presentation will explore how Gula and her dog were depicted over time and how these images may form a substrate in Arab Christian legends and even in Sasanian belief.

Human-Animal Concepts in Chalcolithic Cyprus: An Interesting Pair of Pendants from Prasteio Mesorotsos

Christine Mikeska[1], Andrew McCarthy[2]

[1] University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, [2] University of Edinburgh

Images of human-animal hybrids, humans wearing headdresses with animal parts, and activities showing human-animal interactions are fairly widespread on the mainland of 4th-3rd millennia Southwest Asia. However, contemporary depictions of either human-animal hybrids or humans and animals in contact with one another are unusual in prehistoric Cyprus. The well-known cruciform figurines and pendants from Chalcolithic Cyprus, while sometimes using complex forms, rarely include references to animals or animal body parts. A pair of unusual bone pendants recently recovered from a pit at Prasteio Mesorotsos may provide new clues to the ways in which Cypriot communities perceived and engaged with animals. In particular, one of these cruciform pendants appears to depict an upright anthropomorphic figure with antlers. Comparing this iconography with contemporary depictions of headdresses and animal-human hybrids in the wider Near Eastern world, this paper examines the broader significance of human and animal representations in Cyprus. Specifically, this paper explores the possibility that these bone pendants represent the deliberate embodiment and perpetuation of a traditional hunting ethos at Chalcolithic Prasteio Mesorotsos even as herding became increasingly prevalent both at the site and across the island.

The Lion and the Bull: Animal Behavior and Imperial Ideology at Persepolis

Neville McFerrin[1]

[1] University of North Texas

At Persepolis, animals abound. In doorways from the Throne Hall to the Palace of Darius, royal heroes grapple with lions, bulls, and composite creatures. Lion and bull protomes gaze down upon the site's porticoes. Upon the reliefs of the Apadana, animal and human delegates process together towards the king, in a mode that underscores the agency and cooperation of both. In these reliefs, coercive and violent interactions are conspicuous in their absence. Indeed, while royal heroes may brandish weapons, and while delegates may lead their animal counterparts, horses do not pull against reins, nor do lions twist in pain. Instead, when the depicted behaviors of animals across the site are considered, even in those instances in which predator and prey interact, markers of fear and aggression, from extended claws to lowered horns, are as absent in the animals depicted upon the site as they are in encounters between humans. This paper focuses upon depictions of lions and bulls at Persepolis to argue that a focus on animal behavior, upon the ways in which the curve of a tail and the position of a hoof indicate the communicative potentials of living animals, offers the opportunity to reconsider the communicative potentials of these animals in depiction. It suggests that the careful articulation of these behaviors enables the reliefs of the site to undermine pre-existing imperial associations with long-standing motifs, creating a potential for the re-interpretation of interactions between animals and humans that itself prompts a reconsideration of the functioning of imperial systems.

There's No Such Thing as Sheep

Max Price[1]

University of Durham

The ability to make abstractions is an important part of cognition, but abstractions, by their very nature, place blinkers on perception of the world. Archaeological and anthropological theory has repeatedly and arguably productively questioned the existence of taken-for-granted ontologies, from chiefdoms to animals to the status of domestication. In that vein, and taking a radical approach to ontology that questions and rejects traditional conceptions surrounding the boundaries of the body, I present the case that there's no such thing as sheep. I focus instead on breaking up the ontological abstraction of "the sheep" along temporal and spatial axes. I reconfigure our gaze to see sheep as reconstituted grass, the excreta of bacteria, the congealed energies of pastoral labor; and as bundles of wool, meat, and bones. I take my analysis to the zooarchaeological analysis of ancient animal remains, and show that we zooarchaeologists may indeed be quite comfortable in rejecting the existence of sheep.

7I. Archaeology of the Near East: Bronze and Iron Ages (Whittier)

Chair(s): J. P. Dessel, University of Tennessee

Expressing Luxury in Iron Age IIB–IIC Judah: A Household Archaeology Approach

Reli Avisar[1]

[1] Tel Aviv University

Archaeologists examine luxury through the study of high-value materials, specialized craftsmanship, and patterns of consumption within different social contexts. In Judah, the absence of high-cost prestige items led scholars to suggest that expressions of luxury and social inequality were largely absent, either for economic or cultural reasons. However, applying household archaeology methods provides a more nuanced perspective on how wealth was expressed in domestic settings across different moments and sites. This paper examines household assemblages from several Judahite sites, in the Iron IIB (end of 8th century BCE) and Iron IIC (late 7th and early 6th centuries BCE). By analyzing architectural features, artifact distribution, and consumption patterns, I explore the variability in wealth expression across different settlements. The discussion considers Judah's economic and political transformations during these periods, including the impact of the Assyrian hegemony, to assess how shifts in governance and external influences shaped Judahite elite strategies for displaying social hierarchies. This approach offers new insights into social stratification and consumption behaviors within Judahite society.

Foreigners in the Aegean and ANE

Doug Hartman[1]

[1] University of Texas, Austin

The degree of connectivity and mutual influence between civilizations in the Aegean and the greater ANE world during the Middle and Late Bronze Ages is a matter of ongoing debate. Understandings and depictions of "foreignness" in iconographic and written sources can serve as a test-case to judge the measure of sociocultural connectivity between the Aegean and the neighboring civilizations to the east. As Flora Brooke Anthony demonstrates, non-Egyptians are represented distinctly from one another and from the Egyptians themselves in New Kingdom iconography, with clear leitmotifs evident in the imagery. Egyptians depict foreigners either as forces of isft, "chaos" to be conquered and subdued, or as tribute-bearers—symbols of exotic luxury and honor to be welcomed. Both depictions are variations on the same theme, where foreigners serve as a foil by which Egyptians gain honor by defeating them in battle or by imposing subservience to Egyptian Imperialism. These two basic themes are attested prominently in other ANE cultures as well, including later Hellenistic iconographic and literary sources. How then do earlier Minoan and Mycenaean civilizations compare to this ANE paradigm? In this essay, I will demonstrate that early Aegean sources reflect a marked distinction to the dominate ANE paradigm, which suggests limited influence of ANE culture on Aegean civilization in this area.

Middle Bronze Age Chronology of the Levant: An Update

Felix Höflmayer[1]

[1] Osterreichisches Archaologisches Institut

The past decade has seen signifcant advances in dating the Middle Bronze Age southern Levant. New radiocarbon sequences from several sites in Egypt and the Levant have challenged both the traditional and the low chronology and a new (high) chronological framework has been suggested. This paper presents a summary of the current evidence from an archaeological and radiocarbon point of view and discusses the synchronisation of the Levantine Middle Bronze Age with Egypt, Mesopotamia, and the Aegean. It further explores the historical implications of the high Middle Bronze Age chronology and calls for a new approach in chronological studies that is based on absolute calendrical dates and not on artificially constructed relative chronological phases.

Phoenician Transport Jars of the Iron Age II: Harbor-Based Production from Akko Bay to the Lebanese Coast

Paula Waiman-Barak[1], Gunnar Lehmann[2], Golan Shalvi[3], Zachary C. Dunseth[4], Charles Wilson[5], Ayelet Gilboa[6]

[1] Tel Aviv University, [2] Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, [3] University of Calgary, [4] University Of California-San Diego, [5] University of Chicago, [6] Haifa University

This study examines the emergence and expansion of Iron Age II Phoenician transport jar (TJ) production, building on previous research that refined their typology, evolution, and dating. This study integrates petrographic and FTIR analyses of over 230 TJs, comparative analysis of the Akko Bay tableware, and geological surveys. Four broad petrographic groups, corresponding to production regions—South Akko Bay, North Akko Bay to Tyre, South Lebanon, and Central Lebanon—were identified. During the Iron Age, sites in the Akko Bay were situated along the coast near brackish lagoons. Over millennia, extensive sediment deposition caused the shoreline to shift seaward, leaving formerly coastal sites further inland and burying ancient harbor environments. Our analysis indicates that TJ production was directly connected to these ancient environments. TJ production evolved in phases. In the Iron Age IIA, a single TJ type was made at Akko Bay, reflecting the independent Phoenician trade. By the Iron Age IIB–IIC, production broadened to multiple TJ types and workshops, possibly under Assyrian influence. TJs spread widely across the Levant, reaching Egypt, Cyprus, and perhaps Assyria. The discovery of early TJ production in the Akko Bay was unexpected, as previous research focused on Lebanon. This finding marks a significant shift in our understanding of Phoenician production and trade. Akko Bay thus emerges as a key but previously overlooked center in Phoenician maritime trade, reshaping our understanding of production and exchange networks in the region before, during and after the Assyrian occupation of the Levant.

7J. Urbanism and Polities in the Bronze and Iron Age Levant (White Hill)

Chair(s): Omer Sergi, Tel Aviv University; Daniel Master, Wheaton College; Karen Covello-Paran, Israel Antiquities Authority

The Power and Peril of Size: How Scale Shaped Possibility and Constraint at Late Bronze Age Hazor

Igor Kreimerman[1]

[1] Hebrew University

Hazor, the largest Bronze Age city in the Southern Levant, provides a significant framework for understanding the dynamics of urban scale and socio-political development in ancient Canaan. Its considerable size invites inquiry into the extent to which scale influences societal complexity. Does increased size merely amplify the attributes of smaller urban centers, or does it catalyze new forms of organization, interaction, and opportunity? Equally, how did Hazor address the distinct challenges that accompany large-scale settlement, particularly in managing resources, maintaining administrative coherence, and ensuring long-term survival? This lecture will examine Late Bronze Age Hazor through its urban planning, monumental architecture, material culture, trade networks, and literary sources. By analyzing these interconnected elements, it will explore how Hazor's scale shaped its historical trajectory, influenced its social and economic systems, and determined the strategies employed to sustain its prominence and manage the complexities of urban life.

Ceramic Production and Distribution under the Empire – A View from the Late Bronze Age Shephelah

Sabine Kleiman[1]

[1] Tel Aviv University

During the Late Bronze Age, the Shephelah was one of the most densely settled regions in the southern Levant. Its socio-political organization was based on a segmentation of land into royal cities with rather modest ruling families that dwelled in palatial centers and controlled the small, subordinated villages in their territory. With the start of the period the region came under Egyptian hegemony, which had a strong impact on the local culture and traditions. In this paper I present the results of a large scale analysis of ceramic production and distribution mechanisms that prevailed in the city-states of the Shephelah during that time. While employing the methods of provenance and techno-stylistic analysis, this paper sheds light on the actions and interactions of the different ancient communities: how they produced ceramics, how products had been distributed, how knowledge transfer took place, and to what extent these actions were influenced by the imperial system. It could be observed that every city-state produced its own ceramics in professional potter's workshops. Many of these workshops shared technological know-how and some were influenced by Egyptian production methods. Distribution of goods took place in-between the sites, mainly with the direct neighbor and still on a rather limited scale.

Egyptian Administrative Presence in the Sharon Plain? A View from Tel Zeror

Ofer Naveh[1], Naama Yahalom-Mack[2]

[1] Tel Aviv University, [2] Hebrew University of Jerusalem

Textual sources indicate Egyptian rule in Canaan from the time of Thutmose III, who established a series of administrative centers along major routes, including Gaza, Jaffa, and Beth-Shean. Material evidence for significant Egyptian presence is best known from the time of the 19th and 20th Dynasties, which other than at Tel Beth Shean, is concentrated mainly south of the Yarkon River. Tel Zeror, excavated in the 1960s, offers a unique opportunity to explore the possibility of Egyptian presence in the Sharon plain. Excavations uncovered parts of a large mudbrick public building, a bronze industry, and an assemblage of Egyptian-style pottery, alongside imported Cypriot vessels. Its strategic location, midway between Jaffa and Tel Beth-Shean, highlights its potential role within the Egyptian administrative network. This lecture presents the relevant finds which are indicative of an Egyptian presence at Tel Zeror. Based on the finds, it is suggested that during the Late Bronze Age the site housed an Egyptian governor's residence with an associated metallurgical industry. As such, the site may have functioned as a riverine anchorage on the banks of Nahal Hadera, serving as a crucial logistical hub which supported the Egyptian administrative network in northern Canaan.

The Egyptian Colonial Network and its Impact on Urban Communities in the Jezreel and the Beth-Shean Valleys

Omer Sergi[1]
[1] Tel Aviv University

During the Late Bronze II–III, parts of the Jezreel Valley—most likely its northeastern section—were designated as Egyptian crown property and cultivated by forced labor drafted from local towns and villages to sustain the Egyptian colonial hub at Tel Beth-Shean. Aside from the excavations at Tel Beth-Shean, which provide valuable insights into the Egyptian administrative presence and its complex cultural interactions, archaeological evidence for Egyptian rule in the region remains limited. Much of our understanding of Egyptian control over the Jezreel Valley derives from the Amarna correspondence. Since these letters were written on behalf of local Canaanite rulers, they also offer a perspective on how Egyptian rule affected the local population and how it was perceived by those under its influence. This presentation will examine the impact of the Egyptian colonial system on urban communities in the Jezreel and Beth-Shean Valleys, offering a new reading of the Amarna letters in light of recent archaeological excavations in the Jezreel Valley.

7K. Bioarchaeology in the Near East (Tremont)

Chair(s): Sarah Schrader, Leiden University; Rose Campbell, University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) Luskin Center for History and Policy

Interpreting the Skeletal Evidence for Sex-Related Health Differences in a Pre-Pottery Neolithic Population from Gusir Höyük, Türkiye

Handan Üstündağ[1], Donald Kale[2], Necmi Karul[3]
[1] Anadolu University, [2] Hacettepe University, [3] Istanbul University

A number of studies have examined the consequences of the Neolithic transition on male and female health. However, due to the limited availability of Pre-Pottery Neolithic A (PPNA) skeletal samples and related data, researchers have not been able to fully explore disparities in sex-related health among pre-agricultural communities in Southeast Anatolia. This paper will provide insights into this issue through skeletal evidence of sex-related health differences in the PPNA (10th-9th millennium BCE) sedentary hunter-gatherer population at Gusir Höyük, located in the Upper Tigris Basin. Excavations at the site revealed at least 125 burials beneath the floors and along the walls of the buildings. The majority of these skeletons were fragmentary and poorly preserved. A total of 176 skeletons were examined, of which 136 were adults and 40 were non-adults. According to osteological methods 41 males and 48 females were identified within the adult population. The frequency of dental caries, traumatic injuries, and physiological stress indicators (e.g. porotic hyperostosis, cribra orbitalia, osteoperiostitis, and enamel hypoplasia) obtained from this adult group were subjected to statistical analysis to examine differences between the sexes. A foundation of this study was also incorporating the osteological paradox when examining physiological stress indicators. The results of this study demonstrate that there were age-related differences between the sexes; with a higher level of resilience found in females. This study was supported by a TÜBITAK 1001 project (No. 123K441).

Utilizing Two Dental Stress Markers to Infer the Most Stressful Periods of Juvenility at Early Bronze Age Karataş-Semayük

Christina Trent[1], Donovan M. Adams[1], Ali M. Büyükkarakaya[2]
[1] University of Central Florida, [2] Hacettepe University

Early Bronze Age Karatas-Semayük was located in southwest Anatolia on the Elmali plain and was occupied between 2700-2300 BCE. During occupation, the site experienced emerging social stratification, which anthropologists recognize leads to increased stress, especially for juveniles. However, limited research has addressed what periods of juvenility an individual is most susceptible to increased stress and decreased health. Dental anthropologists utilize dental fluctuating asymmetry to assess and interpret the severity and timing of stress during development. Previous research has indicated that rates of stress for the juveniles at Karatas were generally consistent throughout occupation. However, degrees of asymmetry varied between tooth type, suggesting that the severity of stress experienced varied throughout life. Linear enamel hypoplasia is used in interpreting short-term stress episodes and may be representative of traumatic or sudden stress. Dental fluctuating asymmetry analysis suggested that for the juvenile population of Karatas, the most stressful period of life was around 6 years of age, as seen in the permanent dentition, and in utero, as seen in the deciduous dentition. For both the permanent and deciduous dentition, fluctuating asymmetry generally decreased throughout occupation. Regarding linear enamel hypoplasia, the average age of development was 834 days (2.285 years) with a range of approximately half a year. There was no significant relationship between burial period and presence of linear enamel hypoplasia ($p = 0.230$), suggesting that the frequency of episodic stress did not increase throughout occupation.

Experiencing Childhood in Byzantine Period Syedra, Turkiye

Kathryn E. Marklein[1], Autumn Koehling[1]
[1] University of Louisville

The ancient city of Syedra occupied a strategic position along the southern coast of Türkiye, in present-day Alanya district, Antalya province. Following its height in the imperial Roman period, Syedra transformed into a Christian nexus of worship during the Byzantine period. Recent excavations of the site have revealed extramural necropolises associated with the Roman period and intramural burial grounds from the Byzantine period. This preliminary bioarchaeological research focuses on nonadult individuals excavated from multiple middle Byzantine (11th-12th c. CE) contexts and evaluates differences in demographic representation (estimated age), proxied health (growth faltering), and mortuary practices (single/multiple interment, grave goods) between three discrete burial locations. Over 15 nonadults from within the large church (buyuk kilise), 11 nonadults west of the church, and 17 nonadults east the church (outside the apse) are examined and contextualized within the historic and archaeological context of Syedra to better understand how ascribed mortuary identities and biological identities contribute to reconstructing childhood experiences (and precarity) in middle Byzantine Anatolia.

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 20, 2025 | 4:25pm–6:30pm (EST)

8A. Cultural Heritage in Crisis: People Oriented (Workshop) (Grand Ballroom A)

Chair(s): Tashia Dare, Independent Scholar; Jenna de Vries Morton, Umm al-Jimal Archaeological Project

Cultural Heritage and US Foreign Relations: Cultural Policy is Security Policy

Morag M. Kersel[1], Patty Gerstenblith[1]

[1] DePaul University

The connection between national security and cultural heritage protection has become increasingly significant in recent years. Cultural policy, as an integral part of security strategy, plays a vital role in fostering social cohesion, enhancing diplomatic relations, promoting international cooperation, and maintaining regional stability. Cultural heritage is instrumental in shaping and promoting national identity, thereby fostering unity among citizens and contributing to national resilience. The protection of cultural heritage has gained prominence in national security considerations due to several factors. It promotes economic stability, as preserving cultural assets can contribute to economic growth and stability. Safeguarding cultural heritage can enhance a nation's international reputation and promote peaceful cooperation with other countries. During conflicts such as the 2003 Iraq War and the fight against the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), looted artifacts were used to fund terrorist activities. Protecting cultural sites and artifacts has become essential in reducing security threats. In the past, these developments have led to significant changes in U.S. policy and programming, particularly in foreign policy, cultural policy, and law enforcement. In this paper we explore how the real or perceived relationship between threatened cultural heritage and national security developed, how this relationship has changed U.S. foreign and cultural policy, and whether these changes are for the better or the worse from a broader policy perspective, particularly with respect to the goal of cultural heritage preservation.

Communicating Cultural Heritage During Crisis: Challenges and Opportunities

Yaroub Al Obaidi[1]

[1] Duquesne University

Communication before and during crisis is crucial, playing a vital role in informing people about impending events, ongoing situations, and, most importantly, post-war recovery. Effective communication ensures the dissemination of accurate information, identification of key stakeholders, and understanding of their informational needs. Cultural heritage is equally significant, serving as a foundation for rebuilding societies and fostering long-term peace. War, despite its devastation, can present opportunities for recovery and growth. The relationship between communication and documentation is particularly strong, highlighting the essential role of cultural institutions in both areas. This study examines Syria and Sudan ,two recent conflicts offering valuable insights into wartime communication. By analyzing these cases, the study aims to extract lessons to enhance future crisis communication strategies. Cultural heritage communication during crisis is critical for peacebuilding, as it promotes cultural models that bridge divided communities. Establishing a structured plan for engaging institutions and local communities often reunited through cultural work can significantly aid post-conflict reconstruction. A Crisis Communication Structure provides a framework for managing and disseminating information before, during, and after a crisis: 1. Pre-Crisis (Preparation & Planning): Crisis communication plans, stakeholder identification, message development, training, and early warning systems. 2. Crisis (Response & Management): Rapid information dissemination, designated spokespersons, media engagement, stakeholder coordination, and transparency. 3. Post-Crisis (Recovery & Evaluation): Assessment, public reassurance, institutional learning, and ongoing engagement. This structure ensures timely, accurate, and transparent communication to mitigate damage, support affected communities and facilitate recovery.

Crisis Response, Risk and Actions during the Sudan War

Shadia A. Abdelwahab[1]

[1] National Corporation for Antiquities and Museums – Sudan

The Sudan, one of Africa's largest nations, has long been a cradle of rich cultural diversity and a repository of invaluable archaeological heritage. However, the ongoing war since 2023 has precipitated widespread destruction, looting, and illicit trafficking of cultural property, devastating museums, historical sites, and irreplaceable artefacts. This crisis not only threatens Sudan's cultural identity but also represents an irreparable loss to global heritage, erasing critical links to humanity's shared past. From June 2023 to the present, the National Corporation for Antiquities and Museums (NCAM) has undertaken urgent measures to safeguard, document, and protect Sudan's cultural heritage. This paper examines the challenges faced during this period, the strategies implemented to mitigate the crisis, and the initiatives launched to secure archaeological sites and museums. Additionally, it highlights efforts to foster international cooperation in combating the illicit trafficking of cultural property. By sharing these experiences, this study aims to contribute to broader discussions on heritage preservation in conflict zones and the role of global collaboration in protecting cultural heritage.

Peace Building through Safeguarding Sudan's Living Heritage during Sudan's Crisis

Michael D. Mallinson[1], Helen Mallinson[2]

[1] Safeguarding Sudan's Living Heritage, [2] Mallinson Architects and Engineers

The Safeguarding Sudan's Living Heritage (SSLH) project developed out of the Western Sudan Community Museum Project, which started in 2018 and was funded by the British Council Cultural Protection Fund, CER and Aliph Fund. The project completed three community museum projects in Darfur, Kordofan and Omdurman. One of the aims was to support peace building through community engagement with Sudan's living and material heritage. The SSLH Project started at the Khartoum Ethnographic Museum to make a living heritage hub celebrating Sudan's diversity. The war scattered the team abroad and in Sudan requiring a radical project rethink. Inside Sudan SSLH grew a network of different community museum type hubs. Firstly, Gezira Museum in Wad Medani, as a community museum for refugees from Khartoum, although short lived as war also overtook this city, the idea took root in Jebel Barkal and Kassala. Its example inspired the El Obeid team to keep going working with community heritage despite the 18 month RSF siege. While in Kassala was created a community peace garden and peace tent with 12 different heritage and refugee groups building traditional houses to display their heritage culminating in a peace festival. In Jebel Barkal a community peace tent was built, coordinated with US Embassy funded community museum for locals and the regions refugees. Finally, in parallel SSLH teams have mounted an international multi-media campaign showcasing Sudan's living heritage from the vantage point of its external team and refugee diaspora. It includes an online museum, a YouTube channel. https://www.sslh.online/en and #OurHeritageOurSudan.

Resilience Through Cultural Heritage – Rehabilitating Umm al-Jimal's Ancient Water Channel

Ahmad H. AlAdamat[1]

[1] Umm El-Jimal Municipality

Umm al-Jimal's ancient water channel has long been a vital part of the region's cultural heritage, serving as a historical lifeline for its people. Over the years, local efforts have contributed to its preservation, demonstrating the community's deep connection to its heritage. In 2024, a new initiative was launched in partnership with the International Labour Organization (ILO), funded by the German government, to restore this essential structure using locally sourced basalt stone and a workforce comprising both local community members and Syrian refugees. This project is a continuation of the water harvesting initiatives that Umm al-Jimal project has been working on, originally pioneered by Bert de Vries. By integrating this initiative into ongoing conservation efforts, it strengthens the long-term sustainability of water management in the region while preserving an essential part of its history. More than just a restoration effort, this project is a model for peacebuilding and reconciliation. By bringing together diverse groups to work on a shared cultural landmark, the initiative fosters cooperation, mutual understanding, and economic resilience. The inclusion of both local Jordanians and Syrian refugees ensures that the project not only preserves history but also strengthens social cohesion and provides employment opportunities. Through this initiative, Umm al-Jimal's water channel will once again stand as a symbol of resilience, demonstrating how cultural heritage can serve as a bridge for peace and reconciliation. This project highlights the power of heritage in uniting communities, fostering dialogue, and building a sustainable future for all.

8B. Art, Archaeology, and History of Central Asia II (Grand Ballroom B)

Chair(s): Harrison Morin, University of Chicago; Mitchell Allen, University of California, Berkeley

New Research in Northern Tukharsitan: Excavations and Surveys in the Vakhsh Valley (Kafyrkala, Laghman)

Vikentiy Parshuto[1]
[1] New York University

In October – November 2024 ISAW (NYU), Jerusalem University, and the Academy of Sciences of Tajikistan organised a pilot season of excavations at the site of Kafyrkala to renew the research on urbanism of Tukharistan, which I want to discuss in my talk. In addition to 5 previous areas in shahristan, two new ones (VI, VII) were started. Area VI showed a long stratigraphic sequence, which details the previously proposed stratigraphy, possibly lengthening it down to the Hellenistic period. Area VII presents almost one-period occupation of a large ceremonial hall (6.8 x 9.5 m) with a Π-shaped wide bench along its walls. In addition to excavations, a new topographic plan was created, and a new hypothetical urban layout with horizontal stratigraphy of the site's development was proposed. A short survey at the neighbouring site of Laghman confirmed the previous poorly published research on it and added large amounts of new data to it, manifested in ceramics and architectural elements (column base) spanning from Hellenistic to Timurid periods. Given that the site is in immediate danger of being washed away by the river Vakhsh, we suggest undertaking rescue excavations as soon as possible. The excavations at Kafyrkala and surveys around it are only the first stages of research on urbanism in Northern Tukharistan. Supplying the area with an archaeological1 GIS system, re-reading textual and documental sources, and comparing the materials to the much wider and better-known Sogdiana, are the next stages of research, through which we aspire to write a cohesive history of Tukharistan.

Paradisal Gardens from Textual Deserts: Unearthing the Cultivars of the Agricultural Estate in the Late Antique Iranian World

Mark K. Gradoni[1]
[1] University of California, Irvine

This paper marshals textual, archaeobotanical, and ethnoarchaeological evidence to reconstruct the biome of the agricultural estate in the late antique Iranian world. Drawing upon the documents produced on, or concerning, estates in Bactria, central Iran, and Ṭabarestān, palynological records, and recent studies of the diffusion of cultivars across Afro-Eurasia, this paper repopulates these estates with the non-human inhabitants of the attached vineyards, fields of cereal corps, rice paddies, orchards, and timber stands. Building upon Haraway and Tsing's conception of the Plantationocene, this paper interrogates how the extensive refashioning of the landscape changed local ecologies, weakening their resilience to the environmental stresses of changing climate and increasing disease burden and prefiguring some of the deleterious aspects of "modern" agriculture as scale. The Middle Iranian texts of the Berkeley-Berlin Pahlavi Archive, the Bactrian Economic Documents from Northern Afghanistan, and the Ṭabarestān Archive describe vibrant agrarian landscapes across the Iranian world in Late Antiquity (ca. 200-800 CE). Readers find plentiful references to wheat freshly milled, hearty horses ready to bear their riders onward to the next destination, and choice wines aged in the cellars of great manorial houses. But that is it; a close reading of these texts reveals the sparseness of these worlds absent the diversity of flora and fauna, domesticated and semi-domesticated, that literary sources and archaeological analogy attest within them. How can spaces associated with the primordial bounty of the world be so empty? This paper investigates and interrogates these absences in light of recent archaeological and textual discoveries.

Reassessing Eastern Sasanian Art: Visual Narratives and Regional Identity in the Bandiān Stucco Reliefs

Parisa Atighi[1]
[1] University of Minnesota

This paper offers a new visual and contextual analysis of the Bandiān stucco reliefs, emphasizing their dynamic composition, sequential arrangement, and "breaking borders" format. These characteristics suggest an affiliation with a broader pictorial tradition in greater Khorasan. While Sasanian art is often examined through rock reliefs and metalwork, this study situates Bandiān within a regional artistic tradition encompassing monumental wall paintings and book illustrations. Through detailed visual analysis and digital reconstruction, this research recovers lost details, refines existing interpretations, and identifies compositional parallels across silverware, wall paintings, numismatics, and architectural reliefs. This study presents the first thorough reconstruction of Bandiān's stucco panels, revealing new insights into their iconography, spatial organization, and artistic principles. The reliefs display a sophisticated interplay of movement and hierarchy, guiding the viewer's gaze through narrative sequences. Stylistic similarities to Khorasanian wall paintings suggest that Bandiān belonged to a vibrant regional school influenced by Iranian, Buddhist, and Hellenistic traditions. Unlike imperial Sasanian rock reliefs, the stucco programs of Bandiān and Qal'e-ye Dukhtar reflect localized adaptations, with gypsum serving as a primary medium for elaborate embellishments. By integrating visual analysis, comparative study, and digital reconstruction, this paper reexamines Bandiān's significance within Sasanian visual culture. It explores the role of local elites in commissioning artistic programs and how these works shaped regional identity. Finally, it considers the afterlife of this provincial style in the early Islamic period, tracing its influence on subsequent artistic developments.

Examining Dental Wear of Mongol Era Individuals using Principal Axis Analysis

Ari Au[1], Megan Savoy[2], Julia Clark[3], Bayarsaikhan Jamsranjav[4], Khurelsukh Sosorbaram[4], Alicia V. Ventresca Miller[2]
[1] Wake Forest University, [2] University of Michigan, [3] NOMAD Science, [4] Institute of Archaeology, Mongolian Academy of Sciences

This study examines the dental wear rate from skeletal remains found in noble burials that date to the Mongol-Yuan Dynasty (13th to 15th centuries CE). These cemeteries are located along the Dood Tsakhir mountainside in Khövsgöl province, northern Mongolia. To our knowledge, this study marks the first dental wear analysis using principal axis methods on Mongol era individuals. The aims of this study were to determine if dental wear rates correlate with particular subsistence patterns such as food preparation and dietary intake. Dental scoring was achieved by quantifying dentine exposure of molar 1 and molar 2 by assigning a total ordinal score (4-40, or 1-10 per quadrant of a tooth). The dental wear scores for the Mongol era population (n = 14) were then analyzed using principal axis analysis which assesses wear rate in and across populations. The Mongolian sample was compared to a similar agro-pastoralist community to gauge similarities in dental use patterns. Results showed that the comparative population had statistically significantly faster wear rate and higher regression slopes than the Mongol population. This suggests that one population may have had a coarser diet resulting in faster tooth wear. In conclusion, we argue that the term, 'agro-pastoralist' may not accurately reflect the wide variety of subsistence strategies that may be utilized. We urge that further dental wear analysis be implemented into bioarchaeological studies as an inexpensive, offline, and nondestructive option to investigate dietary practices alongside other methods such as isotope analysis.

A Remote Reassessment of the Cultural Landscape of Northern Afghanistan Post-August 2021

Harrison Morin[1], Anthony Lauricella[2], Gil J. Stein[1], Andrew M. Wright[1]
[1] University of Chicago, [2] University of Memphis

Since August of 2021, the landscape of Northern Afghanistan has seen an unprecedented amount of change. The swift takeover of the region by the Taliban coupled with the advent of major infrastructural projects like the Qosh Tepa Canal have generated major humanitarian, cultural heritage and environmental concerns. While on-the-ground assessments have been made increasingly difficult, satellite imagery has proven to be an effective tool in the assessment of the various changes that have impacted this region. Building off of the work conducted by Emily Hammer et al. in 2018, this paper provides a reassessment of the archaeological heritage situation in Northern Afghanistan following the Taliban takeover in August 2021. Using data collected by the University of Chicago's Afghan Heritage Mapping Partnership (AHMP) in a diachronic examination of time-stamped imagery, our analyses have identified new patterns of looting and greater threats to heritage sites in the Northern Afghan landscape. It is hoped that through this assessment, greater attention will be place on the ongoing damage and destruction currently affecting cultural heritage sites throughout Northern Afghanistan.

8C. Ancient Aliens in Modern Times: The Politics and Ethics of Pseudoarchaeology (Georgian)

Chair(s): Leah Neiman, Brown University; Sandra Blakely, Emory University

Margaret Cavendish and the Roots of Fringe Archaeology

Andrew McCarthy[1]
[1] University of Edinburgh

The intellectual context in which Margaret Cavendish wrote The Blazing-World (1666) was one that saw increasing popularity of Greco-Egyptian esoteric literature such as the Corpus Hermeticum and well-known Classical works like Plato's Timaeus and Critias and Herodotus's Histories. Furthermore, travel literature at the time was often viewed as anecdotal evidence, and there was a general acceptance of the descriptions of mythological lands and peoples such as Hyperborea in the far north. Cavendish's contributions to Natural Philosophy at a time when rules for conducting the Scientific Method were being established created a fusion between the fantastical and the observational. Cavendish's imaginative reconfiguration of esotericism, legendary lands and Classical sources, as well as the association with genuine scientific enquiry, resulted in a template upon which 19th and 20th century esoteric writers would base their occult philosophy. Modern Fringe Archaeology takes on the superficial appearance of pure scientific enquiry, but in fact conflates with Theosophical and New Age ideas, many of which ultimately find their roots in Cavendish. This paper will investigate the impact (direct or indirect) that Cavendish's invented world, which drew upon ancient Mediterranean sources, had upon modern alternative histories, demonstrating that Cavendish's work was a wellspring for Fringe Archaeology's specific ideas and basic tenets.

Misconceptions and Meeples: Pseudoarchaeology and the Public Perception of Archaeology in Gaming

Michael Zimmerman[1]
[1] Bridgewater State University

The general public often filters archaeology through the very biased filter of pop culture: often thinking of archaeology as treasure hunting, often involving pseudoarchaeological elements, as reinforced by the Uncharted or Tomb Raider series of games. This paper is designed to demonstrate how biased misconceptions of archaeology emerge in all forms of gaming (video, board, RPG, etc.), how pervasive they are, how these games often reinforce these misconceptions, and how they can also be used to dispel them, to assist archaeologists in fulfilling their responsibilities as effective science communicators.

Shaping the Past: Language, Bias, and the Intersection of Academic and Pseudo-archaeological Narratives

Robyn Price[1]
[1] Brown University

Words matter. Whether terms dehumanize ancient bodies (e.g., "mummy"), sensationalize finds (e.g., "Cleopatra's perfume"), or reinforce dominant narratives (e.g., "Near East"), both academic and pseudo-academic studies use language to further specific agendas. While pseudo-archaeology is often discredited for championing mystical narratives, this dismissal overlooks how both academic and pseudo-archaeological studies are shaped by modern biases. Egyptology, for example, emerged through sensationalized displays of ancient bodies and problematic practices like the consumption of mumia. Egyptian archaeology was constructed upon pseudo-scientific theories and racialized narratives explaining the origins of civilization. The question then is when these practices bifurcated into the fields of "scientific" and "pseudo-" archaeology. This paper does not seek to pinpoint this moment. Rather, it highlights the shared history between the two, which is often quietly ignored. Both fields perpetuate biases, though academic archaeology often masks these biases with seemingly "objective" terminology, while pseudo-archaeology relies on sensationalized narratives. The reception of Cleopatra's story through time illustrates how both academic and popular narratives are shaped by similar dynamics. Cleopatra's identity has been molded by creators—from media producers to

scholars—who use her name to serve various agendas. Similar to how Media Archaeology tracks the developments stories across time and genres, archaeologists could recognize and embrace Cleopatra's multi-forms as part of her complex legacy rather than dismiss them as distortions. Archaeology, after all, happens in the present. Both academic and pseudo-archaeological research reflect broad historical processes that influence how we write history and how these histories shape the contemporary world.

Ancient Aliens in the Classroom: Building First-Year Undergraduate Skills in Rebuking Pseudoarchaeology (Virtual)
Debra A. Trusty[1]
[1] University of Iowa

In the paper, I discuss my first attempts to teach a course on pseudoarchaeology with the expressed interest encouraging students to consider what makes archaeological conspiracy theories so captivating, how they originated, and the "evidence" used to support them. By closely examining case studies (like the Mitchell-Hedges Crystal Skull, Piltdown Man, and the Beringer Hoax), this first-year seminar has humble aims of debunking modern interpretations and perceptions of the past that are not based on scientific evidence or methods. Students are encouraged to critically analyze pseudoscience using scientific analysis and participate in two major group projects that challenge students to question the use of archaeology through an analysis of modern media and the University Library's Special Collections. The goal is to equip students with a realistic and logical toolkit that enables them to think critically about the human past and present, while also deflating arguments that are founded on ethnocentric, racist, and nationalist ideologies, as well as exploitative concepts that not only harm public understanding of scientific theory, but also the legacy of indigenous communities and the safety of cultural heritage sites. This paper reflects on the lessons learned in this course and the ways to empower students to use archaeological evidence more critically and effectively in their studies and personal lives.

Choosing our Battles: Archaeoastronomy in the Face of Pseudoscience (Virtual)
Elizabeth Leaning[1]
[1] University of Auckland

As transdisciplinary methods become increasingly popular in studies of the ancient world, so too do the opportunities for these methodologies to be misconstrued. Archaeoastronomy is particularly vulnerable, as it asks for one to imagine an ancient civilisation independently capable of astronomical thought – an apparent anathema to many audiences. This paper examines the current state of two of the pseudoscientific obstacles facing archaeoastronomical methods, using the case study of ancient Egypt. It also considers how such obstacles can be challenged to help dispel pseudoscientific narratives in archaeoastronomy. Firstly, it considers scholarship such as Neugebauer and Parker's and "translations" such as Ellis', which erase the astronomical grounding of ancient Egypt. While this scholarship is not a product of the traditional colonial period, its lingering colonial and racist overtones resist the attribution of astronomical understanding to ancient Egypt, aiding in the spread of disinformation. Secondly, it examines the anti-intellectual, anti-scientific movements popular both in social and entertainment media that would attribute all scientific understanding in the ancient world to the "advanced" influence of aliens or "precursors". Overall, this paper considers how these pseudoarchaeological approaches to archaeoastronomy rewrite the astronomical narrative of ancient Egypt, as well as the political, pedagocial and scientific consequences of their popularity. It makes the case for two different methods for confronting this disinformation: a systematic academic response, and a case-by-case rebuttal. Ultimately, it argues that archaeoastronomers have a responsibility to confront the disinformation associated with their field, regardless of how entrenched this disinformation seems.

8D. Experiments in Critical Reading: Ancient Literature and Modern Theory II (Arlington)

Chair(s): Jane Gordon, University of Chicago; Margaret Geoga, University of Chicago

No Homo? The Bromance of Gilgamesh and Enkidu
Jessie DeGrado[1]
[1] University of Michigan

In this talk, I read scenes from the Epic Gilgamesh alongside Tony Silva's article "Bud-Sex: Constructing Normative Masculinity among Rural Straight Men That Have Sex with Men" (Gender and Society 31 [2017]: 51–73). In this article, Silva provides a sociological study of self-identified straight men who have sex with men. The participants in Silva's study generally consider sex with other men to enhance, rather than detract from, their masculinity. This offers a productive angle for considering homoeroticism in Gilgamesh, in which Gilgamesh's exploits with Enkidu need not be seen as standing in tension with normative masculinity in Mesopotamia. More broadly, I will consider how the aims of ethnography intersect with those of critical theory, insofar as both fields seek to examine the social context in which knowledge is produced. I have been increasingly drawn to sociological and anthropological studies precisely because they so explicitly situate their studies in a particular context. Engaging this type of work might help ancient historians consider alternative epistemic configurations without falling into the trap of anachronistically importing paradigms to the ancient world.

Susan Stewart and En-nigaldi-nanna: Objects of Desire, Nostalgia, and Narrative
Jane Gordon[1]
[1] University of Chicago

How do objects and places figure in a society's narratives about itself or its nostalgia for another time? And if, as Susan Stewart put it, "it is not lived experience which literature describes, but the conventions for organizing and interpreting that experience," how do these objects and places, when they feature in literary texts, participate in that system of meaning? For Stewart in On Longing: Narratives of the Gigantic, the Miniature, the Souvenir, the Collection (1984) things, from the Statue of Liberty to the souvenir, instantiate the particular object-person relationships of bourgeois society, functioning as sources of affects and identity formations specific to modernity. This paper proposes to read the stuff in the En-nigaldi-nanna Cylinder of the 6th century BCE Babylonian king Nabonidus--an eclipsed moon, the ruins of a house for priestesses, and a range of cuneiform inscriptions, including the Cylinder itself--through the lens of Stewart's book, arguing that they organize and represent their own society and its time. In doing so, it explores how works written to illuminate cultural objects that are irrevocably modern, and indeed to elucidate the workings of modernity itself and its accompanying historical forces of capitalism, colonialism, globalization, etc., can productively inform readings of premodern texts. Furthermore, it argues that ancient Babylonian society too can be theorized through its material and literary traces, and that its literature not only described, but also organized its world.

Response
Gina Konstantopoulos[1]
University of California, Los Angeles

Corrupted Language: Reading The Eloquent Peasant alongside Wittgenstein's Philosophical Investigations

Niv Allon[1]
[1] The Metropolitan Museum of Art

Language and corruption take center stage in the ancient Egyptian Tale of The Eloquent Peasant. Composed in the Middle Kingdom, the story follows a man who petitions against a corrupt official, only to endure further torment at the king's command. Justice arrives only after he delivers nine petitions—his eloquence becoming a source of entertainment for the king and readers alike. As Richard Parkinson notes, the story's blend of "subjective sympathy and objective irony 'is the very essence' of the Tale." Yet, the narrative also underscores the failure of language: the Peasant's rhetorical mastery fuels the very power it seeks to dismantle. As the story unfolds, his language arguably transforms, with the fifth petition, for example, devolving into derogatory statements. The Peasant's failure can be illuminated through Ludwig Wittgenstein's concept of language-games. In Philosophical Investigations, Wittgenstein argues that language is embedded in social interactions—and, crucially, that it operates within shifting rules. The Peasant remains unaware that his language-game has changed, rendering his words futile. However, beyond offering an explanatory model, reading The Eloquent Peasant alongside Wittgenstein invites reflection on the consequences of such failed understanding for language itself. This study follows the model set by Veena Das's Life and Words and her engagement with Wittgenstein's writings surrounding the violence during India's Partition and the 1984 Sikh massacre. Embracing a similar positioning—as an apprentice in Wittgenstein's work—the paper will contemplate the challenges of pairing their work with this ancient, and more significantly literary, text.

Searching for the Mind: Khakheperreseneb, Deconstruction, and the Self-Destructive Power of Language (Virtual)
Margaret Geoga[1]
[1] University of Chicago

In 1800 BCE, the ancient Egyptian priest Khakheperreseneb lamented the impossibility of saying anything new, because everything had already been said. Khakheperreseneb is disturbed by the binaries through which he sees the world: past and present, repetition and novelty, self and other, order and chaos. Khakheperreseneb's apparent interest in binary modes of thinking have a clear echo in deconstruction, which seeks to identify and ultimately undo the hierarchical binaries that define Western thought. This paper proposes to combine The Words of Khakheperreseneb with Barbara Johnson's The Critical Difference, a collection of essays exploring the problems of difference—that is, the precise relationship between elements of binary oppositions—and how it structures the act of reading. Johnson models a deconstructive approach through readings of texts by Baudelaire, Mallarmé, and Poe, among others, demonstrating deconstruction's concerns not only with undermining implicitly accepted binaries, but also with the structures of language and wordplay. How can Johnson's text allow us to better understand how Khakheperreseneb simultaneous constructs and undermines, through virtuosic wordplay, the binary oppositions that define his worldview? Can deconstruction offer a new way to read the juxtaposition between Khakheperreseneb's desire for novelty and the highly conventional speech that follows—often interpreted as a demonstration of his failure? Finally, echoing Johnson's focus on the interplay between difference and the act of reading, the paper also examines how the binaries that preoccupy deconstructionists shape Egyptologists' interpretations of Egyptian literary texts, and how we might move beyond them to embrace instability and multivalence.

Response
Madadh Richey[1]
[1] Brandeis University

General Discussion

8E. Archaeology of Cyprus III (Berkeley & Clarendon)

Chair(s): Kevin Fisher, University of British Columbia; Catherine Kearns, University of Chicago

Pyla-Vigla and the Early Hellenistic Transition on Cyprus: A Fortified Settlement in the Age of Alexander and the Diadochoi
Thomas Landvatter[1], Brandon R. Olson[2], Melanie Godsey[3]
[1] Reed College, [2] Metropolitan State University of Denver, [3] Trinity University

This presentation examines the early Hellenistic period on Cyprus through the lens of the fortified site of Pyla-Vigla (Vigla), a short-lived military settlement occupied at the turn of the 4th to early 3rd centuries BCE. Vigla, strategically located between ancient Kition and Salamis, offers a unique opportunity to explore this critical period of political and cultural transformation. Excavations conducted by the Pyla-Koutsopetria Archaeological Project (PKAP) since the early 2000s, with intensified efforts from 2018, reveal a site characterized by fortifications, a complex architectural network, robust assemblage of material culture, and a narrow window of occupation. Numismatic evidence, including local and foreign issues, suggests broader connections during the political upheavals of the Diadochoi. Ceramic assemblages, particularly from a sealed slab-lined pit and multiple floor surfaces, highlight local and imported wares, including Rhodian and Chian amphorae, underscoring Vigla's integration into regional and Mediterranean trade networks. The architectural remains point to a significant investment of resources with evidence of episodic reconfigurations evident of repurposing of the fort's primary spheres of habitation and production. Preliminary findings suggest that Vigla served as a purpose-built military installation, reflecting the strategic imperatives of the early Hellenistic powers vying for control of Cyprus. This study not only sheds light on Vigla's role in the geopolitical struggles of the late 4th century BCE but also contributes to a broader understanding of Cyprus's integration into the Hellenistic world.

American Expedition to Idalion Redux
Pamela Gaber[1], Andrew M. Wright[2]
[1] Lycoming College, [2] University of Chicago

During June and July of 2024 a small group began to clean trenches in the Lower City South. Our goal was to remove several baulks to create a coherent vision of the architecture. That effort occupied the first week of the project. Meanwhile, Andrew Wright, in charge of data management, was busy geo-referencing all of the relevant elevation stakes and grid markers in the field. After cleaning, preparation for photogrammetry began. In addition, mapping was conducted with Emlid RTK receivers, which allow accurate coordinates to be captured directly in the OCHRE database. They are also instrumental in photogrammetry, used in conjunction with control markers to create highly detailed 3D models and orthomosaics One baulk proved surprising. We were expecting a wall to appear at its western end. In both squares to the north and south of the baulk (EO17 and EO18) There were large deposits of mudbrick detritus. It was no surprise that, after removal of the rainwash, we came down on mudbrick detritus. Then articulated mudbricks in situ appeared: extremely rare on the Cypriot plains. Importantly, we completed significant digital work. We adopted digital methods for field recording and finds processing. The database, the Online Cultural and Historical Research Environment (OCHRE), now contains over 120,000 pieces of legacy data catalogued since 2018. We used OCHRE for offline data capture in the field synched daily. Labels with QR codes were printed for each

pottery bucket and registered find, bringing our project up-to-date for the 21st century. We'll continue in 2025.

A More Harmonious Neolithic--Why Did Cyprus Not Develop Like its Continental Neighbors?

Alan Simmons[1]
[1] University of Nevada-Las Vegas

The past few decades have demonstrated that the Cypriot Neolithic was as early as that on the mainland, having both PPNA and PPNB components. It can no longer be viewed as an isolated "footnote" to continental developments, with the sea forming a barrier. Rather, the Mediterranean Sea formed a "highway" for the continual importation of the Neolithic lifestyle. While there are clear continental parallels, however, early Cypriots chose a different path for their Neolithic lives. The requisite "Neolithic package" is present, having been transported across multiple mainland origins to the island. This included both domestic plants and animals, some technological innovations, as well as a Neolithic "ethos." And yet, while the Cypriot Neolithic is elaborate, it does not match mainland developments in several aspects. These include the absence of "mega-sites," elaborate ritual reflections, and evidence for population and environmental stress. I argue here that there was no need for this trajectory. Rather, early Cypriot Neolithic peoples developed a unique island-focused life that did not require the elaboration seen on the mainland. Their multiple origins must have made the island an interesting place, consisting of different Neolithic cultures and languages. And yet, the island's Neolithic seems to have been harmonious. A principal reason for this is that population levels were intentionally kept low, with the realization of the ecological restrictions of an island. This avoided the necessity of hugh settlements and elaborate ritual activity designed to govern larger populations. Rather, in Cyprus, the Neolithic developed along a more amicable island life path, gradually withdrawing from substantial mainland influences until much later in time.

Twilight of a Goddess: A Very Late Roman Statue of Artemis-Diana in Cyprus

Charles A. Stewart[1], Laura A. Swantek[2], Lucas Grimsley[3], Philip A. Webb[4], Kristin Flake[5], Thomas W. Davis[5]
[1] Benedictine College, [2] Phoenix College, [3] Lanier Center for Archaeology, [4] Independent Scholar, [5] Lipscomb University

In 2024 the Kourion Urban Space Project (KUSP) uncovered a one-third life-size marble statue of the goddess Artemis-Diana. The statue once stood in an affluent residence before it was toppled over by walls and ceiling that collapsed over it, during the 365 CE earthquake. Because Apollo was the patron deity of Kourion, it was fitting that his twin sister should be honored and worshiped alongside his statues. The style, form, and context suggest that our Artemis-Diana statue was carved during the second quarter to mid-fourth century CE. As such, it is one of the last goddess statues that was manufactured just prior to the Edict of Thessalonica (380) when paganism was effectively outlawed. As such, this Kourion Artemis-Diana belongs to a well-known, but rare group of mythological statues affiliated with the marble workshop at Aphrodisias (Turkey). Other statues in this group have lost their original provenance; therefore, the Kourion statue shines much light on this often-misunderstood collection regarding their purpose and display.

Digital Archaeology in Context: Integrated Methodologies in the Study of Nea Paphos (Cyprus) (Virtual)

Nikola Babucic[1], Lukasz Miszk[2], Ewdoksia Papuci-Wladyka[2], Wojciech Ostrowski[3], Malgorzata Kajzer[2], Martina Seifert[1]
[1] Universität Hamburg, [2] Jagiellonian University,[3] Warsaw University of Technology

The integration of digital methodologies has become a cornerstone of archaeological research in Cyprus, offering new perspectives on ancient urban landscapes. This shift is particularly evident in large-scale archaeological projects focused on the study of ancient cityscapes. This paper presents the ongoing collaborative project in Nea Paphos, jointly conducted by the Jagiellonian University in Kraków, the University of Warsaw, and the University of Hamburg. The project combines high-resolution geophysical prospection, drone-based photogrammetry, GIS analysis, and digital documentation to investigate the spatial organization and development of the ancient city. These approaches not only facilitate non-invasive exploration of buried structures but also support long-term heritage management and public engagement through interactive digital tools. The digital revolution has also led to fundamental changes in excavation surveys, reshaping the documentation process through advanced scanning techniques and close-range photogrammetry. Furthermore, the study of archaeological monuments has been profoundly affected, particularly in the areas of documentation, database management, and the application of scientific techniques to the analysis of movable archaeological artefacts. By discussing recent results and methodological workflows, the paper highlights the benefits and challenges of integrating diverse digital datasets across institutional and disciplinary boundaries. In doing so, it demonstrates how digital archaeology can enhance both the analytical depth and the interpretative potential of fieldwork in complex urban settings like Nea Paphos.

8F. Interdisciplinary Approaches to Seals, Sealing Practices, and Administration II (Studio 1)

Chair(s): Pınar Durgun, The Morgan Library and Museum

Crafting the Religious Experiences of Glyptic Producers in the Making of an East Mediterranean Exchange System (ca. 2300-1500 BCE)

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[1] Loyola Marymount University

The late third to early second millennium BCE witnessed increasing interaction between communities around the eastern Mediterranean, reflected by the spread of religious iconography alongside new technological innovations and social practices. These included the development a visual koine and the rise of new writing systems with (semi-)pictographic scripts, both of which appear on stamp seal amulets and cylinder seals. However, the spread of these innovations and practices is often explained through the lens of disembodied narratives about networks, technologies, and the rise of new political centers, or alternatively a complete rejection of external stimuli in favor of purely local innovation. One group largely understudied in the literature is that of craftspeople and how their experiences impacted on why and how certain motifs were adopted at the local level. This paper shifts focus to the glyptic producers themselves, examining how their embodied religious experiences contributed to the development of a glyptic koine and, in turn, an interconnected east Mediterranean exchange system. By analyzing iconographic pattering alongside shared material choices and production techniques, a social learning model is employed to re-situ these active agents back into the social networks to which they belonged. In doing so, it is argued that glyptic producers played an important role in shaping religious and technological expressions across the region and highlights the entanglement of religious experience, craft knowledge, and mobility in the making of the early second-millennium BCE Mediterranean world.

Embodied Culture and Collective Memory in Iron Age Seals of the Levant

Erin Anderson[1]
[1] University of Chicago

The archaeological record across the ancient Near East is littered with seals, impressions, and evidence of sealing practices from a variety of time periods, regions, and individual sites. In addition to thorough iconographical evidence, the findspots of seals in conjunction with the materials that they are fashioned from provide comprehensive information on the individuals who owned the seals, their beliefs in ritual or apotropaism, and their access to luxury goods depending on resource availability or economic means. Through the investigation of the colors, materials, and glazes of seals from several sites in the Iron Age Levant, I will suggest that non-elite individuals who were otherwise unable to procure luxuries could imitate opulent items by glazing or incorporating pigments into seals created from local materials. The collective memories of these communities understood certain radiant colors and precious stones including carnelian, obsidian, and hematite to possess wealth and ritual power. If a non-elite individual desired wealth or power, then they could mimic the elite behavior of their community through the use of pigments or glazes on their seals to perform the illusion of luxury and partake in the embodied practicing of wealth. The materiality and findspots of Iron Age seals at Levantine sites reveal the individual's relationship with their larger community, their understanding of collective memory through objects, and the cultural practices that they adopted in life and death.

An Egyptian Official at Persepolis: a Director of Estates and a Chief of Buto?

Hong Yu Chen[1]
[1] University of California, Los Angeles

Among the corpus of tablets excavated from Persepolis, there are a number of seals that have been noted to exhibit "Egyptianizing" elements. Indeed, these seals seem to contain specific motifs and artistic iconography derived from the millennia-old iconographic traditions of Egypt or imprecise renditions of Egyptian hieroglyphs. However, one such seal has hitherto gone unnoticed as being distinct among the corpus, and it further cements the presence, even if likely few in number, of highly connected and educated Egyptian elites in the heartlands of the Achaemenid Empire. These elites were involved deeply in the administrative practices of the region, and at least one of them displayed overtly to his imperial colleagues the origins of his prestige and elite status. The unique seal from Persepolis links its now-forgotten user to his geographically distant Egyptian counterparts and to the ancestors from whom he, his power, and his cultural practices derive.

Discussion

8G. Archaeology of Anatolia III (Studio 2)

Chair(s): Nancy Amelia Highcock, Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford; Oya Topçuoğlu, Northwestern University

A Closer Look at Iron Age Anatolian Inscribed Monuments and their Potential Histories: The Case of the Phrygian Black Stones from Tyana

Leopoldo Fox-Zampiccoli[1]
[1] New York University

This paper presents the results of a detailed study of the Phrygian-inscribed 'black stone' fragment T-03 from Tyana-Kemerhisar (Turkey),
conducted at the Niğde Archaeological Museum in August 2024. In light of the discovery of new Phrygian-inscribed sherds at nearby Kınık Höyük, this research offers fresh insights into the role of Phrygian in Iron Age southern Cappadocia. In this study, the linguistic content is integrated with an analysis of the inscription's materiality through close-looking, photography, and 3D modeling. By comparing this case with other notable monuments in the wider region, I point to broader implications for the development of monumental inscriptions in the early Iron Age Levant and Anatolia. Adopting this holistic approach, beyond textual analysis alone, allows us to access a more complex object-history of this fragment, reconstruct the cultural and technological practices involved in its production, and address its function as a monument and memory-site within its socio-cultural landscape. Drawing on the concept of 'potential history' (A. Azoulay 2019), this research seeks to recover the individuals and communities involved in the creation and reworking of the monument, challenging traditional institutional narratives. This paper contributes to a deeper understanding of monument-making processes and the dynamic interplay between languages, monuments, and writing practices.

The End of Writing in Iron Age Central Anatolia

Ryan H. Schnell[1]
[1] New York University

Following the collapse of large-scale direct Assyrian intervention in Anatolian affairs in the wake of the death of Sargon II, two script cultures remained on the scene in South-Central Anatolia: Anatolian Hieroglyphic and Phrygian. While the suggestion that Cimmerian invaders destroyed the network of canton states in this area, resulting in the death of these scripts, is attractive, it suffers from the fact that the Cimmerians remain unidentifiable in either the material remains or native epigraphic traditions of Anatolia. In addition, there are as of yet no destruction layers attesting to their presence. Therefore, I would like to suggest that the death of these native Anatolian scripts is more likely attributed to local socio-political factors in the region at the time, resulting from shifting cultural practices and a general divestment from political complexity by the end of the Middle Iron Age.

Drinking and Dishing: Pottery Forms and Names as Evidence of Socializing at a Neo-Assyrian Provincial Capital

Britt E. Hartenberger[1], Timothy Matney[2]
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Excavations at the Neo-Assyrian provincial center of Tušhan (modern Ziyaret Tepe) amassed a large collection of pottery from a variety of contexts. At last year's ASOR conference, we presented a paper on aligning textual emic terminology for these pottery forms with our archaeological types. We were able to assign Akkadian names to several of our pottery forms using their volume and shape in comparison with textual references to named vessels as described by their function, shape, and material. Some of these names now suggest functions and/or contents for our jar types. Most of the matches that could be made were for jars, however, as bowls are not mentioned as often in contemporary texts that focus on storage and distribution. It is possible to estimate broad functions for bowls by reviewing their size and interpreting them as for individual servings, larger servings, or more communal/food preparation functions. Combined with the new vessel names and functions we have identified for jars, we will examine where drinking, eating, and socializing likely occurred across the sites in several different domestic contexts as well as the barracks.

Antiochia ad Cragum, a Port and Trade City: Late Roman Early Byzantine Ceramic Data (Virtual)

Asena Kizilarslanoglu[1]
[1] Kastamonu University

The ancient city of Antiochia ad Cragum, located in the Roman province of Cilicia (Türkiye), has been under excavation since 2005.

Due to its position on an important coastal route and its agricultural resources, it was part of overseas trade in the eastern Mediterranean, like many other cities, from the 2nd century to the early 7th century CE. During the Roman Empire, the start of wine production in the region and the increasing importance of various trade routes shaped the city's commercial activities. Between the 2nd and early 7th centuries CE, the city produced amphorae primarily for use in wine distribution, common and coarse ware in different forms. In the Roman Period, ceramic kilns were constructed within the large chambers of the Great Bath that had stopped functioning as a bath during the Late Roman Period. After the 4th century CE, amphorae from important production regions such as Syria-Palestine, Africa, and Eastern Rough Cilicia, alongside local products, appear to have been continuously circulating in Antiochia ad Cragum. In addition to the amphorae, red slip ware from Phokaia and Cyprus were also part of the dynamics of trade. The findings from the Late Roman - Early Byzantine Period at Antiochia ad Cragum, which form the subject of this study, will document the position of the ancient port city within the commercial system of the Cilicia Region and contribute to the creation of a comparative data bank of ceramics for the archaeology of other regions.

8H. Approaches to Dress and the Body (The Loft)

Chair(s): Neville McFerrin, University of North Texas

The Materiality of Piercing: Shared Adornment Practices in the Predynastic Nile Valley

Maryhan Ragheb[1]
[1] University of California, Los Angeles

Body piercing has always been a form of beautifying and adorning the body, where different designs of personal ornaments were inserted into the pierced skin. The practice is poorly documented due to limited preservation of mummified remains and artifacts. However, archaeological excavations in Egyptian sites that date to the 4th and 3rd millennium uncovered forms of body ornaments such as lip and nose plugs, showing that piercing as an adornment practice was adopted at sites like Adaima, Mostagedda, and in Nubian A-Group communities whose cemeteries were excavated in Adindan, Serra East, and Qustul. The presence of these ornaments in mobile and settled communities in the Nile Valley suggests shared body ornamentation practices between A-Group pastoralists and settled Nile Valley communities. This paper examines parallels among these ornaments to argue that cultural distinctions between these groups were less rigid than often depicted in modern scholarships. Integrating such practices points to stronger interactions and shared traditions, challenging conventional narratives of cultural separation, blurring the boundaries of ethnic categorizations imposed by modern Western scholarship, and highlighting the dynamic relationships between these communities during this period.

Adorning Julia Domna, Rome's Empress from Syria

Kimberly Cassibry[1], Helena Kirchner[1]
[1] Wellesley College

Rome's empresses rarely wore jewelry in portraits, unlike their counterparts in neighboring realms. This Roman artistic norm resulted in part from the political notion that emperors were leading citizens, not kings. Yet the significant absence of earrings, necklaces, bracelets, and rings from empress portraits merits further scrutiny. Julia Domna's abundant imagery, made at the height of women's portrait dedications in the Roman empire, offers promising material for a new approach. As a consort (193-211 CE) and a dowager (211-217 CE), this fascinating empress was in power for nearly twenty-five years. Her public appearance was widely known due to coins issued by official mints and portrait sculptures set up by local benefactors in many cities. Past studies have focused on her elaborate hairstyling and debated whether it expressed her Syrian identity, which set her apart from Rome's prior empresses. To model a contextual approach that brings adornment into focus, this paper addresses two of her best preserved portraits with ties to particular regions. The first is a now famous panel painting, known as the "Severan Tondo" from Egypt, which shows her wearing opulent pearl jewelry. The second is a life-sized stone statue from Perge, Türkiye, which shows her without jewelry. Connecting these images to paintings from Egypt and statues from Perge reveals for the first time how jewelry could be used with nuance to make Rome's empresses blend in or stand out from local communities of women in the realm of portraiture.

Chastity and Gesture in Palmyra

Maura K. Heyn[1]
[1] University of North Carolina at Greensboro

In this paper, I analyze visual representations of women in the eastern Mediterranean to ascertain the significance of the so-called pudicitia arm gesture, which was popular in Palmyra in the first three centuries CE. The depiction of women with one hand raised to the shoulder, veil, or face is well-known from first-century funerary reliefs in Rome, where the gesture has long been assumed to express the sexual modesty of a respectable Roman matron. However, closer attention reveals a paucity of ancient evidence for the meaning of this body position in Rome. The unsubstantiated interpretation of the Roman gesture complicates any understanding of its popularity in Palmyra (though a one-to-one correlation was always unlikely), where the absence of literary texts requires comparative analysis. By expanding the study set to include comparable material from the Hellenistic city-states, the Palmyrene hinterland, and the Parthian empire to the east, I provide a more nuanced interpretation of the meaning behind the arm position. The gesture in Palmyra is displayed exclusively by women but likely was not one-dimensional in its significance: it may also have drawn attention to other facets of a woman's identity, such as gender, profession, family, social networks, and wealth. An exploration of these connections results in a more sophisticated understanding of female iconography in Palmyra.

Decoding the Blue Heads: A Fresh Perspective on Akrotiri's Bronze Age Iconography

Laura Mazow[1]
[1] East Carolina University

The frescoes on the walls of Akrotiri are remarkable for their preservation, offering incredible insights into daily life in the Bronze Age Aegean. Scholars have noted the epic nature of many scenes, drawing parallels to The Odyssey and other Homeric tales. However, there is tension between viewing these frescoes as early antecedents of Classical mythology and avoiding anachronistic interpretations of Bronze Age iconography. Previous interpretations have focused on rituals associated with social hierarchies and gender. In this paper, I argue that interpretations of these frescoes, particularly those viewing blue-headed human figures as youthful priests and priestesses, have misled us in understanding both the narratives depicted and the functions of the rooms they adorn. While the blue-colored heads, often with one or multiple side-locks, resemble Egyptian depictions of youths with shaved heads and side-locks, Aegean images are significantly different. In Egyptian art, the bald head is depicted with the same skin tone as the figure, with only the thick-braided side-lock sometimes colored blue. This iconography symbolizes youth and reflects royal and divine status, while priests are depicted bald but almost always without a side-lock. In this paper I suggest that the blue-headed figures in Xeste-3

at Akrotiri are better understood as anthropomorphized rivers and other bodies of water that engage in mythological landscapes. Recognizing these figures as anthropomorphized waters provides further evidence of correspondence between these frescoed stories and later Greek and Roman mythologies. It also enables greater interpretive flexibility in reconstructing room function in Xeste 3.

The Art of Grieving in the Prehistoric Aegean
Cynthia S. Colburn[1]
[1] Pepperdine University

Given the prevalence of jewelry and other forms of dress from mortuary contexts in the prehistoric Aegean, it is surprising that its potential significance in the grieving process, which, after clinical psychologist and neuroscientist Mary-Frances O'Connor, I define as one's adaptation to loss, is generally neglected in the scholarly literature. Rather, most scholarship emphasizes the role of such objects and materials as evidence for social identity, especially status, but also gender. This is perhaps due to the lack of contemporary textual evidence from the Aegean regarding the symbolic significance of such objects, and the notion that it is difficult to get at the emotional meaning conveyed by such objects. Informed by recent scholarship on the psychology and neuroscience of grieving, in this paper I analyze the potential role that bodily dress might have played in the grieving process in the Aegean Bronze Age. Given the lack of local textual evidence, I turn to the textual and material evidence from West Asia and Egypt for inspiration. This approach allows for a more textured interpretation of such artifacts from the archaeological and visual records of the prehistoric Aegean, highlighting their potential meanings to bereaved individuals performing in and/or witnessing funerary rituals likely intended to address the grief of a society suffering deeply from the loss of a community member.

8I. Rebuilding Antioch: Collaborative Approaches to the Ancient City (Workshop) (Whittier)

Chair(s): Nicole Berlin, The Davis Museum at Wellesley College; Elizabeth Molacek, The University of Texas at Dallas

Excavating Antioch and its Legacy
Elizabeth M. Molacek[1]
[1] The University of Texas at Dallas

Organized excavations played a critical role in building American museums and shaping the public's perception of the ancient world, including Antioch. Key to this process was partage, in which universities, museums, countries, or even individuals, partially funded expeditions and were thereby entitled to a portion of the findings. Using archival documentation, I show how personal influence, institutional aspirations, political factors, and even pure chance were just some of the factors that affected the way in which artifacts were divided between the countries and institutions involved in the Antioch excavations. Focusing on the personal correspondence, excavation journals, and other ephemera of individuals including Sandy Campbell, Robert Garrett, and William Morey, the paper brings to life key players and their contexts (the excavations and institutions from which they came), to demonstrate that the story of Antioch we know today is heavily influenced by the men who paid for its rediscovery.

Shaping Antioch's Memory: Archive and Image (Virtual)
Amy Miranda[1]
[1] Aarhus University

The Antioch archives are rife with excavation photography, both of ancient objects and the 20th century people that excavated them. This paper explores the images of the Antioch excavation archives and their role in the creation and shaping of memory. The excavation photography in the archival record presents three distinct experiences in heritage: the creation of heritage in the ancient world, the excavation of heritage in the early 20th century, and the present-day efforts to preserve heritage in light of past colonialism. While focus is placed on tangible heritage—the material culture of ancient Antioch and the physical archives across institutions—the paper also offers a reflection the memory practices entrenched in the use of archaeological archives. Following the work of Paul Connerton, How Societies Remember (1989), the paper establishes the physical archive and its excavation photography as an inscribed memory practice versus the intangible, incorporated memory practice that is inherent in the embodied experience of using the archive. The performative and embodied aspect of archival research is its own form of a collective memory practice, shaping current archaeological and art historical research. More than just a look at the past, archaeological archives and legacy data are records of multiple histories and practices of remembrance.

Widening the Lens: Archaeological Labor at Antioch-on-the-Orontes/Antakya
Caitlin Clerkin[1]
[1] Harvard Art Museums

This brief workshop contribution will discuss the communities of excavation workers and labor practices on the 1930s excavations sponsored by the Committee for the Excavation of Antioch-on-the-Orontes and Its Vicinity. Drawing on the excavation archives and photography, I will discuss the local (to the region around Antakya) and regional (including Egyptian and Palestinian staff members) archaeological workers integral to the excavation. With the archaeological labor organization, practices, and professional networks at the Antioch excavations contextualized in relation to other contemporary, interwar-period excavations in the eastern Mediterranean and Middle East, I will reflect on this model of excavation labor vis-à-vis narratives about the site and about archaeological practice. I suggest that bringing the broader community of excavation workers into the narrative frame establishes a more accurate picture of the collective and colonial processes of excavation in the interwar period and helps us imagine a more equitable future for archaeology and cultural heritage.

The Worcester Hunt Mosaic: Provenance Research and Object Biography
Daniel Healey[1]
[1] Worcester Art Museum

Since 2024, the Worcester Art Museum has increased efforts to research and document the provenance of its Greek, Roman, Near Eastern, and Asian antiquities. This research aims to uncover new information about the archaeological origins and ownership histories of antiquities in the collection and share these stories with Museum audiences, both in the galleries and online. Among the jewels of Worcester's collection is its Hunt Mosaic from Antioch, which the Museum acquired in 1936 through its participation in the Antioch excavations and which has remained at the Museum ever since, permanently installed in the floor of its Renaissance Court. Research into the Hunt Mosaic has focused on various aspects of its object biography, from excavation and installation to its long history of display, conservation, and interpretation at the Museum. The mosaic's findspot and removal from Antioch are well documented in excavation photographs and records, many of them digitized. In addition, unpublished material in Worcester's archives offer insights into other aspects of its biography, including its installation and occasional use as a floor within the museum, as well as the multiple campaigns of restoration that have transformed the object over time.

After the 6 February Earthquake, Mosaic Works within the Scope of Digital Heritage Works in Antioch-Hatay

Banu Özdilek Tibikoğlu[1]
[1] University of Hatay Mustafa Kemal

Before joining Turkey in 1939, Hatay was an independent state from 1937-1938, part of the Ottoman Empire from 1516-1918, and later under French mandate rule after World War I. Antakya, the capital of the Seleucid Empire, was a major metropolis in the Roman period, ranking third after Rome and Alexandria. It has been continuously inhabited, with influences from Pagan, Christian, and Islamic civilizations. After the Crusaders, it came under Seljuk and Ottoman control. During the French Mandate (1932-1939), extensive archaeological excavations led by American and French teams unearthed rich mosaics, many of which were scattered worldwide due to a lack of protection laws. The February 6, 2023 earthquake devastated Antakya, highlighting the importance of preserving cultural heritage. Archaeologists, conservationists, and other experts have consulted 1930s excavation documents to restore the city's historical fabric. A key project aims to digitize Antiocheia mosaics, transforming selected pieces into 3D monuments. These will enhance Antakya's urban landscape and reinforce the community's connection to its cultural identity. Additionally, plans include conserving mosaics from the Artemis Bath in Issos Epiphaneia, creating an archaeological park, and ensuring the preservation of Antioch's mosaics through conservation, digital archives, and 3D productions. This initiative will help safeguard the region's cultural heritage for future generations.

The Publication of Daphne

Andrea U. De Giorgi[1]
[1] Florida State University

This is the first stand-alone study of Daphne. In an idyllic landscape of springs, synagogues, oracular temple, sanctuaries, and churches, relentlessly attracted throngs of worshippers and witnessed conflicts. Leveraging the datasets of the 1932-1939 exploration of Daphne, my project is twofold: first, it braids together fragmented excavations, stand-alone mosaic pavements, putative "houses," previously undocumented monuments, and integrates them into a new topography of the sacred. Second, it zeroes in on the actors, and their religious experience, using a ground level perspective to investigate practices, and the encounter with the "other."

Rebuilding the Modern City (Virtual)

Iskender Azaroglu[1]
[1] Antioch Museum of Art

This presentation focuses on ongoing efforts to rebuild the modern city, with its cultural heritage in mind. Given the devastating earthquake that destroyed much of the modern city, recent efforts are underway to rebuild and some have begun to pay special attention to Antioch's many layers. Current projects include the city's Iron Gate, the last surviving gate of Antioch, as well as a museum to display replicas of the Antioch mosaics shipped abroad.

8J. Archaeology of Petra and Nabataea (White Hill)

Chair(s): Cynthia Finlayson, Brigham Young University; Anna Accettola, Hamilton College

Exploring Cultural Continuity and Change in the Petra Region (600 BCE - 200 CE)

Jennifer Ramsay[1], Björn Anderson[2]
[1] SUNY Brockport, [2] University of Iowa

This paper presents the results of the second survey season (2025) of our project, "Exploring Continuity and Transition in Southern Jordan'. Working in and around the Petra region using photogrammetry and GPS pedestrian survey techniques we recorded 10 sites dating between the Late Iron Age and the Nabataean period (8th century BCE – 2nd century CE) in southern Jordan, adding to the 12 sites documented in 2024. Through survey and eventual excavation, we are working to fill a critical gap in our understanding of Jordanian prehistory, specifically the Persian period (600-300 BCE) in the Petra region. The 2025 season continued to explore the transition from the Late Iron Age to the Nabataean phase by thoroughly documenting previously identified sites with evidence from this period. Our focus was on collecting data related to occupation, funerary and ritual architectural features, as well as associated carvings and reliefs. This research is significant as Petra was the capital of the Nabataeans that flourished in northern Arabia and the southern Levant from the 4th century BCE to the 2nd century CE. The rise of Nabataean culture is crucial because it represents a remarkable transformation from nomadic origins to a settled civilization that controlled key trade routes and demonstrated extraordinary adaptability in a challenging desert environment. By studying their development, we gain profound insights into cultural synthesis, technological innovation, and the complex geopolitical dynamics of the ancient Near East.

Dushares in Plain Sight: New Archaeological Perspectives

Cynthia Finlayson[1]
[1] Gannon University

As one of the premier male deities of the ancient Nabataeans of Petra and Mada'in Salah, Dushares is still little understood by modern scholars of the Hellenistic and Roman Eras in the Near East. This paper discusses new perspectives concerning the epigraphic and archaeological evidences associated with Dushares as well as the syncretistic religious milieu in which this deity evolved. Emphasis will be placed on the importance of Dushares as a bridge deity linking the Arab/Aramaean Nabataeans and the Achaemenid Persian and subsequent Hellenized worlds of the Eastern Mediterranean--worlds with which the Nabataeans traded and interracted politically and militarily. In particular, the potential cultural and religious links of the Nabataeans to Egypt and the ancient Phoenician Coastal port cities during the Achaemenid and Hellenistic Periods will be highlighted. Additionally, while Nabataean inscriptions and Classical Greco-Roman literary sources have often been cited in attempts to discern the exact nature of Dushares in Nabataean contexts, early Islamic writings describing the religious practices of pre-Islamic Greater Arabia have often been ignored. Such evidences combined with recent archaeological discoveries on the Ad-Deir Plateau will be included in this paper presentation that help modern scholars understand more fully the nature and roles of Dushares in Nabataean contexts.

Nabataean Expressions of Identity Beyond Nababatea

Anna Accettola[1]
[1] Hamilton College

The inhabitants of the Nabataean Kingdom were organized along tribal lines and in familial groups for far longer than much of the eastern Mediterranean. The coalescence of this kingdom, however, created new pressure for its leadership and inhabitants to present themselves in a manner recognizable to external powers. In practice, this meant that "Nabataean" was often a term only used beyond the physical boundaries of the kingdom, in order to define an ethnicon or territorial association that would be understandable to the Greeks and Romans (Graf 2004). I argue that the term "Nabataean" was used as a way to minimize an unacceptable form of 'otherness,' that of not belonging to a formalized political organization of a Greco-Roman style. To overcome these evidentiary challenges, we must turn our analyses to the discrepancy between emic and etic identification of individuals beyond the borders of Nabataea. While

inscriptional evidence may provide information about the movement of Nabataeans throughout the Mediterranean, it is often created for the benefit of its audience, thus reproducing Greco-Roman standards. As such, we must reanalyze text and context, alongside non-public inscriptions of Nabataeans within and beyond the borders of the kingdom, to find native expressions of the self. In this paper, I argue that Nabataeans were extremely adaptable in creating an external expression of self that met the expectations of Greco-Romans, while carefully maintaining their distinctive identity, even in foreign lands.

Glocalized Soldiers in Late Antique Arabia & Palestrina Tertia
(Virtual)
Conor Whately[1]
[1] Independent Scholar

Despite having one of the smaller and more distant garrisons of any province in the Roman Empire, we are relatively well informed about some of the soldiers who were based in Arabia and Palaestina Tertia in late antiquity. Soldiers and veterans appear occasionally in the Petra papyri, like Flavius Dusarios, former prefect of Kastron Ammatha (P. Petra. 22), and much more frequently in the Nessana papyri, like Flavius al-Ubayy who appears in a marriage settlement (P. Ness. 18). There are also scattered inscriptions, like the epitaph for Aeneas, the son of Aeneas, dated to 482 and from Ghor es-Safi (Jordan, I.Pal. Tertia Ia 237), and the one for the bodyguard Maximos from al-Kafr (Syria, PPUAES IIIA 5, 672). Much of the research has concentrated on the function of the local armies (Isaac 1992, Rubin 1997, Castro 2018, etc.); some have investigated their relationship with local communities (Ruffini 2011). But much less scholarship has been devoted to the origins and status of these soldiers. In this paper I examine the local origins of Arabia and Palaestina Tertia's soldiers, using the epigraphic, material (where possible), and papyrological evidence, and we compare this with what we know about the legal status of soldiers empire-wide (global), using the legal material that comprises Justinian's Corpus of Roman Law, and contemporary textual sources like Procopius' Wars, Buildings, and Secret History. In turn, I aim to contextualize these results with what we know about the resident soldiers from the earlier imperial era (Pollard 2000), as well as their contemporaries in sixth-century Syene (Egypt – Keenan 1990).

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 21, 2025 | 8:15am-10:20am (EST)

9A. Violence in the Ancient Near East and Hebrew Bible II (Grand Ballroom A)

Chair(s): Anthony P. SooHoo, SJ, Pontifical Biblical Institute; Shane Thompson, North Carolina Wesleyan College; Laura Battini, Collège de France

Punitive, Disciplinary, and Deterrent Violence: A Study of Blinding in the Ancient Middle East

Eric J. Harvey[1]
[1] Stanford University

Violence has always had many forms, many functions, and many meanings. This study explores blinding in particular as a strategy of domination in practice and in rhetoric. In and after warfare, blinding served both punitive and disciplinary functions. Royal inscriptions boast of blinding conquered armies, and documentary sources attest to the use of blinded prisoners as menial labor. These newly disabled laborers, placed in sedentary and repetitive occupations, were (usually) easy to surveil and control. Unsurprisingly, then, blinding came to be included quite commonly in lists of punishments for breaking oaths and breaching treaties. As such, this paper will also consider the different implications blinding held as practice and as threat, as well as how it relates to other examples of disciplinary violence in the ancient Middle East.

From Mongoose to Bird: Domestication as Violence in the Annals of the Sargonids

Alistair Robertson[1]
[1] University of St Andrews

In the annals of the late Neo-Assyrian kings, violence is employed through an analogy to human-animal relations: domestication. In several locations, scribes depict the Sargonid king domesticating the "animalized" enemy king through symbolic and ritual violence. Tiglath-Pileser III turns the wild mongoose that is Raḫiānu of Damascus into a caged bird (RINAP I: 20, 1'-11'), Assurbanipal forces defeated Arab chieftans to carry his chariot in the akītu procession like draft animals (RINAP V/1: 11, col. x 17-30), and so on. How were these methods of symbolic and cultic violence received? Who was the intended audience of such violence? Surely, animals were a ready analogy for the ancient agro-pastoralist who lived in such close proximity to animals. Furthermore, the literati could have seen cosmological intertextualities between mythical compositions and the king's actions which placed him in the position of Marduk, especially as presented in Enūma Eliš. This paper will argue that, in this way, "animalization" presented an advantageous analogy whereby both sections of society could be reached. Paradoxically, such violence would have taught both the fear of the king's violence and provided a sense of security in the king's ability to domesticate the wild periphery of the Assyrian kingdom.

Violence of Ancient Egyptian Plundering: The New Kingdom Evidence (ca. 1550-1070 BCE)

Uros Matic[1]
[1] University of Graz, Austria

Looting in armed conflicts is attested in ancient Egypt at least since the Early Dynastic Period (ca. 3200-2700 BCE), which is also when the earliest lists of spoils of war appear. During the New Kingdom (ca. 1550-1070 BCE) when Egyptian imperialism reached its peak, evidence for plundering of humans, animals and things in neighboring lands such the Levant and Nubia is especially numerous and diverse. Lists of spoils of war, "autobiographical" accounts of military personnel and visual representations from private tombs of state officials and temples give insights into the administration and distribution of booty. However, these multiple lines of evidence also allow us to explore other aspects of New Kingdom Egyptian plundering. This paper examines two violent aspects of plundering by the New Kingdom Egyptian army: 1. separation of imprisoned men from imprisoned women and children in the process of deportation, 2. impoverishment through impact on local economies and demographics. Although the first aspect (separation during deportation) has been extensively studied from the economic point of view, its gendered background, violent features and emotional effects have all been neglected. When the second aspect (impoverishment) is concerned, one of the biggest challenges is how to measure impact of plundering by combining ancient Egyptian sources and archaeological evidence in neighbouring lands.

What Could a Demon Do, Anyway? Latent Violence, Fear, and the Supernatural in Demotic Self-dedications

Ella Karev[1]
[1] Tel Aviv University

In second century BC Egypt, over a hundred Demotic contracts were written recording the self-dedication of individuals to a deity. This self-dedication was, in effect, a lifelong pledge of the dedicant's person, labour, and service to the temple of that god. In exchange for selling oneself as a slave, the dedicant received protection from a list of dangers including demons (sšr), pestilential winds (t³w-rwṯ), liars (rmt ʿḏ), evil persons (rmt-bynn), as well as a variety of ghosts (ḫ.t-ntr, ỉḫ, rmt ỉw.f n ỉmnṯ) and deceased persons (ḥs-ntr, ḥsy, ỉn-mwt). The desire from protection from these entities—a desire so tangible it could lead to self-sale into temple servitude—was an expression of fear, or more specifically, a fear of latent violence. This paper explores the motivations for that fear, focusing on the potential for the violent actions which could theoretically be caused by demons, ghosts, and the deceased. Ultimately, this paper argues that although this fear was rooted in the supernatural, the fear itself was natural: a fear of the violence that such entities were capable of enacting through wholly natural proxies such as wild animals and human enemies. Within this context, this paper also suggests parallels for such fears and entities in Aramaic incantation bowls, with an eye to the threat of reciprocal violence present therein and curiously absent from the Demotic evidence.

9B. Archaeology of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq I (Grand Ballroom B)

Chair(s): Petra M. Creamer, Emory University; Elise J. Laugier, Utah State University

Developing a Regional Database for Ceramic Provenance Determination in Iraqi Kurdistan through Research Partnerships

Leah Minc[1]
[1] Oregon State University

Ongoing research in Iraqi Kurdistan offers the opportunity to examine the emergence and growth of ceramic production and exchange networks from the period of early village life through complex village and town systems, to the era of urbanization and dynastic kingdoms. To support this research trajectory, the Oregon State University Archaeometry Lab is working to build a regional comparative database of ceramic and clay compositions - based on bulk chemical analysis via INAA and ceramic petrography - that will support ceramic provenance determinations for the region. Through collaboration with museums and recent field projects, our objectives are (1) to assess the spatial scale and nature of geochemical variability in clays across this region; and (2) establish site-specific or localized ceramic compositional signatures for key sites, while (3) addressing specific research questions of our partners. Ultimately, the combined data on ceramic provenance will allow us to track the emergence of production centers and the growth of exchange

networks and contribute to our knowledge of how these developments articulate with socio-economic changes evidenced in patterns of status differentiation observed within sites and with the settlement densities and hierarchies observed in regional surveys. This presentation provides an overview of observed chemical variability within and among ceramics of the Erbil Plain, Rania Plain, and Bazian Basin along with findings regarding the spatial resolution of provenance discriminations, and concludes with an invitation to potential collaborators to join this important research effort.

Pottery Production and Consumption at Helawa (Erbil Plain) between the Ubaid and Late Chalcolithic Periods

Agenese Vacca[1]
[1] University of Milan

This paper aims at presenting the results of the Asor funded project "Crafting Complexity. Pottery Production and Consumption at Helawa (Erbil Plain) between the Ubaid and Late Chalcolithic Periods". The project aimed at exploring the pottery production system, understood as a key aspect of the socio-economic organization of prehistoric communities in the Erbil Plain, by means of technological and archaeometric analyses integrated with typological and functional features. The hypothesis of craft specialization and ceramic standardization has been analyzed through the investigation of pottery production at the prehistoric site of Helawa in a diachronic perspective, from the Ubaid to the Late Chalcolithic period (5th-4th millennium BCE). In particular, the project focused on variations occurring in the different steps of the chaîne opératoire to assess where routinized gestures appear (raw material procurement, paste preparation, vessel forming, firing) and how they affect the organization of production in terms of serialization, specialization, and standardization. The results of the Crafting Complexity project will be presented and discussed, comparing data obtained from Helawa with neighboring sites in the Erbil plain and more broadly in the Trans-Tigridian region.

From Proto-Urban to Empire(s). Five Years of Investigation at the site of Gird-I Matrab, Erbil Plain (2021-2025)

Rocco Palermo[1], Zach Silvia[2], Marta Doglio[2], Eleonora Franco[3], Sergio Taranto[4]
[1] Bryn Mawr College, [2] Brown University, [3] University of Milan, [4] Sapienza University of Rome

With the resurgence of archaeological research in the Kurdistan region of Iraq, increasing attention has been given to smaller sites, shedding new light on aspects of Mesopotamian history often overlooked in urban-focused narratives. These include agricultural production, resource distribution, rural economies, and regional networks, particularly during periods of radical socio-cultural transformation. Adopting a long-term, multi-scalar approach, this paper presents the findings from five years of investigation at Gird-I Matrab. Excavations have focused on two key periods of significant change: the Late Chalcolithic period (5th–4th millennia BCE) and the "age of empires" (late 1st millennium BCE to the early centuries CE). Through landscape studies, non-invasive exploration, stratigraphic excavation, and material culture analysis, it examines the lives, economies, and subsistence strategies of rural populations on the Erbil Plain, tracing their development from prehistory to their integration into expansive imperial networks and trans-regional connections.

Zoroastrian Rock Fire Altars in the Kurdistan Region

Hasan Ahmed A. Qasim Al-Berwary[1]
[1] Kurdistan Archaeology Organization

The Kurdistan Region is home to several ancient rock fire altars, which are believed to be linked to Zoroastrianism, one of the world's oldest religions. These fire altars, carved into rock surfaces or elevated platforms, were used for rituals centered around fire, a sacred element in Zoroastrian belief. Fire was considered a symbol of purity, wisdom, and divine presence, and these altars played a crucial role in religious ceremonies. Archaeological evidence suggests that these altars date back to the pre-Islamic era, particularly during the Achaemenid (550–330 BCE) and Sassanian (224–651 CE) periods, when Zoroastrianism was the dominant faith in the region. The strategic placement of these altars on mountaintops, in caves, or near natural gas vents indicates their spiritual significance and the possible connection to eternal flames fueled by natural gas emissions. The presence of Zoroastrian fire altars in the Kurdistan Region highlights the area's rich cultural and religious heritage. While many of these sites remain understudied, they serve as important historical landmarks, offering insights into the spiritual traditions that once flourished in this part of the ancient Near East. Today, they continue to attract scholars, historians, and visitors interested in the region's Zoroastrian past.

9C. Towards a Working Ancient Economy: The Bronze Age I (Georgian)

Chair(s): Eric Aupperle, Harvard University; Andrew Deloucas, Harvard University; Taha Yurttas, Harvard University

Why Economic History?

Gojko Barjamovic[1]
[1] Yale University

By far the largest part of the written corpus surviving from the ancient Middle East is made up of "archival" texts—a large proportion of which were written with the explicit purpose of tracking economic data. They cover genres that for a large part don't typically survive in later Mediterranean contexts. In various ways they shed light on individuals and groups often underrepresented elsewhere in history. They also present particular challenges and necessitate tailored approaches different from the ones developed in fields like Bible and Classics. They tend to speak more to colleagues in Archaeology and the Archaeological Sciences. For various reasons, scholarship on economic texts has contracted noticeably in the US over the course of the last generation. No ANE program can currently be said to focus on economic history. Approaches developed in the subfields of Economic History with approaches like Cliometrics, New Institutional Economics, Ecological Economics, etc. have seen limited application in ANE studies (with a few notable exceptions) while a growing interest in ancient economic data and the history of institutions from within the fields of Economics and Sociology has caused moderate engagement with scholars specializing in ancient data. This paper will discuss current trends and outline possible venues of future development in the field of ancient Economic History as a preamble to the talks offered by the session speakers.

Economic Transformations in Late Bronze Age Egypt in the Light of New Papyrological and Archaeological Data (Virtual)

Juan Carlos Moreno García[1]
[1] Sorbonne Université

Egypt's economic organization saw considerable transformations during the Late Bronze Age. The country became deeply integrated into the exchange networks that connected the Near East, the Mediterranean, North-East Africa, and the Indian Ocean. The introduction of new crops and irrigation devices, the expansion of cities and imperial conquest in Nubia and the Levant, and the cultivation of new areas in the Nile Valley opened new possibilities for crop specialization, trade and craft innovation. Only part of these activities was promoted by the state demand. In other cases, private actors played a crucial role in cultivating institutional land, in international trade and transformation tasks, and even led their own

businesses abroad. In the almost complete absence of private archives, scattered references to markets, silver use, and private trade offer invaluable evidence that the private sector is more important than previously assumed. At the same time, the interplay between the textual and the archaeological evidence casts new light on some aspects of the ancient Egyptian economy usually subsumed under the alleged centrality of an "interventionist" and redistributive state. Therefore, the collaboration between the institutional and the private spheres may help get a more balanced comprehension of the functioning of the economy.

Metal Wealth in Ebla: Trade, Value, and Economic Dynamics
Fiammetta Gori[1]
[1] Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich

Metals played a fundamental role in Ebla's economy, serving as both media of exchange and measures of value. This study examines their impact by analyzing the circulation and imports of gold, silver, and other metals, assessing their role in shaping Ebla's economic capacity. While the recorded value of different commodities—often expressed in silver—offers insight into valuation systems, the availability and movement of multiple metals influenced commercial transactions, fiscal strategies, and resource distribution. By integrating these aspects, this analysis provides a broader perspective on the function of metals in Ebla's economy and their implications for trade as well as palace administration.

Temporary Exemption from Conscription for Elder Care during the Ur III Period
Andrew Pottorf[1]
[1] University of Cambridge

Royal and provincial households as well as temples conscripted much of the population during the Ur III Period (2110–2003 BCE), in addition to utilizing slave labor, to maintain their households and provide for the population. Male citizens and serflike UN-il2 ("menials") were regularly conscripted at part-time rates of 50 to 87.5 percent of the year and full-time rates of 90 to 97.5 percent, respectively. Female citizens were not regularly conscripted though, allowing them to be self-employed in crucial domestic work or various professions. Female UN-il2 were conscripted at full-time rates of usually 80 to about 83.33 percent, so they had more free time for domestic work than male UN-il2. To ensure some amount elder care, male citizens and mostly male UN-il2 could receive temporary conscription exemption to care for their elderly parents. This presentation examines data from the first exhaustive search of over 150 attestations of individuals with this exemption, known as ab-(ba-)il2 ("father supporter[s]") and ama-il2 ("mother supporter[s]"). Father and mother supporters were usually the youngest children and rarely grandchildren in the family able to provide care, which may have limited the impact of their conscription exemption. This exemption was probably more available to citizens than UN-il2, but slaves could probably not utilize this exemption. Moreover, it appears that elderly fathers and mothers were nearly equally cared for.

Making Sense of the "Irrational": Behavioral Economics in the Archives of the Third Dynasty of Ur
Steven J. Garfinkle[1]
[1] Western Washington University

Our examinations of the economy in ancient Mesopotamia have long recognized that the behavior of economic actors was embedded in a set of socio-cultural expectations that often defy easy characterization by our traditional economic theories. At the same time, our view of early political economies has often assumed the absolute power of the state to determine economic participation through their redistributive economies. In this paper, I will argue that the archives from the Third Dynasty of Ur show us a different model in which behavior that may appear irrational can be understood as the optimization of decision making by households that possessed access to the means of production. Therefore, while the provincial administrative archives of the Ur III kingdom demonstrate the instantiation of state power, those same archives show how the kingdom's elites also sought and acquired economic agency and social power.

9D. Art Historical Approaches to the Near East I (Arlington)

Chair(s): Amy Gansell, St. John's University; S. Rebecca Martin, Boston University

Gathering Stones: Shutruk Nahhunte I the Collector
Rachael Maxon[1]
[1] University of Iowa

This paper explores the changes in collecting practices in ancient Iran under Middle Elamite king Shutruk Nahhunte I around 1155 BCE as compared to past kings of Mesopotamia. Using evidence from the archaeological, art historical, and textual record I will discuss the motivations for the collection, movement, and display of objects by Shutruk Nahhunte I at Susa and how his approach to object collection differs from earlier Mesopotamian kings. Mesopotamian kings such as Enmetena I, Gudea of Lagash, and Shalmanser I among others leave inscriptions attesting to their collection of objects as booty during wartime. I argue that while Shutruk Nahhunte I also gathered booty such as the Victory Stele of Naram-Sin, the Obelisk of Manishtushu, and numerous Babylonian kudurru in this way, several of his inscriptions indicate that his impetus for collecting was also motivated by personal interest in collecting objects of the past outside of war. Objects of this type include the Awan Stele, the Stele of Untash-Napirisha, and other smaller stone monuments. This paper examines these objects and inscriptions in order to rethink how and why kings collected objects, and how Shutruk Nahhunte I and his successors used their display on the Susa Acropolis to legitimize their rule and link themselves to the Mesopotamian empires of the past.

From Nude to Prude: The Iconographic Evolution of the Laḫmu in Mesopotamian Art during the 1st Millennium BCE (Virtual)
Raquel Robbins[1]
[1] University of Toronto

The divine being known as Laḫmu, a mostly nude male figure with six distinct hair curls and belt, illustrates a strong continuity of iconographic representation throughout Mesopotamian history. The Laḫmu first appears in the iconographic traditions of the ancient Near East in the 3rd millennium BCE. His iconic physical appearance in art remains stagnant until the rise of the Assyrian Empire in the 1st millennium BCE when his distinct iconographic depiction is altered. This new depiction modifies the Laḫmu's iconic nudity and lack of dress, suddenly depicting him draped fully in garments, stylistically matching depictions of the Assyrian warriors. This paper seeks to demonstrate how the changing political and religious climates in the late 2nd and early 1st millenniums BCE may have caused the shift in the iconic depiction of the Laḫmu. Within the iconographic traditions in the 1st millennium BCE, there is a shift to cloth all nude figures in some form of dress. The Laḫmu presents an excellent case study that displays this change in previous representations while maintaining some traditional iconographic aspects. I argue that the clothing in art during this period was used as a political symbol and shows the significance of textiles in the Assyrian Empire. As the Assyrian Empire grew, so did a revitalization of traditions, particularly those from the Akkadian period. The Laḫmu was one of these iconographic revitalizations which saw the

push to display cultural artistic traditions with the influence of modern agendas.

To Raise his Head: Fashioning the Neo-Assyrian King's Headdress
Elizabeth H. Clancy[1]
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The figure of King Ashurnasirpal II dominates the relief panels of the Northwest Palace at Nimrud, protected by inscriptions and flanked by courtiers and supernatural beings. The king wears a belted tunic with a luxuriously fringed mantle, his arms flexing under bracelets heavy with Ishtar's rosettes. Secured by the long streamers of a crested headband, a royal headdress rises from his brow in the shape of a truncated cone, topped with an emphatically pointed finial. In reliefs and paintings of the king on campaign, the point echoes the proportion of his soldiers' helmets. The cone is also shown divided by ornamented bands suggesting wrapped layers. This form of royal headdress survives for centuries and as part of an agentive assemblage embodying his imperial office, is potent enough to stand in for the royal body. To explore the components and messages of the royal headdress, this paper employs evidence from iconography, text, and experimental archeology. A reconstruction of an extant iron helmet from Nimrud will be shown wrapped in cloth and also covered with felted wool. Focusing on the materiality of this enigmatic garment unlocks new understanding of its role as a symbol of investiture by the sky god Anu. If it is indeed made on an underlying helmet, the point of the helmet would have reminded the king's subjects of his role as military commander, while the tiered layers ornamented with celestial signs speak of his cosmic role as a conduit for divine will.

The Strange Upper Sea: The Assyrian Seascape from Khorsabad Reconsidered (Virtual)
Christopher W. Jones[1]
[1] Union University

The seascape relief from Khorsabad, first discovered by Paul-Émile Botta in 1844 and now on display in the Louvre, depicts a fleet of boats transporting timber along a body of water (most likely the Mediterranean Sea) for the purpose of constructing Sargon II's new city of Dur-Šarrukin. The depiction of the flora and fauna of the region contains numerous small details that have long puzzled scholars, including the presence of snakes, lizards, and scorpions swimming in the sea as well as mermen and lamassus. In other cases the artists appear to have depicted exotic fauna using more familiar forms: sea turtles are rendered so as to resemble the Euphrates Softshell Turtle. This contrasts with other Assyrian reliefs which depict the local fauna of Mesopotamia with a high degree of naturalism and accuracy. Detailed study of the Khorsabad relief is complicated by reconstructions which are not clearly visible in published photos. This paper will present the results of upcoming research which I will carry out in the Louvre in May of 2025 to identify these reconstructions and understand how they may change our interpretation of the fauna of the relief. Tentatively, it will propose that the scene represents a deliberate strangifying and exoticizing of the Mediterranean. Drawing on an earlier tradition of depictions of the Mediterranean from the reign of Tiglath-pileser I and Assur-bel-kala, the Khorsabad relief draws attention to the unprecedented expansion of the empire under Sargon II by depicting its edges as an exotic space filled with strange creatures.

Balancing the Divine: Aššur, Mullissu, and the Legitimation of Sennacherib at Khinis
Talah Anderson[1]
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The monumental reliefs of the Assyrian king Sennacherib (r. 705–681 BCE) that are carved into the cliffs overlooking the site of the Khinis canal head (near Bavian) present a striking visual articulation of divine legitimation, positioning the king in direct association with the Assyrian state god Aššur in addition to his divine consort Mullissu. These compositions have often been understood as extraordinary expressions of the king's proximity to the divine, as well as the divine partnership between Aššur and Mullissu, but their spatial and symbolic dynamics warrant further consideration. Rather than positioning the king in a single relationship to the divine, the reliefs adopt a shifting visual strategy—at times placing the royal image beside, between, or even embedded within the images of the deities. This paper considers how these spatial and symbolic arrangements integrate the king into the visual rhetoric of divinity. In doing so, it explores how the Khinis reliefs express the structuring role of divine partnership for Sennacherib's ideological landscape and, in turn, how this extends into the physical environment.

9E. Dwelling in the Past: Scales of Settlement, Time, and Society in Anatolia I (Berkeley & Clarendon)

Chair(s): N. İlgi Gerçek, Bilkent University; Yağmur Heffron, University College London; Müge Durusu-Tanrıöver, Temple University

Follow the Water: Waterscapes of the Yalburt Survey Project as Examples of the Medium-Scale
Müge Durusu-Tanrıöver[1], Omur Harmansah[2], Peri Johnson[2], Shannon Martino[3], Bochay Drum[4], Ben Marsh[5]
[1] Temple University, [2] University of Illinois at Chicago, [3] Shannon Martino, [4] Yalburt Yaylası Archaeological Landscape Research Project, [5] Ben Marsh

In this paper, we discuss the medium-scale as a methodological and theoretical window with which to view the scale of human experience, dwelling, and movement across landscapes. Medium-scale landscape analyses offer the resolution and scale to discuss taskscapes, movement across regions, transhumance and geomorphological change. The layout of agricultural fields; the placement of quarries and clay beds; the location of cemeteries and rural sanctuaries; management of irrigation networks and waterways; engagement with springs, caves and sinkholes, and the mapping of roads and routes all belong to the medium-scale. Studies of landscape at this resolution can counter the abstractness of maps, satellite images or large spatial datasets that can reveal larger regional networks at the expense of human lifeways. The medium-scale emerges from archaeological fieldwork (specifically, regional survey), data collection, and analysis that renders ancient communities and their place-based practices visible. Taking waterways and bodies of water from the Yalburt Yaylası Landscape Archaeology Project region as our focus, we discuss the politics and ritual significance of water as a key element in the organization and experience of medium-scale landscapes in the longue durée. From the many sites and activity areas nestled along the Bulasan River valley to the highland spring monumentalized in the Yalburt sacred pool of the Hittite Empire period, water acted as a focus for human and non-human communities. In our paper, we discuss the practices that went into utilizing water from subsistence to ritual, its consequences for material culture and place-making, the politics of lowland and upland ecologies, and the resulting medium-scale landscapes that were constituted and experienced.

The Seasonality of Hittite Water Structures: Karakuyu as a Case Study (Virtual)
Néhémie Strupler[1]
[1] Durham University

The Hittites built many structures that had a direct connection with water, such as ponds, dams, canals, and vaulted chambers. Research from recent decades demonstrates how the Hittites astutely took advantage of the local topography and the changes in

water regimes throughout the year. They ensured that these water structures, if required, would be filled through water capture at the end of the winter season. Subsequently, during the hotter and drier summer months, this would provide a water reservoir that would slowly dry out until the winter, marking the renewal of the yearly cycle. However, our understanding of how people interacted differentially with these structures during various seasons is still in its infancy. Most of the plans and drawings of these water structures present only a single, fully functioning phase, neglecting their variation through the year, with wetter and drier states. To address this gap in understanding Hittite water structures, this paper presents a case study on the under-researched Karakuyu water structure, to illustrate how we could better approach the differentiated behavior of humans with water structures and the dwelling of sacred landscapes.

From City to Wilderness: Sacred and Ritual Landscapes in Hittite Anatolia

N. İlgi Gerçek[1]
[1] Bilkent University

Archaeological and textual research across Hittite Anatolia points to a broad spectrum of settlement forms—from major urban centers to smaller towns and rural establishments. These sources suggest that the city, along with other forms and scales of human habitation, was neither fixed nor isolated; it represented a dynamic community whose identities, socio-political connections, and economic activities extended beyond its walls. Thus, cities were not static—their meaning and relationships to the broader landscape were shaped through continuous movement and interaction. Communities were tied to their surroundings through myriad taskscapes involving agriculture, animal husbandry, trade, administration, and security, all of which required regular movement across space, linking cities, smaller settlements, and the wild landscapes beyond. One of these paths between the city and the wilderness was trodden into existence through rituals. Many rituals recorded in the Hittite archives unfolded across extended spatial landscapes, requiring practitioners to move beyond the city. Some were tied to liminal settings such as borderlands, where the act of traversing was integral to the ritual process. Drawing on the rich Hittite terminology describing urban and extra-urban landscapes, ritual movements, spaces, and places, this paper investigates how ritual movement inscribed meaning onto Hittite landscapes, reinforcing the city's connections to spaces beyond its walls. In doing so, it illustrates how dwelling, as both a collective and individual practice, operated on multiple scales—from the city's immediate environs to the distant "wilderness"—shaping and being shaped by sacred and ritual landscapes.

The City, the Village, and the Household in the Iron Age Syro-Anatolian Corpora (Virtual)

Federico Giusfredi[1]
[1] University of Verona

In recent years, the studies on the so-called Syro-Anatolian culture(s) of the Iron Age have entered a new phase, in which archaeological and anthropological studies have been successfully integrated in the traditionally philological field of what was formerly described as "Luwian studies". This virtuous process resulted in a better understanding of the historical, geographical, and cultural coordinates of a civilization that is now described as multicultural, in that it combines Anatolian and Semitic components in a rather complex fashion. In light of this new promising – if still perfectible – paradigm, a re-evaluation of previous research hypotheses is now necessary. In this paper, I will reconsider and rediscuss some of the Hieroglyphic Luwian documents that I studied in my now fifteen-year-old book "Sources for a Socio-Economic History of the Neo-Hittite States" (Heidelberg 2010), concentrating on the references to cities, villages and households as structural units of the demographic, economic and political horizon of Syro-Anatolia during the Iron Age. I will reassess the structure of texts such as the CEKKE inscription and the KULULU LEAD STRIPS (among others) in a comparative fashion that will also consider the Syrian traditions and some peripheral Semitic documents, such as the CEBELİRİS DAĞI inscription, which had not been included in my original discussion.

Landscapes of Learning: Long-term Social Memory on the Kaneš–Aššur Highways

Neil Erskine[1]
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The interactive importance of routine, movement, and landscapes in socialisation and the creation of meaning are common themes in social theory and interpretative archaeological approaches. However, they are rarely examined in ancient West Asian contexts, even where there is abundant and detailed evidence regarding routine travel, such as in Middle Bronze Age Anatolia. Two motifs in the literature may explain these lacunae: a tendency to focus on sites, historical geography, the logistics of trade, or the goods or ideas transported in studies of movement; and secondly, an aversion to explicitly interpretative approaches, possibly due to their frequently vague connections between data and theory. This paper draws upon the relational ontologies of Gilles Deleuze and the radical constructivism of Ernst von Glasersfeld to build a data-theory bridge and explore how socially-constructed perceptions of landscapes and landscape motifs were internalised by individuals and across generations amongst traders who moved between MBA Central Anatolia and Mesopotamia. This will present a theoretically-aware but data-centred methodology with which ancient social meaning can be addressed; an analysis of Assyrian trade movement with a focus placed firmly on the individual merchant and their specific experience; and an account of how movement informs both individual worldviews and society-level ontologies.

9F. History of Archaeology I (Studio 1)

Chair(s): Leticia R. Rodriguez, University of Houston; Caitlin Clerkin, Harvard Art Museums

The "Siloam Pool" in Recent Archaeological Excavation and Site Presentation in Antioch and Its Vicinity

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[1] Wichita State University

Many archaeological excavations, especially those imbued with religious significance, begin with an initial discovery that excites the imagination and shows promise as a tourist destination. As excavations proceed, the initial discovery may lead elsewhere, but the marketing and presentation of the site may not necessarily be amended to present what is eventually uncovered. This paper casts light on issues arising from this type of process by describing the ongoing excavations of Birket el-Hamra, the site identified in 2004 as the Second Temple Era "Pool of Shiloah (Siloam)," located in the East Jerusalem village of Silwan. Findings and preliminary interpretations from the Israeli Antiquities Authority-led excavations begun in 2023 are compared with ways the site has been presented in tourist and visitor information in the last twenty years. The discussion that follows addresses issues concerning the multilayered relationships between archaeological projects, site management, presentation, and funding. The site evokes connections to biblical references in both the Old Testament/Tanak and the New Testament, to Jewish heritage and Christian sites of pilgrimage, as well as being a place in the living history of the area's current residents. As such, the marketing and management of the site and incentives of the funders (City of David Foundation) shape site presentation in ways that may conflict with archaeological results. Finally, the site's location adds further challenging realities particular to the status of East Jerusalem and the reality of its Palestinian residents, sharpening the issues at stake in decisions of heritage management.

Excavating Absence: Researching Back in Antioch and Its Vicinity

(Virtual)

Ezgi Erol[1]
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Shifting power relations during the interwar period deepened the gap between people and heritage in and around Antioch. Between 1932 and 1939, French, American, and British archaeologists conducted excavations under the French Mandate, removing countless artifacts. The local men, women, and kids who labored on these digs are largely absent from the archival record. Their absence reflects the epistemic violence through which colonial knowledge structures erased local agency and shaped hegemonic archaeological and museum narratives. This paper introduces an interdisciplinary methodological framework to address these erasures. By combining C. Wright Mills' sociological imagination with Michael Shanks' archaeological imagination, I offer an alternative reading of Hatay's societies, human-object relations, and archaeological heritage. How can legacy data be reconstructed—or deconstructed—through the lens of interdisciplinary imagination? How do aesthetic regimes in museums and archives maintain or challenge colonial hierarchies? I answer these questions by reclaiming local narratives, applying Linda Tuhiwai Smith's concept of 'researching back' to reconstruct histories and restore local voices. This approach informs my study of the House of the Boat of Psyches, a villa excavated in 1934 during the Franco-American digs in Daphne, a suburb of ancient Antioch. Its objects—once embedded in place and context—are dispersed across more than five North American and European institutions, as well as private collections. I trace their dispersal and reassemble their fragmented narratives, examining what this loss and its (im)possible reconstruction means for collective memory, postcolonial archaeology, artistic research in heritage studies, and the reimagining of local agency.

From Jebel Barkal/Kerma to Antioch-on-the-Orontes: The Archaeological Career of Reis Berberi Mahmoud Aisa of Quft (1909–1939)

Jeffrey R. Zorn[1]
[1] Cornell University

Over the last twenty years there has been an increasing interest in documenting the careers of the local people who participated in western-led excavations during the period of the British mandate over Palestine and also under Ottoman rule. Their contributions have often gone unnoticed in texts describing the history of archaeological work in this region, even in histories of ASOR itself. Yet, these men, women and children contributed significantly to the achievements of these early excavations. Many worked as laborers clearing vast amounts of debris that produced the broad horizontal exposures characteristic of that era. Others provided important technical skills such as surveying, drawing pottery, accounting, translating, building, supervising workers, and fine excavating. In the past two sessions I have discussed the work of Labib Sorial, an Egyptian Copt form Luxor, known primarily for his role as a dig architect, and also Boulos el-`Araj, a Palestinian Quaker from Ramallah, often tasked with drawing pottery. This presentation spotlights the career of Berberi Mahmoud Aisa, one of the many Qufti reises who supervised the scores, even hundreds, of local workers employed in those projects. The Quftis were a type of village/family guild, first trained in the Egyptian campaigns of Petrie and Reisner in the late nineteenth/early twentieth centuries. Berberi's career is first documented with Reisner at Samaria in 1909 but began sometime before that and continued to Antioch in 1939. Available documentation on Berberi provides rare hints on the family labor networks in which the Qufti reises were situated.

'Careful about the Preservation of Objects as about the Finding of Them': Expertise, Labor, and Field Hierarchies

Caitlin O'Grady[1]
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The professionalization of conservation and its transformation into an accepted discipline has its roots in the development of archaeology as a science in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Understanding this history provides insight into how experts framed their work within concepts of risk, uncertainty, and sustainability – parameters which continue to have lasting impacts for contemporary conservation practice. Efforts to mitigate risk and ensure preservation required the labor contributions of multiple actors– each operating with varying levels of agency. Archaeologists including Sir C. Leonard Woolley (1930) knew that they needed to be as 'careful about the preservation of objects as about the finding of them, and the demands on his time are thereby as least doubled.' Preventing artifactual data loss was an ethical imperative that facilitated sustainable research and highlighted conservation's ability to transform recovered archaeological materials—often degraded and fragmented—into interpretable data and evidence about the past. This process legitimized authoritative claims about the past made by experts, which were often rooted in colonial, imperial, or nationalistic foundations. Field hierarchies further dictated how expertise and labor were valued, acknowledged, and bartered within archaeological ecosystems. This paper will review case studies from British Mandate Palestine (Tell en-Nasbeh, Megiddo), Mandate for Syrian and Lebanon (Antioch-on-the-Orontes), as well as the Ottoman Empire and its vassal states (sites investigated under the auspices of the Egyptian Exploration Fund) using the lens of identity and expertise against a framework of shifting politics, nationalism, and antiquities legislation.

Authority, Authenticity, and Forgery: Language Expertise in the Modern Production of Hieroglyphic Texts, 1850-1900

Katherine Davis[1]
[1] University of Michigan

In the decades that followed the decipherment of hieroglyphs in 1822, the ancient Egyptian language remained a contested and marginal field of study, in which the ability to read hieroglyphs, as well as the related scripts, often acted as a proxy for authority over the ancient Egyptian past, regardless of any scholarly or professional status. At this same time, textual inscriptions on ancient Egyptian objects conveyed both authenticity and value on the booming antiquities market. It is in this milieu that the amateur American Egyptologist Edwin Smith moved to Luxor, assembled an Egyptian collection (including two of the most famous Egyptian medical papyri), established himself in scholarly circles, and, according to rumor, forged antiquities. Drawing from newly discovered archival material—notebooks that record Smith's early engagement with the Egyptian language, including attempts at composing modern texts in hieroglyphs—this paper uses Edwin Smith as a case study for exploring the complex relationships between scholarship, language, forgery, and the antiquities market in the last decades of the 19th century.

9G. Ancient Inscriptions I (Studio 2)

Chair(s): Jessie DeGrado, University of Michigan; Madadh Richey, Brandeis University

Inside or Outside the City? The Study of Past Inscriptions during Sargonid Renovations to Formerly Extra-Mural Temples

Ben Dewar[1]
[1] University of London

This paper analyses VA 5707 (= KAH 2 no. 27), an unusual Neo-Assyrian copy (or perhaps forgery) of a Middle Assyrian royal inscription on a clay amulet from Ashur. In particular, it focuses on the context of this amulet within the library of a family of exorcists, and its contents of its inscription – a building account for a temple or palace that had originally stood outside the walls of Ashur but had since come to be located inside the city as it expanded. I argue that this amulet was studied in antiquity in relation to the original Akitu House at Nineveh, which was located within the city by the Sargonid period. In this context, VA 5707's presence in an exorcist family's library represents efforts by scholars during the Sargonid to answer questions of how to approach extra-mural temples that had been swallowed up by urban expansion; was it more important to preserve the absolute location of these structures, or relocate them to preserve their relative location? This analysis illuminates several aspects of Sargonid attitudes towards temples, building conservation, and urban and extra-urban space, and of how the study of historical texts contributed to shaping these attitudes.

Reading the Nimrud Nabû temple statues in context

Zachary Rubin[1]
[1] University of Michigan

Around the end of the 9th century BCE, Assyrian governor Bēl-tarṣi-ilumma donated two inscribed statues to the Nabû temple in Nimrud (ancient Kalḫu), on behalf of his king Adad-nērārī III and queen mother Sammu-ramāt. In addition to their attestation of the power of Sammu-ramāt, the historical basis of the legendary warrior-queen Semiramis, the statues testify to the rise of the Babylonian Nabû cult in Assyria. Bēl-tarṣi-ilumma's closing exhortation to "trust in Nabû" and "do not trust in another god," has been especially invoked in discussions of personal religion and monotheism in the ancient world. This paper seeks to reevaluate the dedication of the statues in light of the political and cultural trends of Bēl-tarṣi-ilumma's day, as well as his own likely history with Nabû. After a brief exploration of the early reception of the statues in Assyriology, this paper will reconstruct Bēl-tarṣi-ilumma's own career and possible intellectual influences, including the devotional compositions he may have used as templates for his dedicatory inscription. It will also re-analyze the layout of the Nabû temple and its statuary as hybrids of Assyrian and Babylonian influences. Through these evaluations, this paper casts Bēl-tarṣi-ilumma as a member of a budding new Assyrian elite class (the "magnates") who profited from the rapid expansion of the empire in the ninth century. Though their power ultimately derived from their service to the Assyrian king, their identity was strongly informed by Babylonian high culture.

Criteria for Determining the Function of Consecration in Mesopotamian Incantations

William A. Younger[1]
[1] University of Chicago

This paper aims to establish valid criteria for the identification of a consecration function in Mesopotamian incantations. Through textual analysis of an incantation text within its literary and ritual context this paper articulates a range of criteria, e.g, rubrics, explicit statement of consecrated object, recurrent phraseology, etc. Furthermore, it demonstrates the nuance and complexity involved in assigning a particular function to incantations which lack the representative criteria. Despite the large number and considerable importance of consecration incantations (commonly referred to as Kultmittelbeschwörungen) this corpus has never been systematically studied. Formal definitions of the corpus prove problematic and point to the need to determine the function and purpose of each incantation on a case-by-case basis. By developing plausible criteria that permit the identification of a consecration function, this paper serves as an important step to better delineating and understanding the consecration incantation corpus in particular, and clarifying the functional aspects of Mesopotamian incantations in general.

Uncovering the Interpretation: Looking for Systems of Logic in Mesopotamian Divination

M. Willis W. Monroe[1]
[1] Columbia University

Despite the skilled and persistent effort of erudite scholars in cuneiform studies it has been hard to establish a place for the rigorous nature of Mesopotamian scientific thought in the long history of scientific observation dominated, at its origin, by the ancient Greeks. One reason is the lack of easy to digest works of theoretical speculation that dominate early Greek philosophy within the cuneiform corpus. Small hints at the existence of this type of genre do exist--the Diviner's Manual and some tablets of Multābiltu--however the vast corpus of cuneiform scholarship are primarily the output of systems of logic rather than descriptions of them. In this paper I hope to show how we can make use of the corpora at hand (either in print or digital edition) together with quantitative methods of analysis to tease out associations and coöccurrences that underlie the production of divinatory texts. Primarily this paper will focus on the published tablets of the astrological series Enūma Anu Enlil but Šumma Alu will also be used as textual material. The goal will be to show that underlying the long lists of omens contained within the corpus of Mesopotamian divination are systems of association that attest to the existence of theoretical ideas about meaning. To be clear this paper is not an attempt to resurrect a theory of the "natural world" as described by modern scholars in early Greek philosophy, but to find something different but equally interesting in the cuneiform world.

Beyond Babylonia: Elements of Assyrian Royal Ideology in the Cylinder of Antiochus

Ezequiel Martin Parra[1]
University of Michigan

As the sole extant foundation inscription from the Hellenistic period, the Cylinder of Antiochus offers a unique perspective on Seleukid engagement with the cuneiform traditions. Recent analysis stresses its significance as a unique piece of evidence for the accommodation of the priestly elites of Babylonia in the new imperial context created by the Seleukid empire. The many layers that constitute point to an intense engagement of the priesthood with the local tradition of the Neo-Babylonian period. However, as persuasive as this approach might be, it risks being extremely Babylon-centric, disregarding other traditions involved in the composition of the Cylinder. In this paper, I argue that the text has deeper roots in Mesopotamian history and that it is possible to identify elements emanating from Neo-Assyrian traditions of royal ideology. Assyrian-inspired patterns and motifs are concentrated in the sections of royal titularies and the final prayer. These patterns are incorporated into the text by means of two literary strategies that I refer to as conflation of sources and "transformation" of genres, which suggest an active and purposeful engagement of Babylonian scholars regarding their sources and materials. In that sense, I claim that such a process did not entail the adoption of certain formulae because they were Assyrian but because they were useful to communicate aspects of Seleukid kingship that were somehow related to its Assyrian counterpart, especially the military ethos of the monarchy.

9H. Interconnectivity and Exchange with Northeast Africa I (The Loft)

Chair(s): Iman Nagy, University of California, Los Angeles; Annissa Malvoisin, Brooklyn Museum

xpr.w: Migrations & Ani's Going Forth by Day

LaMarrison Forte[1]
[1] University of Toronto

Chapter 86 of the Papyrus of Ani is the beginning of a series of xpr.w ("transformations") that see Ani taking the forms of several animals, Netchers, and a plant, all which contribute to his journey of being found mAa-xrw ("True of Voice") and ultimately becoming an ancestor. The manner in which these transformations occur is based on a mixture of species behavior, correlation-based metaphor, and cultural information that stretches over a large swath of the African continent. In this presentation, I will focus on the bird species: the barn swallow (Hirundo rustica), the peregrine falcon (Falco peregrinus), and the grey heron (Ardea cinerea) of chapters 86, 77,78, 83, and 84 respectively. Species-specific attributes involving migration patterns can help us understand the species selection with more clarity, and possibly identify specific areas in Africa where Ani is supposed to return to in a tangible geographic context. The natural elements in the text seem to ultimately be the vehicle for the mythological items, not a product of them.

Soleb Temple: A Vector of Nilotic Kingship Ideology

Brandon Keith[1], Charles Rhodes[1]
[1] University of California, Los Angeles

Amenhotep III was king of Egypt during a time of extraordinary wealth accumulation and construction caused by the burgeoning Egyptian empire. He presided over extensive building at Karnak and Luxor temples, and his mortuary complex was the largest religious structure built in Thebes. Analogous to these, his temple at Soleb in Lower Nubia was the largest religious structure in Nubia of its time. This temple was placed within the Nubian landscape to communicate the imperial power of the king in several ways; its massive size communicated imperial Egyptian hegemony, while its extensive list of "bound-captive" toponyms and ethnonyms demonstrated the empire's knowledge of the African and Levantine world and their perceived subordination to the king. Additionally, Amenhotep III is depicted here in a deified form expressed using ram's horns and a sun disk, innovative in Egyptian theological and artistic expression but belonging to broader Northeast African ideological conceptions meant to communicate ideas of kingship and sacred power to an elite Nubian audience. Soleb remained in the Nubian landscape long after the contraction of the Egyptian empire, informing ideas about religion, kingship, and imperialism for the Napatan and Meroitic dynasties. This paper uses 3D modeling to create a hypothetical reconstruction of the temple and its artistic program to better understand how it existed within the geological and cultural landscape of the region, how these were used to express power, and how it may have informed ideological conceptions of divinity and kingship for the kings of Egypt and Nubia.

Skeuomorphism in Polychrome Painted Pottery, Basketry, and Beaded Artistanship in Bronze Age Nubia (Virtual)

Carl R. Walsh[1], Elizabeth Minor[2]
[1] New York University, [2] California Polytechnic State University

Ceramic workshops at the capital of Kerma reached a peak of creative skilled artisanship in the Classic Kerma Period. Only a small portion of the polychrome painted pottery has been previously published, namely a set of "hut shaped" vessels. A close look at all polychrome painted pottery at Kerma defines the full corpus of vibrantly decorated vessel types. The shape of the vessels and forms of decoration appear to be skeuomorphic, either representing basketry, beaded covers, or both. As examples of these organic crafts are not as well preserved as the ceramics, the ceramic vessels stand as evidence for the complexity of twined and beaded artisanship from Kerman workshops. Several figural polychrome painted vessels provide new insights into Kerman religion and interregional connections, as well as set a precedent for later painted Nubian pottery. Elements of the figural decorations echo the vibrant style of Kerman wall paintings, carved ivory inlays, and mica appliqués. Other thematic elements show connections with Egyptian and Mediterranean decorative traditions, and may speak to wider connections in Kerma decorative arts to other artistic traditions across Northeast Africa and Western Asia during the Bronze Age.

Kerma Cattle Culture: Towards a Material Syntax of A Kerma Religion

Malkia Okech[1]
[1] University of California, Los Angeles

I will explore the city of Kerma in ancient Kush/Nubia (present-day Sudan) and investigate archaeological evidence in its cemetery sites to understand Kerma religion and its larger implications in Kushite cosmology and worldbuilding. Using archaeological evidence to define a 'syntax' is a proposal for understanding and analyzing sites and their associated logic where text is not present. I will specifically consider Kerma graves and their associated evidence, which include bucrania (or cattle skulls) encircling tumuli, or mound superstructures, with varying degrees of complexity. In this exploration, I will address numerous studies focusing on cattle, social stratification, exchange, and the ecology of Kerma culture. Without texts from the people of Kerma themselves to study, my goal is to define the syntax of Kerma religion through materiality, as evidenced by the artifacts found in these tumuli. From my initial overview, these artifacts include animals, pottery, organic materials, equipment from different professions, adornments, amulets, etc, all depending on social status. The artifacts found in these cemetery sites and associated graves are not passive – evidence of deliberate

placement of said artifacts and even the modifications and manipulations of goods in these graves requires in-depth analysis.

Discussion

9I. Digging Up Data: A Showcase of Ongoing Digital Scholarship Projects (Workshop) (Whittier)

Chair(s): Melissa Cradic, Open Context/Alexandria Archive Institute; Sarah Kansa, Open Context/Alexandria Archive Institute

Data Preparation Towards Digital and Open Access Publishing for the BILAS Survey Project

Monica Genuardi[1]
[1] Society for Eastern Mediterranean Archaeology

The continued development of the digital humanities is opening up new opportunities for the publication of archaeological sites and surveys. As traditional archaeological site reports have become progressively costly and cumbersome to produce, the use of digital tools and platforms, along with principles of open access and data sharing, offers innovative publication strategies that enhance the engagement and accessibility of archaeological data and interpretations. My project began as an exploration of the potential in applying such tools and principles for the publication of The Bay of Iskenderun Landscape Archaeology and Survey (BILAS) Project, led by Professor Ann E. Killebrew in the region of Cilicia, Turkey (The Pennsylvania State University: 2004–2009). With the overarching goal of an enriched, open access publication for the entire survey, the BILAS project decided to take the initial step of contributing its data to the digital platform and archive, Open Context (https://opencontext.org). For the 2025 Digging Up Data program, my project focuses on the data cleanup, preparation, and application of controlled vocabularies to the ceramic data from the BILAS survey for publication in Open Context. This presentation shares the trials and errors of adding internal project standard vocabularies to the existing ceramic descriptions—beginning with the application of BILAS-defined time periods. It will also consider the use of linked open data terminology and propose the next steps in preparing a findable, accessible, interoperable, and reusable dataset for meaningful archaeological research and interpretation.

Developing the Digital Typology at Erimi-Pitharka for Future Applications

Brigid A. Clark[1]
[1] University of Haifa

In the 2024 cohort of Digging Up Data, I developed an online database for Late Cypriot ceramic typologies with the aim organizing the ceramics at Erimi-Pitharka. A year later, this project has evolved into a yet-unnamed operational database with The University of Chicago's Online Cultural and Historical Research Environment (OCHRE). With a year of data entry behind us, what have we learned? More importantly, how can this growing repository shape future research? And finally, can we transform what is primarily a scholarly tool into an accessible resource for students and the wider public?

Mapping the Neo-Assyrian Empire as a Network

Heidi Dodgen Fessler[1]
[1] Loyola Marymount University

This paper presents the progress made on my Digging Up Data project, which seeks to create more accurate maps of the Neo-Assyrian Empire and make them available online. Although scholarly consensus is that the Assyrians expanded their territory through nodes of control, most open access maps portray Assyrian expansion as a giant blob that indiscriminately conquered large swaths of land. The goal of this project is to develop publicly accessible maps for teachers and professors that more accurately portray the nature of Assyrian expansion as a network of strategic cities along important corridors. This paper will consider how I created a proof of concept during my time with DUD in 2022 and detail specific obstacles I've encountered to produce a polished series of maps, such as navigating QGIS, improving the aesthetics of the maps, and ensuring plausible accuracy of locations of the sites in Assyria's imperial network. I will also discuss my inquiry into which platforms would be the best place to house the maps and explore the next steps I hope to accomplish in the project, such as creating a initiative to produce these types of maps for other empires.

Networking a Nuzi Family

Faith Myrick[1]
[1] Johns Hopkins University

Social Network Analysis has many uses and this paper demonstrates one application of the tool. This paper details the process of setting up a network, choosing a subject and the application of an Social Network Analysis program. The exploration of Social Networks in this paper adds to the growing popularity of network approaches and applications regarding the ancient world. The Mesopotamian family in question comes from the Late Bronze Age world, at the site of Nuzi. The paper demonstrates the networks of interactions from the family through several generations and some of different analyses possible with social network analysis programs.

Ancient Things and ThingLink: Experimenting with a Digital Tool for Teaching Purposes

Lauren K. McCormick[1]
[1] Princeton University

Thinglink appears to be a user-friendly digital platform for immersive and interactive learning. In this workshop, I will experiment with this digital tool for a project exploring gender on ancient figurines (Judean Pillar Figurines, from 8th-6th cent. BCE Judah). I will share tips and tricks and ThingLink's capability for handling 3D files as I share progress on a digital project aimed at high schoolers and above.

How Data Visualizations Can Tell a Story – with the help of Tableau® (Virtual)

Valery Schlegel[1]
[1] Freie Universitaet Berlin

A year ago, as part of the Digging up Data workshop at ASOR 2024, I presented the syllabus I had created to implement scientifically based storytelling through digital visualizations into university courses. During the teaching of this syllabus at Freie Universität Berlin, one tool crystallized as especially helpful: Tableau Software. Tableau® can be used in many different ways and does not only display graphs but also other visualizations such as tree diagrams, charts, histograms and even maps. It takes your data from preinstalled sources or directly from your database no matter the format, e.g. Microsoft Access or Excel, and then allows complete adjustment and filtration of the data displayed. To make informed decisions on such modifications, I connect the possibilities of Tableau® with the five key advices in "Storytelling with Data" by Cole Nussbaumer Knaflic: 1) Know your message & audience; 2) Choose an effective visual; 3) Declutter; 4) Focus the attention and 5) Tell the story. This combination enables to not just show data but tell a story with it – a story that is both intriguing and scientific. My contribution for the Digging up Data workshop at ASOR 2025 will exemplify this approach and summarize the results of the very same approach applied by the DuD 2025 cohort for a broader audience.

Digital Humanities Publication Processes and Procedures Brainstorming (Virtual)

Bethany Hucks[1]
[1] Universitaet Heidelberg

This brief presentation will focus on the process of publishing open access projects in digital humanities that rely on large data, image, and video/model sets and making them accessible to the general public as well as to researchers. My own efforts to create and publish databases and models unlimited by expensive image and legal rights will be presented, followed by an audience brainstorming opportunity to discuss how to work with and around international copyright limitations and parameters.

9J. Ancient Climate and Environmental Archaeology I (White Hill)

Chair(s): Brita Lorentzen, University of Georgia; Kathleen Forste, Brown University

Farming the Hills and the Highlands: A Comparison of Islamic-era Plant Economies in the Levant

Kathleen M. Forste[1]
[1] Brown University

Increasing investment in the study of archaeobotanical remains in the Levant has opened opportunities to investigate topics beyond subsistence and agricultural practices. The surge of work on botanical remains from the Early and Middle Islamic periods in particular makes it possible to ask questions about human-environmental interactions, and ways in which agricultural choices reflect past socioecological relationships. The interpretive power of botanical data is amplified when analyzed alongside phytolith, soil chemistry, landscape engineering, and historical evidence. Such a multi-disciplinary approach is employed by the TERRSOC project, "'Reading' Ancient Landscapes: Peasant Decision-Making and Terraced Agriculture in Central Palestine over la Longue Durée", directed by Dr. Bethany Walker. In this paper I compare archaeobotanical results from recent excavations at two sites incorporated into this project, Khirbet Beit Loya (located in the Shephelah) and Tall Hisban (located in the Madaba Plains). Previously-analyzed and novel data collected from primary domestic contexts dating to the Abbasid and Mamluk periods (8th 15th centuries) will be presented. This is a first step in bringing these datasets into conversation, interpreting them within their respective socioecological contexts, and starting to integrate them into the wider corpus of archaeobotanical studies on agricultural systems across the Islamic southern Levant.

A Complex Political Ecology at the Heart of Central Anatolia's High Plateau: Two Millennia of Plant Use, Agricultural Change and Anthropogenic Environmental Impact at Kaman Kalehöyük and Büklükale

Andrew S. "Andy" Fairbairn[1], Sullivan Heywood[1], Nathan Wright[2], Cemre Ustunkaya[1], Morvarid M. Motlagh[1], Rhona Fenwick[1], Kimiyoshi Matsumura[3], Sachiro Omura[3]
[1] The University of Queensland, [2] University of New England, [3] Japanese Institute of Anatolian Archaeology

Forty years of excavation by the Japanese Institute of Anatolian Archaeology at Kaman Kalehöyük and Büklükale, close to or on the Kızılırmak River in central Anatolia, has allowed the intensive archaeobotanical sampling of settlements spanning the Early Bronze Age (late 3rd millennium BCE) to Late Iron Age (c. 300 BCE). This paper provides a contextual analysis of crop, weed seed and wood charcoal data, including nTaxa and taxonomic abundance, with crop stable isotopes, to explore the long term history of plant use at the site and its relationship to climate change, political change and broader economic changes at a local and regional level. The settlements were quite different in scale, economy and social organisation, Kaman Kalehöyük being a town with a strong agricultural focus located in rolling croplands, while 30km away at Büklükale a larger settlement developed at a strategic crossing with high status occupation for much of the Bronze Age. Patterns of crop and wood use do not simply follow climatic models, for example the putative crunch-points of the 4.2k and 3.2k climate events. Rather, economic decisions, including centralised decision making during the Hittite and Persian periods, and the link of sites to regional trade networks, better explain the diachronic patterns of both food systems and landscape management seen in the data. This unique example shows the value of intensive, long term commitment to archaeobotanical research in closely located settlements.

From Ores to Shores: A Comparative Approach to the Enduring Geochemical Agency of Ancient Mediterranean Mining Landscapes

Ana González San Martín[1]
[1] Brown University

Across the Mediterranean, mining landscapes have long been sites of extractive intervention, but their environmental legacies extend far beyond the human timescales of production and abandonment. This paper offers a comparative assessment of ancient copper districts around the Iberian Pyrite Belt (Spain), the Troodos Ophiolite Complex (Cyprus), and Wadi Faynan (Jordan), to explore the enduring geochemical and environmental repercussions of past and present copper mining. While often dismissed as either inactive, exhausted, or abandoned sites of past industrial activity, mining waste sites (such as slag heaps, tailings, and gossan areas) are not as dead as they may seem. Most often, they are volatile and hazardous sites of ongoing mineralogical and environmental transformation. Through an interdisciplinary framework, this paper seeks to highlight how the persistence of heavy metal contamination, acid mine drainage, and bioavailable toxicity impacted these landscapes diachronically. Ultimately, it aims to approximate potential ways in which past mining communities perceived and responded to these hazardous environments and engaged in different forms of risk mitigation, spatial adaptation, and technological expertise, shaped by long-term environmental entanglements. Through a comparative approach, the three case-studies proposed are meant to highlight how past and present extractive landscapes challenge linear narratives of resource extraction open up space to consider environmental care-ethics and remediation practices, underscoring the chthonic environmental agencies at work in mining districts. In bridging together Western and Eastern Mediterranean examples, this paper aims to expand the scope of traditional discussion on the enduring impact of extractive economies, the limits of human control over mining landscapes, and the necessity of interdisciplinary approaches in reconstructing their past and present dynamics.

Multi-layered sites as sources of paleoclimate data: climate signals from Tell es-Safi/Gath

Marc Ramrekha[1], Johanna M. Regev[2], Elisabetta Boaretto[2], Aren M. Maeir[3], Dan Cabanes[1]
[1] Rutgers State University, [2] Weizmann Institute of Science, [3] Bar Ilan University

Climate plays a crucial role in the sustainability of urban life and is of great concern to both archaeological and contemporary studies. When studying paleoclimate, archaeologists commonly attempt to link data from archaeological sites with spatially distant proxy environment sources. However, this approach only allows for the establishment of tenuous relationships because climate proxy data are indirect measures of climate or regional vegetation trends that only reflect only the consequences of human actions, not the actions

itself. Furthermore, the linking site data with distant proxy environment sources has a low temporal resolution. Consequently, responses environmental shifts at the space and time scale of humans remains largely unexplored. To address these issues, we use anthropogenic phytolith assemblages from the multi-period site, Tell es-Safi/Gath, as sources of paleoclimatic data and thus, serve as direct records of human-environmental interactions. By sampling from a variety of stratigraphic sequences and in situ archaeological contexts, we were able to isolate climate signals from anthropogenic assemblages, demonstrating that (1) phytolith analyses directly link human activity with past environmental conditions and (2) that tell sites are archives of local paleoclimate data. This study offers a high-resolution, human-scale view of responses to environmental variability at Tell es-Safi/Gath and has the potential to be applied at tell sites across the Near East.

Of Wood and Copper: Tracing 6000 Years of Human-Environmental Interactions Through Archaeobotanical Proxies in the Hyper-Arid Southern Aravah Desert

Marc G. Cavanagh[1], Erez Ben-Yosef[1], Dafna Langgut[1]
[1] Tel Aviv University

For over 6,000 years, the copper-rich southern Aravah Desert has hosted smelting communities—from the earliest phases of metallurgy in the Chalcolithic–Early Bronze Age onward. In the Timna Valley, a peak of industrial activity occurred during the Late Bronze and Iron Ages, followed by later periods of small-scale production that culminated in the Early Islamic period. This long-term occupation took place despite the region's extreme aridity—the hottest and driest in the Levant—where limited water and vegetation made both metallurgy and basic survival challenging. This presentation examines human-environment interactions over this extensive timespan using a comprehensive archaeobotanical dataset, combining previously published and new research. Focusing primarily on charcoal assemblages from smelting and habitation sites, and supplemented by wood and pollen evidence, the study reconstructs past vegetation and subsistence strategies. The results reveal not only the long-term environmental impact of ancient copper production, still visible today, but also provide the first robust paleoenvironmental reconstruction for a desert region with scarce climatic proxies.

9K. The LCP Handbook Series: The Late Roman Amphora 1 (White Hill)

Chair(s): Andrea Berlin, Boston University; Nicole Constantine, Stanford University

"God's Grace is a Gain" - the Church's Involvement in the Production and Distribution of LRA1s (Virtual)

Samuel G. "Grady" Gillett[1], Veronica Iacomi[2]
[1] TerraXplorations, [2] Independent Researcher

The Late Roman 1 amphora (LRA1) is one of the most ubiquitous maritime transport containers found in Mediterranean contexts from the late 4th to the beginning of the 8th century CE. The majority of scholars working in this field agree that LRA1s were an important component of the imperial annona system. It has also previously been proposed that the early Church might have played a role in the distribution of the amphora type. However—despite a considerable bulk of evidence—the mechanisms of the Church's involvement in this complex economic web are inexplicably understudied. In this paper, we will present new research on the local and regional milieu of LRA1 manufacturing centers as well as dipinti, stamps, and other markings. This holistic analysis of the full lifecycle of the amphora highlights the systematic and well-organized efforts that Church officials made to shape and profit from the Mediterranean wine trade. The kilns at Halasarna, Içmeler, Laggeri, Leukos, and Saqqara were all constructed in close proximity to basilicas and monastic complexes, indeed sometimes inside such establishments. This ordering of physical space reflects the administrative ties these local ecclesiastical communities must have had on the production process. Additionally, various forms of external markings spell out the connection between the LRA1's contents and/or original manufacturer and various Christian estates, occasionally even invoking their heavenly patron. We argue that these phenomena should be interpreted as evidence for the Church's strategic and active participation in ceramic production, large-scale viticulture, and maritime trade logistics.

At the Heart of the Matter: LRA 1 Amphorae from the Bay of Iskenderun Landscape Archaeology Survey, Cilicia (Türkiye)

Philip M. Bes[1], Ann E. Killebrew[2]
[1] Independent Researcher, [2] The Pennsylvania State University

The Bay of Iskenderun Landscape Archaeology Survey (BILAS) carried out extensive and intensive field survey in three large zones around the Gulf of Iskenderun/Issos between 2004 and 2009. The collected pottery in particular evidences, amongst others, long-term settlement and economic patterns. Hellenistic to Late Antique pottery is especially well-represented, which will enrich our relatively poor understanding of Cilicia Pedias, or Flat Cilicia, which throughout this millennium played a key role in the region's and Mediterranean's tableware and agricultural economies. Ceramologically, this is represented by Late Hellenistic to Roman Imperial Eastern Sigillata A, a limited yet widespread series of Roman Imperial amphora types (e.g. Pompeii V, Agora M 54) and, above all, Late Roman Amphora 1 (LRA 1), the most widespread amphora type between the mid-fourth and mid-seventh centuries AD. Given that the origins – typology, significant workshops – of LRA 1 are to be found in Cilicia Pedias, it is no surprise that fragments are commonly attested among the pottery collected by BILAS. These data not only furnish data regarding the chronological and functional interpretation of sites, but also motivate to ask questions of broader relevance. For example, which macroscopic fabrics and potential workshops are identified? And do we observe a similar range at consumption sites beyond the Gulf of Iskenderun? These and other questions are addressed by drawing on the rich collection and image documentation generated by BILAS.

LR1 Amphoras on the Move: New Insights and Questions from Shipwreck Cargos off the Turkish Coast

Justin Leidwanger[1], Harun Özdaş[2]
[1] Stanford University, [2] Dokuz Eylül University

Decades of underwater archaeological surveys off the Turkish coast have brought to light dozens of shipwrecks loaded with LR1 amphoras, making the type one of the most prevalent—likely the most common—cargo in these waters. This container was clearly a critical one for late antique maritime interaction here, but the dynamics behind the numbers are much harder to understand for several reasons. The production of the various members of the "LRA family" across vast areas of the eastern Mediterranean represented a departure from earlier trends of more localized shapes, making it difficult to link assemblages with specific origins and scales of movement, to distinguish uniform cargos from those reflecting multiple producers or areas, and to compare such late antique trends with those they succeeded. This paper draws together approximately 40 shipwrecks marked by large numbers of LR1 amphoras off western and southwestern Turkey, ranging from the rare excavated or well-investigated wrecks to the many more assemblages only preliminarily reported but sometimes offering samples for documentation and petrographic analysis. Working quantitatively and qualitatively across this data set allows us to reveal some trends in the shape of interaction along the Turkish

coast, including the clear interregional pull of a new imperial capital and the contrasting regional cadences and trajectories of the growth to which it was tied. But these views also permit further questions and suggestions about how we might better investigate such complicated types in maritime contexts and beyond as material evidence for eastern Mediterranean networks.

Over the Seas and Far Away: The Distribution of Late Roman 1 Amphoras Across the Mediterranean

Paulina Komar[1]
[1] University of Warsaw

Amphora distributions offer valuable insights into the socio-economic dynamics, trade networks, and cultural exchanges across the Mediterranean. This presentation explores the widespread presence of Late Roman 1 amphoras in late antique contexts in Italy, Ephesus, Gaul, and on Cyprus. By examining the archaeological evidence of amphoras from various sites, spanning the western Mediterranean to the eastern provinces, this study investigates regional variations in distribution patterns, analyzing how they reflect local economic priorities and interactions with neighboring regions. It also employs regression analyses to better understand the factors that governed late antique trade. Through a multidisciplinary approach that integrates ceramic studies with statistical methods, this presentation aims to deepen our understanding of the complexities of Late Roman Mediterranean commerce and its implications for the nature of the Roman economy.

From Sea to Sand and Back Again: LRA1 in the Negev

Alexandra Ratzlaff[1]
[1] Brandeis University

The Negev presents an interesting inland zone, marginally connected to the Mediterranean Sea and Red Sea with unique geographic and environmental elements, creating distinct micro-regions, a major, mitigating factor in the establishment of the Negev's trade networks. The fourth century marks significant economic, political, and military changes here. The Byzantine cities of the Negev, including Nitzana (Nessana), Avdat (Oboda), Shivta, Haluza (Elusa), and Mamshit (Mampsis) flourished as primary nodes within the trade network, with caravansaries, smaller towns, and Late Roman/Byzantine army forts and installations connecting the broader network. The LRA 1 penetrated the inland Negev through this complex network, which in many cases followed the lines of trade established in the Nabataean period as part of the Incense Route. While LRA 4, the Gaza jar used for transporting the similarly named Gazan wine (vinum Gazettum) is often the most ubiquitous form found throughout the Negev from the 4th – 7th centuries CE, the LRA 1 is commonly found in the same assemblage. As a multi-purpose vessel, the LRA 1 was not limited to the transport of wine but is well-documented as a container for olive oil and various dry goods. This paper will examine the distribution of the LRA 1 in the Negev from the 4th – 7th centuries, differentiating between urban, military, and agriculturally dominant sub-networks.

Eastern Mediterranean Amphoras in the Late Roman Red Sea and Beyond

Nicholas Bartos[1]
[1] University of California, Los Angeles

In recent decades, the increasing recognition of the broader distribution of the Late Roman 1 Amphora (LRA1) and other Eastern Mediterranean types has transformed our understanding of the long-distance social and economic connections of the late antique world beyond the Mediterranean. This is especially apparent in the Red Sea, where ongoing fieldwork especially along the western coasts is revealing a more uniformly integrated basin than in earlier periods. On the occasion of the latest publication of the LCP Handbook series, this presentation highlights the role of the Late Roman 1 Amphora and other Eastern Mediterranean types in the evolution of the Red Sea maritime economy in late antiquity. It draws especially from the results of recent excavations at the Egyptian port of Berenike, where quantified assemblages reveal that in the Late Roman period – especially in the 5th century – Eastern Mediterranean amphoras such as LRA1 and LRA3 types surprisingly outnumber Egyptian amphoras at the site. This circumstance contrasts with many other sites in Upper Egypt and suggests that this lucrative Red Sea port maintained slightly different relationships with the Byzantine East. The substantial importation of Eastern Mediterranean amphoras farther south (e.g., at the Aksumite port of Adulis in modern Eritrea) further demonstrates how the products transported in these vessels helped to integrate the Late Roman world with the far reaches of the Red Sea. The presentation concludes with a hypothesis about the factors that stimulated this late antique transformation, especially as related to the LRA1 and LRA3.

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 21, 2025 | 10:45am-12:45pm (EST)

10A. Islamic Archaeology and ASOR: A Session in Memory of Don Whitcomb (Grand Ballroom A)

Chair(s): Asa Eger, University of North Carolina, Greensboro; Jodi Magness, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill

Economy and Urbanization in Early Islamic Ascalon

Tracy Hoffman[1]
[1] Tel Shimron Excavations

Medieval texts praise Ascalon's mosque, strong fortifications, and flourishing markets. Excavations by the Leon Levy Expedition to Ashkelon have uncovered expansive residential neighborhoods across the city which, when integrated with textual evidence, allow for an illuminating reconstruction of Ascalon's urban plan. They also reveal the important role of trade with Egypt for the economic and urban development of Ascalon in the Early Islamic period. The significance of this relationship is on full display in the Fatimid period when Ascalon served as an important regional port and manufacturing center, as well as being one of the most important governorships in the empire. This paper will discuss the economic and urban development of Ascalon in the Early Islamic period with a particular focus on the role Egypt played in shaping the city's fortunes.

Investigating the Production and Fabrics of Ayla-Aksum Amphorae from Donald Whitcomb's Aqaba Excavations in Jordan

Tasha Vorderstrasse[1]
[1] University of Chicago

One of Donald Whitcomb's many achievements was his detailed excavations and study of the site of Aqaba in Jordan. Ayla-Aksum amphorae, one of its most famous pottery exports, have not been studied in as much detail at the site, however. Whitcomb found large numbers of Ayla-Aksum amphorae and other pottery vessels made from the same fabric. The fact that no final publication ever appeared from the site, however, meant that there was no detailed overview of all the amphorae found. Damgaard provided 11 examples that he excavated at Aqaba to be studied with Ayla-Aksum amphorae at the site of Zafar in Yemen. The studies of the fabrics of Ayla-Aksum amphorae from Yemen and Eritrea (at the site of Adulis) have indicated that these amphorae came from Aqaba as well. But these studies only looked at a small number of amphorae. This paper proposes to add far more examples, producing the first detailed and systematic study of Ayla-Aksum amphorae from the site of Aqaba. The use of non-destructive analysis with a dino-lite handheld microscope to examine the fabrics will hopefully provide a demonstration of how this technique can be used to study larger numbers of sherds. After discussing the amphorae from the site of Aqaba, the paper will also provide a new discussion of the find spots of the amphorae, It is hoped that this study will continue to add to our understanding of the ware, its distribution, and production.

Qusier al-Qadim and Red Sea Scholarship

Katherine S. Burke[1]
[1] University of California, Los Angeles

Pioneering Islamic Archaeologist that he was, Donald Whitcomb always seemed to be at the leading edge of new research. In 1977, when he and Jan Johnson first marveled at the abundance of sherds and lines of walls visible on the surface at the remote shores of Quseir al-Qadim, there certainly had been plenty of explorers and scholars interested in Red Sea sites, but little excavation. Afterward, however, there came a veritable explosion of studies specifically aimed at elucidating the cultures that rim the Red Sea, many of them focused on the Islamic periods. From the 1980s, several surveys, excavations, and textual studies have produced a corpus of Red Sea scholarship that has brought the morphology and activities of port towns into focus, with particular attention to mercantile economies, as well as to fishing, navigation, and boat-building. This paper will serve as a retrospective on the archaeological work at Quseir al-Qadim begun by Whitcomb and Johnson and picked up by David Peacock and Lucy Blue, examining how the excavation of the port town with its humble architecture but astonishing assemblage of business and personal letters in Arabic on paper, fits into the abundant Red Sea scholarship. It will review the evidence not only for Quseir al-Qadim's port functions and mercantile activities, but also for transportation of grain and pilgrims to Makka, a subject much better understood for the early modern periods in the Red Sea than for the medieval, and deserving of renewed attention.

The Jinn in the Lamp & Don the Anthropologist

Ian Straughn[1]
[1] University of California, Irvine

Given his long career with the Oriental Institute (now ISAC) and his role as a luminary in the field of Islamic archaeology, you might not remember that Don's doctoral training was in anthropology. Yet, this aspect of his scholarship was foundational to his approach to both Muslim societies and the nature of the archaeological record. Don the anthropologist emerged through his deep interests in social identity in the formation of early Islamic communities and polities, the transformation of the urban and rural landscapes of Bilad al-Sham, and, most importantly, in articulating parity between the archaeological, textual, and ethnographic records. In this presentation, I hope to build on that insight and how it has inspired my own work conducting an experimental archaeology project with a collection of sphero-conical vessels (SCVs). While I will offer an interpretation of this enigmatic artifact category - often glossed as "grenades" – that falls out of alignment with Don's own theories for their use and social role, I argue that my research stays true to his method of investigation that extended formalist empiricism by voicing people's potential lived and embodied experience of the object. In so many areas of his scholarship - amsar, qusur, or ceramic typologies - his attention to the anthropological was crucial to both his creativity and ability to champion the archaeological record as an independent and complementary resource in the study Muslim societies and their development. So, even if he might disagree with the conclusions I offer about the nature of the SCV, he would still enjoy the bold claim that these objects were the original genie lamp of legend.

10B. Archaeology of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq II (Grand Ballroom B)

Chair(s): Petra M. Creamer, Emory University; Elise J. Laugier, Utah State University

The Surezha Chipped Stone: Households and Imports Beyond Social 'Complexity'

Joseph Harris[1]
[1] University of Chicago

In the Late Chalcolithic of Kurdistan, chipped stone is an often-overlooked class of material culture. However, its inconspicuous, democratized, traditional nature offers crucial context for common lifeways beyond narratives of social 'Complexity'. Current research, while sparse, paints a picture of mobile, itinerant flintknapping specialists who supplemented low-quality household production with high-quality blades, often from far away. Both of these industries—the itinerant blade-producers, and household flintknapping—are poorly understood, and offer to help contextualize the world of common people. The Surezha chipped stone assemblage—spanning the Terminal Ubaid to LC3—is a great resource for this study, exhibiting changes in blade import and utilization alongside a vibrant household production industry. After two summers of study, its chipped stone sheds light on agricultural production, seal-making, and symbolic belief, and I attempt a first look into Late Chalcolithic local household production. The findings point outside the narrative of emergent social 'Complexity'—a notion of increasing social ranking that has dominated understandings of this period—pointing instead to a society that is fundamentally corporate, household-based, and entrepreneurial. Lastly, the world of Late Chalcolithic chipped stone is compared with other periods of the region—especially earlier periods, which emphasize lithics much more—tying a decrease in mobility and reliance on imports to a degeneration of household production forms.

Ware Types, Technology, and Transitions: Chronological Reconstruction at Surezha, Erbil Plain, through Pottery Analysis from the Ubaid to the LC3 Period (Virtual)

Ludivine Audebert[1]
[1] Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne

The Erbil Plain is a cohesive space characterized by a sloping chronological horizon from the Ubaid to the LC3 period, making interpretations within the established regional chronological scheme for north Mesopotamia a challenge for archaeologists. Building on recent work documenting the diversity of pottery making practices during the Ubaid and Late Chalcolithic periods, this paper will focus

on how the study of ceramics, and especially the study of pottery ware types, and chaines operatoires at Surezha, on the Erbil Plain, can help us better define the chronology. This presentation will outline a macroscopic study of several hundred sherds from the 2024 campaign at Surezha, define preliminary fabric groups and the chronological trends which they seem to reflect. It will also outline preliminary observations on technological patterns. The presented data will aim at pinpointing the transitions between the Ubaid and LC1, and between the LC2 and LC3, and constitutes a first attempt to link this data with the lives of communities of practice, as a step beyond the more stereotypical chronological scheme.

Mortality and Burial on the Erbil Plain: Insights from Tell Surezha
Andrea M. Zurek-Ost[1]
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Excavations at Tell Surezha, a 22-hectare site on the Erbil Plain of Iraqi Kurdistan, have revealed significant insights into past mortuary practices and demographic patterns, specifically in the Late Chalcolithic. 22 burials were excavated across the 2023-2024 field seasons. These individuals, typically interred in ceramic vessels, were predominantly subadults (with the largest age category being infants under one year of age). Due to overall young age profiles, comprehensive reconstructions of skeletal health and stress are challenging; however, these high infant mortality profiles may be linked to factors such as sanitation, weaning, and nutritional stress. The spatial distribution of burials at Tell Surezha provides insight into the relationships between the living and the dead. Many jar burials are located under floors within domestic spaces, indicating that spatial proximity was a factor in decisions surrounding mortuary practice. While these burials are contemporaneous with the occupation of various architectural spaces, other burials appear to have been cut through previous architectural structures (such as walls) during later use of the Tell, seemingly to utilize it as a cemetery space. This practice may garner insight into diachronic placemaking and memory (i.e., the use of a space which operated at least in part as a funerary space in the past was reused for the same purpose later in the history of Tell Surezha). These findings contribute to broader discussions on childhood mortality, burial traditions, and the social landscape of ancient Mesopotamian communities.

"Uruk Adjacent": Defining the Local Late Chalcolithic 2 and 3 Ceramic Assemblages at Surezha (Erbil Plain, Iraqi Kurdistan)
Gill J. Stein[1]
[1] University of Chicago

This paper defines local ceramic typology at the prehistoric site of Surezha in the LC2 and LC3 periods, which correspond chronologically to the Early Uruk and early-Middle Uruk periods in south Mesopotamia. Excavations from 2013-2024 at Surezha on the Erbil Plain in Iraqi Kurdistan have recovered an occupational sequence spanning the Halaf, Ubaid, and Late Chalcolithic (LC) 1-4 periods from 5300-3400 BCE. The local prehistoric ceramic assemblages of the Erbil Plain overlap with, but also differ in significant ways from contemporaneous Chalcolithic assemblages and stylistic traditions in other parts of North Mesopotamia such as the Khabur headwaters and the Euphrates valley. By using stratigraphically excavated ceramics, we can identify the most distinctive local diagnostic types that differentiate between the LC2 and LC3 . This will allow us to significantly improve the Chalcolithic ceramic chronology of Surezha and more broadly over the Erbil plain. It will also help ongoing regional surveys in Iraqi Kurdistan by providing better temporal resolution for surface collections to determine occupational histories, diachronic changes in site sizes, and population estimates for settlements on the ancient Erbil Plain.

10C. Towards a Working Ancient Economy: The Bronze Age II (Georgian)

Chair(s): Eric Aupperle, Harvard University; Andrew Deloucas, Harvard University; Taha Yurttas, Harvard University

Networks of Credit and Trust: Lending and Borrowing in Ur III Babylonia (Virtual)
Palmiro Notizia[1]
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The large number of surviving loan documents dating from the time of the Third Dynasty of Ur attests to the importance of access to credit for the urban communities of southern Mesopotamia at the end of the third millennium BCE. Alongside sale contracts, these documents constitute the largest category of non-institutional archival records available for reconstructing the economic history of Early Bronze Age Mesopotamia. The Ur III loans provide valuable insights into the networks of moneylenders active within Babylonian cities, as well as the entrepreneurial activities of individuals operating outside of the dominant urban institutions. This presentation draws on previous scholarship and new textual sources to offer a reassessment of the role of credit in Ur III Babylonia. It aims to delineate a profile of moneylenders and their clients based on the loans granted by some of the best-documented Ur III creditors, who conducted their business in the provinces of Nippur, Irisagrig, and Adab. To this end, the period of activity of these lenders, the types of loan contracts and their duration, the amounts of goods that were borrowed, and the number and identity of their debtors and the witnesses to the credit transactions will be examined.

Old Babylonian Debt Remissions: Variance and Change in Archival Evidence
Seth F. Richardson[1]
[1] University of Chicago

Questions about Old Babylonian debt remissions (esp. mīšarums) have revolved around a range of issues: whether they were periodic or occasional; their effect on the temporal distribution of loans; the extent of properties and persons entailed; their economic impact on credit markets and historical states. As an ideal type, these measures were essentially conservative interventions, meant to function as socio-economic "reset" buttons. But some features of practice show that the reset points of the environments which mīšarums proposed to regulate kept changing—when they were issued, what was covered, who was affected and when. This paper asks questions about the relationship between the enactment of mīšarums and the prosopographic landscape in real time, about how many and what kinds of economic actors survived or succumbed to debt remissions. This has the potential to not only report on the role these measures played in the palace economy, but the purpose and ability of the Babylonian state to make projections about their effects.

Counting Days, Counting Debts: Temporality in Old Assyrian Society
Taha Yurttas[1]
[1] Harvard University

This paper explores the interplay between temporal frameworks, commercial activities, and socio-cultural systems in Old Assyrian society (c. 1900-1840 BCE). It examines how Assyrian merchants structured, perceived, and experienced time in relation to trade, credit and debt cycles, and financial agreements. Through a study of private archives of the merchants and some of their Anatolian neighbors at Kültepe-Kanesh, it argues that commercial and financial activities fostered a shared temporal framework within which merchants operated, made decisions, and interacted with one another. For Assyrian merchants, events were sequenced around

repayment cycles, expedition returns, and the settling of accounts, while both Assyrians and Anatolians also relied on various forms of seasonality and natural cycles. Thus, this paper suggests that commerce, finance, and nature jointly structured the rhythms of social and economic life, shaping how merchants conceptualized their present in relation to past commitments and future possibilities. This approach also raises questions about how commercial and financial activity may have influenced historical consciousness and memory culture within merchant communities.

On Food Infrastructure and Logistics: A "High-Power" Model of an Early State

Eric Aupperle[1]
[1] Harvard University

Building on previous research on agriculture, land tenure, and taxation in early Babylonia, a new model is offered for the storage, transport, and use of edible commodities by the Ur III central government, its stockyards, and extended network of royally-supported estates. Examination of the stockyard system and granaries suggests close cooperation between the central government and institutional sector with regard to food storage, transport, and security. In examining food supply chains, new evidence is uncovered for large-scale patterns of trade-based consumption, and for the existence of additional royal estates neighboring the well-known enclave of GARšana in the fertile Umma-Girsu border area. Transfers between these rural royal estates, central stockyards, and independent middlemen highlight the importance of tax-farming, predatory lending, and sales on consignment for the generation of government revenue. Based on this analysis, a new interpretation is offered regarding the roles played by edible bulk goods in the fiscal system of the Ur III state. The results shed new light on pre-industrial relations and fiscal history in the deep past, showing the sophisticated operations and "infrastructural power" of an early state that recognized the importance of concerted cooperation between central and local authorities in natural resource management.

Why Is It so Hard to Study the Kassite Economy?

Susanne A. Paulus[1]
[1] University of Chicago

The study of the economy of Late Bronze Age Mesopotamia, particularly during the Kassite period, presents a range of methodological challenges. Although a substantial corpus of sources from institutional and private archives is available, these sources are chronologically and geographically unevenly distributed, and many texts remain unpublished. Moreover, the available material is often ill-suited to addressing conventional economic questions such as monetarization, long-distance trade, and the analysis of key economic indicators like yields and prices. A distinctive feature of this period is the overwhelming dominance of barley—a low-value, widely available staple—in economic transactions, which contrasts with the typical focus of economic history on precious commodities. My project, Banking with Barley, adopts a text-oriented, emic approach to analyzing core economic activities such as salaries, investments, loans, debt management, and trade, all of which are shaped by the central role of barley. This presentation draws on an unpublished archive of merchants from Babylon to examine how these traders navigated the intersection of international trade networks and the domestic barley-based economy. It offers new insights into the economic structures and practices of the Kassite period.

10D. Art Historical Approaches to the Near East II (Arlington)

Chair(s): Amy Gansell, St. John's University; S. Rebecca Martin, Boston University

Middle Assyrian Seals and Seal Impressions in the Yale Babylonian Collection

Agnete W. Lassen[1]
[1] Yale University

This talk presents the corpus of Middle Assyrian seals and seal impressions kept in the Yale Babylonian Collection, including six hitherto
unpublished examples. Several of the published seals were previously not recognized as Middle Assyrian or were thought to be forgeries. While small, the corpus illustrates the artistic and chronological range of the period, from cut-style provincial types to finely carved Assur productions, from the common combat scenes to rare royal rituals. In addition to a discussion of Middle Assyrian sealing practices and specialized imaging for enhanced legibility of impressions, the talk will also discuss recent analytical work on materials and pigmentation discovered on the surface of the seals.

The Minet el-Beida Ivory Lid: A Story of Goddesses, Textiles, and Ivory in the Eastern Mediterranean

Marian Feldman[1]
[1] Johns Hopkins University

In 1929 a French-led excavation at the coastal Syrian site of Minet el-Beida recovered a circular carved ivory container lid that depicts an elaborately attired, but bare-breasted, female figure holding vegetation and flanked by rampant goats. Its distinctive iconography immediately recalls arts from the Bronze Age Aegean world, attracting extensive scholarly scrutiny regarding questions of artistic authorship and intercultural connections between the site (understood as "the East") and "the West." However, aside from the acknowledgement of ivory as a circulating material during this period, the relationship between material and iconography has not been deeply probed. In addition, the elaborate split skirt worn by the figure, though compared to Aegean exemplars, has not been considered through the lens of textiles and textile production. This paper explores how a materiality-based approach to this object—considering both ivory and textiles—might shed light on its role in Late Bronze Age Mediterranean exchanges, while at the same time offer new perspectives on the object beyond this one question.

Beyond Interpretatio Greaca: Seeing Hybrid Divine Visual Narratives in the "Venus de Clercq" from Sidon

Mark Abbe[1]
[1] University of Georgia

The "Venus de Clercq" is an unusually well-preserved and seemingly conventional marble statue of Praxiteles' Aphrodite of Knidos type in the Getty Museum (72.AA.93). Archival evidence and detailed reexamination have revealed that the sculpture originated from Sidon, specifically the statue-rich subterranean Mithraeum discovered in the 1880s. Multiband imaging, microscopic examination, and scientific analyses now elucidate new aspects of the goddess's once colorful and sumptuous jewelry, adornment, and radiant polymateriality. After distilling recent findings, this paper explores how this expertly finished meter-tall marble statue was much more than a Roman-period replica of a famous historical Greek masterpiece. A new cultural understanding of the "Venus de Clercq" and the hybridity of its traditional "Aphrodite" identification is suggested at multiple levels: in the regional context of Roman Syria, at Sidon (where Astarte was the chief goddess according to Ps.-Lucian, De Dea Syria), and, within the Mithraeum, where the goddess's cult-image-like materiality (reportedly, originally including a crescent moon crown) suggested a divine syncretization of Greek Aphrodite, Phoenician Astarte, and Syrian-Mesopotamian Ishtar. The flexible narrative ambiguities of the nude Knidia – the pudicita gesture and act of un- or redressing – appear to have afforded

multiple, charged readings within the region's cultural traditions, including the crossing of boundaries in the Descent of Ishtar into the Underworld, the astrological focuses of the Chaldean Oracles, and the goddess's role within the seven-staged initiations of Mithraism.

The Rosette and Palmette in Roman Palestine: Between Medium, Technique, Style and Meanings

Zohar Slaney[1] & Adi Erlich[1]
[1] University of Haifa

The art of Roman Judaea/Syria Palaestina of Israel reflected cultural transformations, interactions, innovations and the persistence of ancient decorative motifs. Of the latter, two of the most prevalent motifs in architectural and decorative arts were the palmette and the rosette. Though not unique to the region, these motifs were extensively integrated and adapted across various media, including mosaics, ossuaries, pottery, lead coffins, and architectural decoration. Their stylistic development and distribution reveal a dynamic interplay between external influences and local artistic traditions. The rosette, a widespread motif in the ancient Near East, appeared frequently in Jewish contexts, particularly on ossuaries and mosaics from the Second Temple period, and thus associated with Jewish art. The palmette, widely associated with Greek art, prevailed in architectural decoration during the Roman and Byzantine periods. Over time, it underwent stylistic transformations, merging with other vegetal motifs and reflecting regional artistic preferences. These motifs raise key questions: What role did technique and style play in their choice? Did their meaning vary across media and communities? Were they consciously selected as identity markers, or did they function as part of a broader visual lexicon? This study reevaluates the palmette and rosette beyond their conventional classifications, by analyzing their stylistic and technological evolution across media. By tracing their formal transformations this research offers insights into their artistic and cultural significance, revealing how adaptation and interactions shaped visual traditions in the art of the region in the Roman and Byzantine periods.

Cosmic Iconography in the Roman Villa: Case Studies from the Eastern Roman Provinces

Shir Hoory[1]
The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

This lecture examines the use of cosmological imagery in Roman villas in the Eastern Empire, focusing on mosaics from Philippopolis and Antioch alongside visual parallels. The mosaics, featuring cosmic personifications, offer insight into elite identity formation and their engagement with imperial ideology. This research is part of a broader doctoral study on complex representations of the cosmos in ancient Mediterranean Art. Methodologically, the study examines these mosaics within the framework of the cult of the emperors. In art and literature—such as imperial panegyrics—the emperor was often likened to cosmic elements, reinforcing his eternal authority. The imperial cult functioned as a key mechanism in the Romanization process, forging a connection between Rome and the provinces while fostering political integration. Imperial coinage, in particular, played a central role in disseminating Cosmological themes, making them recognizable across the provinces. Building on this, I argue that cosmological mosaics mirrored this broader phenomenon. Citing from Hannestad's book on imperial art, the domestic sphere often favors apolitical art, but implicit allusions may still dictate the choice of iconography. By incorporating cosmological themes strongly associated with the emperor, wealthy villa owners signaled their connection to Rome and their status within local society. The lecture highlights the recently discovered painted tomb from Bayt-Ras, Jordan (ancient Capitolias), which demonstrates how a member of the local elite used a zodiacal ceiling alongside the city foundation myth to express their status, civic pride, and cosmic oversight of their city and while also demonstrating imperial affiliations.

10E. Dwelling in the Past: Scales of Settlement, Time, and Society in Anatolia II (Berkeley & Clarendon)

Chair(s): N. İlgi Gerçek, Bilkent University; Yağmur Heffron, University College London; Müge Durusu-Tanrıöver, Temple University

Pottery, Roads, and Cultural Networks: Investigating the Role of Table Ware in Komana Pontica

Ayşe Batman[1]
[1] Bilkent University

Komana Pontica is situated 10 km northeast of present-day Tokat. Archaeological investigations began in 2004 and are still ongoing. Since the 2018 excavation season, previously unknown, primary undisturbed contexts dating to the Late Iron Age-Early Hellenistic period have been uncovered. These contexts consist of two distinct architectural levels, primarily characterized by abundant pottery and bone deposits, as well as fragments of figurines, coins, and small artifacts. This study examines the use and distribution of painted and decorated 'Table Ware' pottery—one of the most prominent groups in the Komana repertoire—from these contexts, as a means of understanding cultural interactions between settlements. It comprises two essential steps. First, it identifies the finds from settlements contemporary with Komana in North-Central Anatolia, as well as regions to the west and south of the Central Anatolian Plateau, spanning from Amisos and Kotyora in the north to Cilicia in the south. Second, it investigates the roads and routes connecting these regions to gain a better understanding of the distribution of daily table wares. This investigation reveals a network of the locations of interconnected sites situated near the identified roads with Komana at a strategic intersection. It further demonstrates that the techniques used in pottery production and decoration remained resilient to change, preserving a cohesive identity through traditional practices. This suggests the presence of a cultural network that connected the settlements and regions under study by prioritizing the relationship between the network of the settlements and their landscape to reach a better understanding of how geography influenced cultural interactions beyond political domination.

The Relationship Between Building Orientations and Social Order at Kerkenes

Atakan Atabaş[1]
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Kerkenes, an ancient city in central Anatolia, flourished in the late 7th and early 6th centuries BCE. First identified in the 1920s and revisited in the 1990s, extensive archaeological research has since employed excavations, aerial photography, and geophysical surveys to gather data. This study aims to analyze Kerkenes' urban planning by investigating building orientations and their relationships with geographical or human-made elements. It explores the reasoning behind these orientations and their implications for the city's social organization, considering environmental, cultural, and infrastructural factors. Geographical Information Systems (GIS), Statistical Analysis, and Machine Learning (ML) will be used to assess the connection between building orientations and the landscape. Isovist, Visibility, and Viewshed Analyses will evaluate spatial visibility, while Point Depth Analysis will highlight prominent locations. Statistical methods, including Spherical and Circular Regression and Kernel Density Estimation (KDE), will model orientation patterns and identify clusters. Additionally, ML will estimate missing data from incomplete surveys and aid in identifying significant city regions. Also, a Phenomenological Approach will be

integrated to interpret the experiences of the city's founders through the application of ML in archaeology.
Key Words: Urban Planning, Building Orientation, Machine Learning, GIS, Spherical Regression, Kernel Density Estimation, Ancient Anatolia, Phenomenological Approach

Mountains, Sea, and Shifting Landscape of Iskenderun (Alexandretta): An Environmental, Urban and Historical Analysis Across Millennia
Feyza Daloglu[1]
[1] Middle East Technical University
The city of Iskenderun (historically known as Alexandretta) has undergone significant spatial transformations since its founding in the 4th century B.C.E. Over a span of 2,300 years, the city has been repeatedly relocated, following the gradual accumulation of land towards the sea— a process known as progradation. This movement, previously overlooked in historical narratives, presents a novel contribution to literature, demonstrating how urban relocation was not solely dictated by political or economic factors but also by long-term geological changes. Situated between the evolving coastline and the mountainous terrain of the Eastern Mediterranean—a defining regional characteristic of the area—Iskenderun's development has been shaped by the dynamic interplay between its natural and built environments. By integrating geological and archaeological reports with primary and secondary historical sources, as well as historical maps, this study reconstructs the city's shifting landscape and settlement patterns. The analysis reveals how the constraints of the Mediterranean's mountainous topography, combined with the slow but continuous process of land accumulation, played a critical role in determining the city's resettlements. Additionally, monuments from different eras serve as tangible markers of these transformations, providing further evidence of how natural forces shaped urban development. This research highlights the necessity of incorporating environmental processes into historical urban studies, offering a new perspective on the interaction between geology, archaeology, and urbanism in the Eastern Mediterranean.

Carving Landscapes in Byzantine Thrace: Settlements, Sacred Boundaries, and Land Management (Virtual)
Görkem Günay[1]
[1] Istanbul Technical University
Rock-cut architecture was a primary space-making practice across time and geographies wherever geological formations suitable for carving were available. In this paper, I examine the multiple ways in which Byzantine communities transformed the rocky landscapes in the Strandzha region, Thrace, according to their particular needs and belief systems. Byzantine Thrace, now dissected among Bulgaria, Greece, and Turkey, has not yet been the subject of many archaeological investigations despite its prominent position between the volatile northwestern frontier and the epicenter of the Empire, Constantinople. Overlooked mainly to date, rock-cut monuments and settlement areas in the region offer valuable insights into how medieval monastic and lay communities positioned themselves in and managed the landscapes they inhabited. Here, I introduce and discuss three case studies. Rock-cut outlying churches around Balkaya village define the limits of a small, unwalled settlement surrounded by the forest wilderness and mark cemeteries, areas of economic activity, and natural corridors that facilitate movement across the undulating, wooded terrain. In Sinanköy, outlying churches carved into the slopes of a rocky hill with massive city walls draw a sacred boundary around the fortified settlement, providing divine protection for the rivers, roads, fields, pastures, and other landscape elements that were considered important. Lastly, the rock-cut hermitage in the vicinity of a walled monastery in Kuzulu occupies a strategic location that enabled monks to change the direction of flowing water and impose their control over the landscape it reached.

10F. History of Archaeology II (Studio 1)
Chair(s): Leticia R. Rodriguez, University of Houston; Caitlin Clerkin, Harvard Art Museums

Itineraries of Neolithic Figurines: Collection, Documentation and Classification from Tangier to the Museum National d'Histoire naturelle (1906-1931)
Delphine Delamare[1]
[1] Institut National d'Histoire de l'Art (INHA)
The collections of the Museum national d'Histoire naturelle in Paris hold fifty-one Neolithic fired clay figurines (also known as "idols") collected during several excavations between 1906 and 1931 in the caves of Cap Achakar on the Atlantic coast of the Tangier region in Morocco. By combining the study of this collection with the consultation of associated or scattered archives, this paper aims to shed light on prehistorical archaeology fieldwork in the Tangier region (pre-excavation, excavation and post-excavation) in two different periods, allowing a comparative approach to the development of the discipline. The Museum collections from Cap Achakar bear the traces of these different phases of excavation, assemblage, classification and study. In 1906, Gaston Buchet, under the auspices of the Mission scientifique du Maroc, began excavations in the only area accessible to Europeans before the colonization. In 1931, Henri Koehler, a French Franciscan and amateur archaeologist, undertook excavations in the same area, then part of the International zone of Tangier. In both cases, archaeology was one of the instruments of rivalry between the Western powers in Morocco. How do the practices of collecting and putting these artefacts into circulation reflect this political and scientific context? What flexibility do the discipline stakeholders have in choosing these objects' itineraries ? I will thus examine the political, scientific and social landscape of the discipline development in a pre-colonial and colonial context, as well as the post-colonial memory of these collections from the Moroccan and French point of view.

"Hoof Prints and Foot Prints in the Sands of Time": Seleucia in Detroit
Caitlin Clerkin[1]
[1] Harvard Art Museums
From 1938 to 1941, unemployed Detroiters processed, studied, and prepared material excavated at ancient Seleucia-on-the-Tigris (Iraq) for publication. It was the Great Depression—and a moment of U.S. federal funding for relief work under the "New Deal." Under this banner was this unusual project, co-sponsored by the Works Progress Administration (WPA) and the University of Michigan, the primary sponsor of excavations at Seleucia, then in British Mandate-controlled Iraq, from 1927 to 1936. While the impact of the New Deal on U.S. Americanist anthropological and historical archaeology has been well-studied, the picture is less clear for U.S. American practice of archaeology focused on ancient west Asia. This presentation contributes to that picture by exploring this instance of broadened participation in archaeological work enabled by the New Deal. This case study of "nonexpert" archaeological labor during the afterlife of an excavation illuminates divergent discourses concerning locally-hired excavation workers on-site in Iraq and the WPA archaeology lab workers in Detroit, in both archival and popular press sources. It also prompts questions about stakeholders in an excavated corpus displaced to southeast Michigan.

Rethinking the Presentation of "Archaeology" in a Museum

Yelena Rakic[1]
[1] The Metropolitan Museum of Art

The Department of Ancient Near Eastern Art at The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City cares for a collection of ancient West Asian art that includes material from a number of archaeological excavations. About a third of the collection was acquired by the museum through the system of partage over the course of the 20th century. The department is currently working on a capital project to rethink the stories and renovate the spaces that present The Met's permanent collection of ancient West Asian art to the public. This paper will consider some of the ways the story of "archaeology" will be presented in the new galleries. Going beyond simply the comfortable narrative of excavated vs. unexcavated, it hopes to explore how the presentation of archaeological material in a museum can be a means to understanding the role of the museum in shaping and constructing knowledge.

Subaltern Contribution to Colonial Archaeology: an Archival Approach (Virtual)

Indu Prasad[1]
[1] Birkbeck University of London

Colonial archaeologists are often celebrated as heroes or dismissed as exploitative foreigners. This is certainly true of the Hungarian-British archaeologist, Aurel Stein who mounted three successful expeditions in the early twentieth century to what is now Western China. Stein brought back archaeological and ethnographical remains, totaling over 100,000 objects, which are currently housed primarily between British and Indian museums. Over the decades, the Stein Collection has been foundational in multiple special exhibitions, including two recent ones at the British Museum and British Library. As with archaeology in general, this assemblage of objects was complex and not the result of Stein's work alone. He was accompanied by a regular team of surveyors, assistants, guides and more, who shaped its construction in significant ways. Stein himself records this in varying degrees in his books. Recent post-colonial and decolonial scholarship has further focused on disassembling colonial expeditions to highlight this collective nature of archaeology. This paper adds to this vital discussion by applying the archival lens to Stein's work and analyzing the contributions of three individuals who were part of Stein's evolution as an archaeologist – the Kashmiri Pandit Govind Kaul, and two surveyors who accompanied him on field, Rai Bahadur Lal Singh and Khan Sahib Afrazgul Khan. Drawing on evidence from Stein's personal papers and the India Office Records, presented here are their influences to Stein's archaeology as captured in their own writing. In doing so, the paper presents a critically fresh lens to Stein's legacy through the contributions of the subaltern men.

10G. Ancient Inscriptions II (Studio 2)

Chair(s): Jessie DeGrado, University of Michigan; Madadh Richey, Brandeis University

Old Babylonian Letters in the Horn Museum

Nicholas Reid[1], Klaus Wagensonner[2]
[1] Reformed Theological Seminary, [2] Yale University Babylon Collection

The Horn Archaeological Museum in Berrien Springs, Michigan, holds a sizable collection of cuneiform artifacts. The c. 3,000 texts were formerly housed in the Hartford Theological Seminary, but were acquired by the Horn Museum and subsequently accessioned in 1973. Apart from the mostly administrative texts housed in the collection there is a substantial group of letters dating to the Old Babylonian period. The presenters edited about 30 of these texts and identified them as a group of tablets originating from the site of Kish. The letters in this group share prosopography and other proper names with several other larger groups of letters from this site (see Reid and Wagensonner, Letters from Old Babylonan Kish, Oxford Editions of Cuneiform Texts 16, Oxford 2025). In this talk, we aim to survey the Horn letters in their entirety and try to assign them to known archives, wherever possible. We will also attempt to discuss scribal hands and other features of the extant tablets.

Concealed Craft? Ritual and Material in Ugaritic Inscribed Bronze Tools

Stephanie L. Cooper[1]
[1] Johns Hopkins University

Five inscribed bronze tools bearing the title rb khnm, 'chief of the priests,' from the first season of excavations at Ras Shamra-Ugarit played a pivotal role in the decipherment of the alphabetic cuneiform script and the Ugaritic language. Four of these tools, three adzes and a hoe/plowshare, are on display in the Louvre and have been for decades. They have been equally "on display" within scholarly discourse; however, many of their mentions occur within the context of linguistic discovery as opposed to archaeological and socio-historical contexts. When reviewed, the tools' context has either been classified as ritual, i.e., a votive or foundation deposit, or as functional, i.e., a metalsmith's hoard or recycling cache. As this study will demonstrate, these typologies have porous boundaries—perhaps akin to the 'boundaries' between craft and ritual. This paper utilizes approaches from craft studies and material religion to illuminate the entanglement of craft and ritual evidenced by the inscribed tools, and, more broadly, by the collection of bronze objects with which they were found.

A Preliminary Report on the Late Bronze Age Cuneiform Tablets from the 2024 Excavation Season at Tell Atchana, Alalakh

Zeynep Türker[1]
[1] Johns Hopkins University

Cuneiform tablets from Late Bronze Age Alalakh (Tell Atchana, Hatay, Türkiye) provide crucial insights into the region's political, economic, and administrative systems. Previous discoveries, primarily from Sir Leonard Woolley's excavations in the 1930s and 1940s, have established a well-documented local administration. More recently, a few tablets from renewed excavations (Lauinger 2005, 2014; von Dassow 2017) have supplemented this corpus. The discovery of eleven new tablets during the 2024 excavation season, directed by Murat Akar (Mustafa Kemal University), provides a valuable opportunity to expand this picture still further. These texts, primarily administrative in nature, record economic transactions, personnel, and goods, and include examples bearing the seal impressions of a high-ranking official and a king. Additionally, several were found in areas of the tell where no previous tablets had been documented, offering fresh insights into the spatial organization of archives and administrative activities. This paper provides an overview of the content and archaeological context of these newly excavated texts and discusses how they contribute to a fuller understanding of the local administration of Late Bronze Age Alalakh.

Pharaonic "Cosplay": an Object Biographical Approach to the Abibaal and Elibaal Inscriptions

Morganne Ottobre[1]
[1] Johns Hopkins University

This paper examines the Abibaal and Elibaal inscriptions through the lens of object biographies and memory performance. An object biographical approach explores the life history of an object to assess how that object's meaning, value, and relationships were

accumulated and transformed as it moved across different social and historical contexts. The Abibaal and Elibaal inscriptions are royal Byblian inscriptions that were carved onto statues of Egyptian Pharaohs and dedicated to a local temple in Byblos. Scholars have long pondered why these Byblian kings would inscribe a statue of another king to be placed in their local temple, and most draw conclusions based on the paleographic and linguistic content of the linear inscription. In this paper, I consider how the linear inscription marks a new stage in the life of the object where past meanings and values have been recast and renegotiated for the object's new home in Byblos. I argue that the addition of the linear script around the Pharaonic cartouches comprises a "performance of memory" where both Abibaal and Elibaal essentially cosplay as Egyptian Pharaohs and thus claim the associated power and prestiege for themselves within their local context. The combination of the cartouche with the linear script allows the Egyptian object to legitimize and express local power in Byblos.

The Carthage Tariff Inscriptions

Yang Han[1]
[1] University of Chicago

The Carthage tariff inscriptions (KAI 69, 74, 75) have long posed a challenge to scholars of Northwest Semitics (NWS) and Punic religion. These texts outline ritual regulations for visitors to various temples in Carthage, employing religious terminology that has drawn extensive analysis from specialists in the Hebrew Bible and Ugaritic studies. However, the medium of these regulations is unique among early NWS inscriptions: they represent a government-sanctioned publication targeting not only lay worshippers bringing sacrifices but also the ritual experts operating within the temples. This paper shifts the focus from internal NWS comparisons to the broader Mediterranean context, drawing parallels with contemporary Greek epigraphic practices known as "ritual norms" (traditionally, leges sacrae). By integrating recent scholarship on these Greek inscriptions, I argue that the redaction and inscribing of the Carthage tariffs reflect a civic action, closely tied to the emergence of Carthage as a city-state.

10H. Interconnectivity and Exchange with Northeast Africa II (The Loft)

Chair(s): Iman Nagy, University of California, Los Angeles; Annissa Malvoisin, Brooklyn Museum

Marks of Power: The Function and Meaning of the Ancient Libyan Neith Tattoos

Collen Cramer[1]
[1] Near Eastern Languages and Cultures, University of California

Much research has been done in recent years analyzing body modification practices in Egypt and Nubia. However, little attention has been paid to the Libyans of the Western Desert. This paper will offer a reanalysis of the tattooing practices of the Late New Kingdom Libyans as seen in Egyptian iconography. Multiple depictions of Libyan men bearing various tattoo motifs have been found in New Kingdom tombs and temples, such as the tomb of Seti I and Ramesses III's funerary temple of Medinet Habu. Most prominent among these motifs is the symbol of the goddess Neith. As evidence for ancient Libyan tattooing is only found in Egyptian art, information on the practice is limited. In this paper, I combine research on the goddess Neith, current anthropological theories of tattooing, and iconographic analysis to shed light on the meaning and function of the Neith symbols found on Libyan men. This analysis shows a close connection between the Neith tattoos and markers of power and protection. This paper further addresses potential connections between Libyan tattooing and current Amazigh North African tattooing practices and the methodological challenges such possibilities pose.

Le Symbolisme des Tatouages Amazigh du Maroc (Virtual)

Myriam Laabidi[1]
[1] Laval University

La tradition du tatouage Amazigh appartient à l'identité ancestrale de l'Afrique du Nord, et dans ce cas-ci du Maroc. D'abord, le tatouage Amazigh est un marqueur avec tout le poids du symbolisme dont il fait preuve. Marqueur au sens franc et direct ou ornemental. La nomenclature des symboles qui composent les tatouages Amazigh est le résultat empirique de la représentation du monde chez les peuples d'Afrique du Nord. Alphabet des symboles utilisés aussi dans l'ensemble de l'artisanat et en architecture. Dans le cadre de cette participation, il s'agira de faire une initiation aux symboles Amazigh présents sur les tatouages, de comprendre sens, leur technicité et leurs fonctions sociales.

Cultural Exchange between the 'Postcolonial' Writers of North Africa and Southern Europe: Selected Case Studies Emphasized (Virtual)

Hemza Boudersa
[1] Ecole Normale Supérieure (ENSC), Algeria

North Africa played major role in hostening potcolonial ideas from diverse cultures including the Mediterranean basin, namely : the Maghreb and Southern Europe and. This paper emphasizes interconnectivity and exchange between postcolonial writers and intellectuals such as : Assia Djebar vs Simon de Beauvoir, Albert Camus vs. Jean Sénac, Kateb Yacine vs Jean Paul Sartre, Malek Bennabi vs. Frantz Fanon and Mohamed Chokri vs Jean Genet. The paper is not tempted to assume that the 'grass is greener on the other side of the hill' and 'ideas' are emigrated/immigrated in one direction -that is ; from one side (Europe) to the other side of the Mediterranean (North Africa). The paper spots literary interconnectivity between the afore-mentioned writers and intellectuals, as they carry common themes (anti-colonial themes like : Assia Djebar, Simon de Beauvoir, Kateb Yacine, Jean Paul Sartre, Malek Bennabi vs. Frantz Fanon), shared social backgrounds (Mohamed Chokri vs Jean Genet). And sound human experiences (Mouloud Feraoun vs Emmanuel Robbles) Bridging the cultural gap through literature is the ideal virtue to be recommended accordingly.

Shifting Sands: Understanding the Relevance of Indigenous/Local Knowledges in Archaeological Interpretations of North African Sites through Case Studies

Iman Nagy[1]

[1] University of California, Los Angeles

Since its inception, the discipline and methodology of archaeological practice has functioned within Western frameworks of space-time. These frameworks rely on a singular ontology, where inference based on materiality forms the basis of narrative constructions. Within this worldview, the concept of indigenous knowledges, or non-Western ways of knowing and perceiving the world, are often othered and or relegated into a dualistic framework that is seen as fundamentally incompatible with Western interpretations and methods. Through a series of case studies conducted at archaeological sites across North Africa, in collaboration with community members, this research seeks to investigate the limitations of this framework and demonstrate the gravity of the preservation of local knowledge and its benefits to archaeological research - not as an alternative to Western methods but as a re-envisioned Archaeology where all forms of data have equitable intellectual weight.

Discussion

10I. Archaeology of Lebanon (Whittier)

Chair(s): Hanan Charaf, Lebanese University; Nadine Panayot, American University of Beirut; Helen Dixon, East Carolina University

Ancient Tyre in the Light of Recent Research

Helene Sader[1]

[1] American University of Beirut

Tyre, modern Ṣūr, "the rock", lies on the Lebanese shore, 80 km south of the capital Beirut. Tyre is by far the most famous Phoenician city, a fame it earned due to various historical accounts: The prophet Ezechiel describes it as the wealthiest trading polity of its time, classical authors say that it is the "mother" of the most famous Phoenician colonies in the West, and, finally, it is the only Phoenician city who dared decline Alexander the Great's request to visit the temple of its city god Melqart. Archaeologists and historians neglected its investigation because they saw no trace of its former glory and wealth in the poor little fishermen's village encircling the small harbor. The discovery of the monumental Roman remains in the 1940's launched a major excavation project which was abruptly stopped by the Lebanese armed conflict. This paper focuses mainly on the results of the recent archaeological research that resumed in the early 1990's on both the island and its mainland extension and the information they provided about the Bronze and Iron Age city. It argues that the new investigations on the mainland of Tyre are key for understanding the rise and the economic potential of the city. The paper concludes by presenting the threats and severe damage done over the years to the city's cultural heritage and stresses the need to take urgent measures to protect what is left of it.

Reexamining the Painted Hellenistic Funerary Stelai from Sidon

Jessica L. Nitschke[1], Helen M. Dixon[2]

[1] Stellenbosch University, [2] East Carolina University

Approximately 35 plastered and painted stone funerary stelai dated to the Hellenistic period have been found in various necropoleis situated around modern Saida, Lebanon. They were discovered mostly in the 19th century (by Renan, Macridy, and others), but some have also come to light from more recent excavations. Among these are 25 with surviving imagery and 20 with surviving inscriptions. While first celebrated as evidence of foreign mercenary soldiers, it is now clear that the corpus includes stelai for Sidonian men and women as well. The painted decoration typically consists of a full-length portrait of the deceased, sometimes surrounded by others, as well as ornamentation in the form of floral motifs and imitation architectural elements. Scattered in collections around the world (and in some cases lost), these stelai have never been studied together as a group. This paper will present an overview of the corpus; analysis of the imagery; and an examination of the social and ethnic identities of the deceased. This type of painted stele is uncommon in the Levant in this period (though examples are known from Egypt), so this corpus provides important data on the evolving and unique nature of Sidonian funerary beliefs and rituals in the last centuries of the first millennium BCE. The iconography and inscriptions likewise offer a window into self-representation and identity in the Hellenistic Levant.

Roman Temples in Lebanon - Building a Domus for the Gods in Overdose! (Virtual)

Alia S. Fares[1]

[1] Heritage Education Program

2000 years ago, the military and economic expansion of the Roman empire brought with it innovations in sacred architecture in some of the most remote regions of Lebanon's western mountain range. As the Roman army ventured into some of Lebanon's rugged mountainous terrain, extracting and exploiting its rich natural resources, religious building projects flourished from the settling legions, relying on the army's manpower and engineering experience. The resulting religious architectural masterpieces were possibly commissioned by army veterans as a continuum on top of earlier local Canaanite Iron Age and Hellenistic sacred sites and/or on newly acclaimed strategic summit locations. The architectural features of most of these buildings transcend geographical borders in both form and order, reflecting a combination of local traditions with new Roman appearances. However, researchers today strive to give them a specific identity, whether local or international, as well as an exact construction date. Lacking very often epigraphic and/or confirmed stratigraphic excavation evidence, most of these elegant buildings in Lebanon await further investigations. Recent archaeological and architectural surveys in North Lebanon are bringing new insights about these Greco-Roman edifices and their accompanying antique settlements. Emphasis will be on the so-called Helios sanctuary of Qasr Naous, located at 630 m asl in el-Koura valley. This project is part of a PhD dissertation to document and understand the architecture, mythology and function of this antique building. The aim is to contribute to the overall architectural and religious historical narrative of North Lebanon.

STEM Archaeology and the Provenance of Roman Terracotta Sarcophagi in Lebanon (Virtual)

Hussein Salman[1]

[1] Lebanese University

Excavations at MAZ 571 in Beirut and DEK 1978 in Sidon have uncovered Roman-period suburban funerary zones with various burial types, including terracotta sarcophagi, whose provenance remains debated. While some studies suggest these sarcophagi were imported, particularly from Cilicia (Turkey), others propose local production. Recent petrographic analysis of ceramic building materials (CBM) from a Roman-period farmstead near Ashqelon has identified Beirut as a possible source for some materials, such as bricks and roof tiles. Based on these findings and the observed similarities between CBM and the fabric of terracotta sarcophagi and their tegulae, it has been suggested that these sarcophagi may have also been produced locally, potentially in workshops in Berytus or elsewhere in the Levant. This study investigates the typology, production techniques, and distribution of these sarcophagi through typo-chronological classification, petrographic analysis, and X-ray diffraction (XRD). By analyzing materials and examining their origin,

this research aims to determine whether these sarcophagi were locally produced or imported. Additionally, the study explores the socio-economic implications of burial practices, examining how the choice of burial containers reflects social hierarchies. This analysis contributes to a deeper understanding of regional trade networks, production industries, and social structures in Roman-period coastal Lebanon.

Architectural Analysis of the Portals of Deir el Qamar and Beit el Dine Palaces

Nehme A. Rjeily[1]
[1] Lebanese University

Palatial portals symbolize strength, security, and wealth. It serves both, functional and symbolic roles; the more monumental, the more powerful. In Mount Lebanon, the towns of Deir el Qamar and Beit el Dine became centers of political and cultural influence from the XVth to the XVIIIth centuries, serving as the seats of power for the Maan and Shahab dynasties. During this period, several palaces have been constructed, witnessing the importance of the region. This study will expose the architectural development of palace portals across five significant palaces: Emir Fakhreddin Maan II Palace (early 17th century), Mir Younes Maan Palace (early 17th century), Mir Youssef Shahab Palace (1729–1754), Ahmad Shahab Palace (1755), and Emir Bashir Shahab Palace (1788-1818). This paper conducts a comprehensive literature review, examines the materials used, and offers a detailed description alongside architectural drawings to investigate the construction techniques, characteristics, and evolution of decorative styles in these portals. The study demonstrates the influence of Ottoman and Islamic architecture on the composition of these portals, while incorporating local artistry and aesthetic values. This study enhances the understanding of Lebanon's regional heritage and highlights the significance of these palace portals in maintaining cultural identity. This research promotes ongoing initiatives to record, preserve, and safeguard these palaces, which represent Lebanon's architectural and cultural legacy, as urban development and neglect put their existence at risk.

10J. Ancient Climate and Environmental Archaeology II (White Hill)

Chair(s): Brita Lorentzen, University of Georgia; Kathleen Forste, Brown University

Soaring Skies, Seasonal Migrations, and Avian Wonders from the Wetlands of Western Anatolia

Tugce Yalcin[1], Safoora Kamjan[2], Christina Luke[3]
[1] University of Georgia, [2] University of Gröningen, [3] Koç University

Marmara Lake, the largest in the Gediz River Basin, dried up and vanished—along with its fauna—during the summer of 2022 due to climate change and human activity. Yet, zooarchaeological investigations at the second-millennium BCE Kaymakçı Citadel reveal that the basin long served as a vital habitat for migratory birds. Its interconnected lakes, ponds, and marshlands facilitated seasonal movements, providing feeding grounds and temporary shelters while functioning as a dynamic contact zone where avian life intersected with human activity. Migratory birds played a key role in Middle and Late Bronze Age subsistence strategies in western Anatolia, supplementing diets alongside domesticated and wild animals. Beyond their economic value, birds also held symbolic and ritual significance, as suggested by iconography, textual records, and broader regional practices. This study present the diversity of avian species sustained by these wetlands and their role in ancient economies, particularly through hunting, seasonal exploitation, and environmental adaptation. By analyzing faunal assemblages and contextual evidence from Kaymakçı, this research highlights the long-term interconnections between human societies and wetland ecosystems, emphasizing the role of migratory birds in past subsistence and cultural landscapes.

Towards an Archaeology of Horticultural Labor: Archaeological Evidence for Gardeners and Gardening at the Casa della Regina Carolina, Pompeii

Kaja Tally-Schumacher[1], Caitie Barrett[2], Kathryn Gleason[2], Annalisa Marzano[3], Lee Graña[3]
[1] Harvard University, [2] Cornell University, [3] University of Bologna

The period between the second century BCE and the first century CE was marked by an unusually stable, moist, and warm climate (dubbed the Roman Climate Optimum or RCO). These climatological conditions fueled the growth of empire – in large part, by enabling the production of agricultural staples such as grain. At the same time, the favorable climate also enabled the blossoming of an unparalleled horticultural revolution across the Mediterranean, which involved the creation of new categories of specialized workers – such as the topiarius. This paper uses the case study of the Casa della Regina Carolina (CRC) at Pompeii to explore the labor involved in producing those domestic gardens. Roman horticultural workers have long been distinctly visible in ancient texts through the very creation of new Latin words to describe their roles, while the enslaved workers themselves may have been brought from the conquered provinces of the east. Yet throughout the large corpus of garden and landscape paintings that developed during the early empire, the gardeners themselves are absent. This presentation considers the contradictory evidence between text, image, and soil, relating the relative invisibility of the gardeners themselves to cultural values related to elite landowners' control of the labor of enslaved, freed, and free workers. Additionally, in order to redress this invisibility as best as we can, we draw on the results of our ongoing field project at the Casa della Regina Carolina at Pompeii to present material evidence for the real-life activities and embodied experiences of Roman gardeners.

Was There a Correlation Between Water Conservation Efforts and Climate in Late Antique Sepphoris in the Galilee? A Study of Architectural Amendments and Climate Models

Sophia Avants[1]
[1] Duke University

Researchers have noted a decline in rainfall in the Eastern Mediterranean during the first seven centuries of the Common Era, with many studies pointing to the fourth century as particularly dry. These studies range from measurements of the shoreline along the Sea of Galilee/Lake Kinnert to isotopic measurements of speleothems in the Soreq Cave, located in Central Israel. In my study of the ritual stepped pools in the ancient city of Sepphoris, located in the Lower Galilee, I noticed amendments to both pools and cisterns that stratigraphically date earlier—roughly to 150 CE. We therefore created a climate simulation model through Duke's Nicholas School of the Environment, confined to the geographic points of the site and the period 150 BCE-200 CE, which showed a temperature increase between 0.5-.60 C. Nicholas School researchers feel that that is enough to generate remedial conservation efforts. My project aims to clarify mixed stratigraphy in the rooms of the homes where water installations were amended. This summer I will be working with a physicist from the Weizmann Institute to collect plaster samples and run 14C analysis. I will also begin photogrammetry work on the cisterns and pools in order to construct 3D models. The goal is to use visualization to understand when changes occurred, and see if correlations exist between the cistern changes and pool closures. My area of research has been ritual norms within rabbinic Judaism. Learning if these norms were impacted by climatic changes will be a significant contribution to the field.

Between Reverence and Exploitation: An Ecocritical Reading of Sumerian Forest Myths

Gioele Zisa[1]
[1] University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology

This paper applies an ecocritical lens to Sumerian mythological literature, exploring how ancient scribes engaged with wilderness and human-environment relationships. Drawing on Cheryll Glotfelty's definition of ecocriticism as "the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment," this study examines how texts such as Lugal-e, Inana and Ebiḫ, Gilgameš and Ḫuwawa, and Lugalbanda and the Anzud bird depict mountains and forests as dynamic, agentive landscapes. These narratives function as ethnoecological mediators, reflecting how ancient societies conceptualized and negotiated interactions with the natural world. Mountains and forests are portrayed as both threatening and sacred. While they harbor supernatural dangers, they also yield essential resources—water, stone, and timber—integral to civilization. This duality mirrors Mesopotamian ideologies on territorial expansion, resource extraction, and environmental manipulation. Divine and human interventions in these landscapes often represent struggles between destruction and regeneration. The slaying of Huwawa symbolizes deforestation, while Enlil's anger at his death suggests anxieties over unchecked exploitation. Lugal-e promotes post-conquest reorganization, while Inana and Ebiḫ depicts pure destruction, raising ethical questions about environmental conquest. By applying ecocriticism, this study uncovers early reflections on ecological ethics, revealing how Sumerian myths balance reverence for nature with its transformation into productive landscapes. Methodologically, it interrogates the application of modern ecocritical theory to ancient texts, demonstrating how these narratives articulate ecological awareness and offer insights into humanity's enduring negotiation with wilderness.

10K. From Artifact to History (White Hill)

Chair(s): Debora Sandhaus, Israel Antiquities Authority; Joe Uziel, Israel Antiquities Authority

Opening Remarks: The Contribution of Andrea Berlin to the Study of Archaeology

Debbie Sandhaus[1], Joe Uziel[2]
[1] Israel Antiquities Authority, [2] Israel Antiquities Authority

Carian Conspiracies: I.Mylasa 1-3 in Context

Paul Kosmin[1]
[1] Harvard University

This paper discusses a curious inscription from Mylasa (Milas) in Caria that contains three decrees from different periods in the rule of Mausolus. Individually, they provide an unsurpassed insight into the local opposition he faced (and have already received some attention in this respect). Collectively, however, they constitute a singular monument to survival and revenge - a form of political biography that selected from the civic archive, asembled in chronological order, and then put on public display three episodes of personal danger, family humiliation, and attempted assassination. This paper will seek to situate this "negative" political biography between two traditions: the first looks to modes of monarchic legitimization, the second to tales of the courtier.

Athenian Pottery in the Eastern Mediterranean

Kathleen M. Lynch[1]
[1] University of Cincinnati

Athenian potters exported their products both west and east, and while scholars have focused on the western market extensively, they have paid less attention to the eastern markets. This paper will discuss evidence for the consumption of imported Attic pottery in the Archaic and Classical periods (ca. 600-300 BCE) primarily at sites under Achaemenid control. The pattern of consumption in the east reveals less evidence of strategic marketing of shapes and scenes, a pattern which is very clear in western, especially the Etruscan market. Instead eastern consumers imported fineware shapes typical of domestic Athenian consumption, with the exception of a handful of clearly commissioned pieces. Although they did not import entire sets of pottery, there is evidence for batches of pottery from the same workshop arriving to sites. Perhaps the most surprising observation is that importation of Athenian pottery increased during the Achaemenid period. A closer look shows that consumption clings to the coast of the Mediterranean with a few notable exception (including Gordion), and that sites the the greatest consumption had already been importing Athenian pottery before the Achaemenid period. This study illuminates the manner in which Athenian pottery played a prestige role among the people of the multicultural east. Whether they could identify the mythological scenes or not, the Athenian pieces stood out and accented their tables.

Hellenistic Harbors: Between Dynastic Ambition and Daily Life by the Sea

Nicole Constantine[1]
[1] Stanford University

The construction of Hellenistic harbors can often be associated with the machinations of the dynastic powers who sought to use these coastal spaces to streamline defense or connect their territories through networks of exchange. The tumultuous reality of shifting boundaries and regimes across the period meant that several harbors changed hands multiple times, so that these sites cannot be understood as simply reflecting the initial intentions of their builders. Harbors were adaptive spaces and their continued utilization may tell us more about the daily rhythms of life of coastal communities and sailors than the grand maritime strategy of the Hellenistic dynasts. Through a consideration of material assemblages from several Hellenistic harbor sites including Akko in Northern Israel and Amathus on Cyprus, I consider the evidence for the former. The materials deposited in and around harbors reflect the human activities that defined these spaces. These included the onloading and offloading of ship cargoes, the storage of goods, the tossing or erosion of refuse into the sea, and the intentional deposition of votive objects as offerings. These assemblages, though challenging to disentangle, allow us to glimpse the individuals for whom interaction with the sea, either from the shore or from ships, was a central component of daily life. The Hellenistic period is often understood as a particularly cosmopolitan and hypermobile era. By considering how the human relationship with the sea was mediated through harbor spaces, I will evaluate how we might see these paradigms reflected in the material assemblages from Hellenistic harbors.

On Friendship and Flying Saucers. New Perspectives on Roman Table Silver

Nicholas Hudson[1]
[1] University of North Carolina Wilmington

Roman table silver has long captivated the imaginations of scholars and the public alike for its beauty and opulence. Complete silver assemblages offer a tantalizing portal through which to view the luxuries and excesses of the Roman Empire. While these gleaming dining sets enjoy some celebrity, they have not received much attention as functional objects in their domestic contexts. This paper examines how complete silver assemblages were used in the house of the Roman elite during the first two centuries of Empire, revealing new possibilities of the meaning and significance of household silver. By analyzing entire table settings, we can better understand the style of dining and drinking practices they facilitated. This study suggests that silver table assemblages were not intended as the flex of wealth and luxury we tend to think they were. Instead, the opulent settings were best suited for small, intimate gatherings that fostered friendship and comradery among peers.

Banias, Sugar, and Pottery: Production and Supply in the 12th Century

Edna J. Stern[1]
[1] Israel Antiquities Authority

The excavation of a pottery kiln at Banias uncovered ceramic production waste, including vessels associated with 12th-century sugar manufacturing. Examining the typology of these sugar pots within a broader regional context provides new insights into sugar production in this area and the centralized supply of ceramic vessels for the industry—an aspect that remains largely unexplored. The sugar molds and molasses jars found at the site resemble those from both Fatimid and Crusader contexts, suggesting a link between Crusader inland expansion and sugar production. Given Banias' political ties to coastal Crusader territories, it is plausible that the Franks played a role in establishing sugar manufacturing in the Hula Valley. However, political instability and logistical challenges in marketing inland-produced sugar may have contributed to its decline. The analysis of these ceramic vessels offers key archaeological evidence for the historical development of the sugar industry and the economic strategies of medieval rulers, contributing to broader research on medieval sugar production in the Levant.

Concluding Remarks

Andrea Berlin[1]
[1] Boston University

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 21, 2025 | 2:00pm-4:05pm (EST)

11A. No session scheduled (rooms on hold)

11B. Archaeology of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq III (Grand Ballroom B)

Chair(s): Petra M. Creamer, Emory University; Elise J. Laugier, Utah State University

Recent Results from the Kurd Qaburstan Project, a Second Millennium BCE City on the Erbil Plain

Tiffany Earley-Spadoni[1]
[1] University of Central Florida

In 2025, the Kurd Qaburstan Project carried out archaeological investigations at a 95-hectare Middle Bronze Age urban center located south of Erbil in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. This multi-institutional collaboration brought together specialists in archaeology, remote sensing, geospatial analysis, archaeobotany, zooarchaeology, human osteology, stable isotope analysis, and cultural heritage to investigate northern Mesopotamian urbanism. Fieldwork this season continued excavation in the lower town palace and the Northwest Neighborhoods, where earlier work had identified monumental and domestic architecture. New excavations also began in a recently discovered Middle Bronze Age building on the northern slope of the high mound. Remote sensing supported spatial analysis and helped reconstruct the organization of the site. These results offer new insights into political and economic organization by showing patterns of centralized control, neighborhood planning, and access to resources within the city. The growing archaeological evidence for large-scale administration and episodes of violence supports the identification of Kurd Qaburstan with the powerful city-state of Qabra, which historical sources describe as having been taken by force during military campaigns in the early second millennium BCE.

From Satellites to Ceramics: Tracking Landscape Change and Heritage Impacts in the Erbil Plain

Elise Jakoby Laugier[1], Mohammed Lashkri[2], Madeline Ouimet[3], Jason A. Ur[4]
[1] Utah State University, [2] General Directorate of Antiquities, Kurdistan Region of Iraq, [3] University of Chicago,[4] Harvard University

Like many dryland landscapes in western Asia and the Mediterranean, the Erbil Plain is increasingly shaped by forces beyond the region, including geopolitical events and climate variability, which accelerate land-use changes and threaten archaeological heritage. Here, we present recent work from the Erbil Plain Archaeological Survey (EPAS), examining how these external pressures impact archaeological sites and landscapes. First, we discuss a remote sensing analysis of (inter)annual land cover change over the past decade, using satellite imagery to assess the extent of landscape transformation and site disturbance. Our results highlight the role of shifting environmental and supra-regional political conditions in reshaping the region's archaeological landscapes. Second, we introduce efforts to develop an accessible ceramic typology, a critical tool for improving site documentation. By enhancing the capacity to systematically record ceramic assemblages, this initiative strengthens efforts to document sites before they are further affected by these forces. We argue that integrating satellite-based land cover analysis with increased ceramic typological accessibility provides an improved approach for tracking and mitigating threats to cultural heritage in the Erbil Plain. More broadly, this research underscores the need for proactive strategies in heritage management, particularly in regions where globalized economic and environmental dynamics are rapidly altering the archaeological record.

Partners in Persistence: Community Resilience at Iron Age Qach Rresh

Laurel A. Poolman[1], Lucas Proctor[2], Elise Jakoby Laugier[2], Petra M. Creamer[3], Kyra Kaercher[4], Glynnis Maynard[5]
[1] Johns Hopkins University, [2] Utah State University, [3] Emory University, [4] Montana State University-Northern, [5] University of Cambridge

This paper presents the preliminary results of the 2025 excavations at Qach Rresh, a small Iron Age agricultural settlement located in the Neo-Assyrian heartland. Excavated as part of the Rural Landscapes of Iron Age Imperial Mesopotamia project since 2021, Qach Rresh offers a rare opportunity to investigate diachronic changes in material culture across three imperial regimes—Assyrian, Neo-Babylonian/Median, and Achaemenid—between approximately

700 and 400 BCE. The site has been excavated by a multidisciplinary team of archaeological specialists, whose research reconstructs how rural communities navigated shifts in imperial control through strategies of subsistence and resource management. This paper presents the preliminary analyses of faunal and botanical remains alongside our initial report, highlighting how multispecies relationships mediated interactions with the landscape and sustained community persistence amidst broader political and economic transitions. By examining evidence for herd management, environmental exploitation, and localized subsistence practices, this study situates Qach Rresh within the broader context of imperial ruralism, emphasizing how multispecies relations structured daily life and facilitated adaptation across fluctuating regimes of power.

The Sebittu Project: Results from the 2024-2025 Field Seasons
Timothy Matney[1]
[1] University of Akron

The primary focus of the Sebittu Project is an exploration of Iron Age villages, hamlets, and farmsteads in the western Erbil Plain of the Kurdish Region of Iraq. The Sebittu Project permit includes seven small settlements (<5 ha) with Neo-Assyrian occupation (c. 900 – 600 BC) based on surface finds and clustered within a 15.5km2 region between two minor river courses. The broad research questions being asked include: (1) the role of these settlements within the Neo-Assyrian economy, especially as part of agricultural intensification or extensification in the imperial heartland and the production of crafts and other materials for urban consumption; (2) the relationship between the small settlements themselves and the degree to which activities were practiced independent of imperial control or with local collaboration; (3) the environmental impact of new settlements, population growth, and farming practices on the interfluvial regions of the Erbil Plains. Based on initial surface surveys, three size-type designations were given to villages (~ 5ha), hamlets (~2 ha), and farmsteads (<1 ha). This paper reports the results of new intensive surface surveys, magnetic field gradiometry surveys, and excavations at a representative sample of site-types across the Sebittu Project area, as well as preliminary results from specialist studies from the 2024 and 2025 seasons. The Sebittu Project is an ASOR-affiliated research project.

11C. Towards a Working Ancient Economy: The Bronze Age III (Georgian)

Chair(s): Eric Aupperle, Harvard University; Andrew Deloucas, Harvard University; Taha Yurttas, Harvard University

An Economic Organism Turning into a Civic Institution: The Case of the Kārum Merchant Community of Sippar in the Bronze Age
Morgane Pique[1]
[1] Université de Lille - HALMA UMR 8164

In the first half of the 2nd millennium BC, the city of Sippar in Central Mesopotamia, which was an autonomous principality, was integrated into the kingdom of Babylon and became its northern gate. However, over the time, the city became informally ruled by the kārum. Unlike the Assyrian kārum in Anatolia, the Babylonian one was not a self-governed trading post but designated a local merchant assembly and it has never been thoroughly studied as a local power or institution. However, since Sippar had control over all the people and goods entering the kingdom, this gave a lot of power to the local merchants and their kārum, headed by the chief of the merchants (ugula dam-gar3). According to the economic and legal texts from Sippar, they grew in importance within the city and became one of the main actors of local power. They replaced the traditional leaders, such as the “mayor”-rabiānum with the chief of the merchants. He, the kārum and the judges of Sippar became the privileged partners of the king in Babylon, but they also became the juridical body for all the Sipparians. Also, they oversaw the development and management of the city, as well as the local agriculture and food granaries. The aim of this paper is to understand how an economic organism, the kārum, evolved into a civic institution. To that end, it will outline the analysis of more than sixty economic and legal texts that come from archives of different “chiefs of the merchants”.

The Institutional Economy of Early Old Babylonian Ur and Nippur (2016-1840 BCE)
Andrew Deloucas[1]
[1] Harvard University

This paper examines archival material from Ur and Nippur during the early Old Babylonian period (2016–1840 BCE). The material is categorized by institutional activity, focusing on the organizational oversight of production chains and the economic interactions documented within neighborhood records. This study in part aims to address inconsistencies in economic and organizational theories, such as debates surrounding public-private dynamics, which are often inappropriately applied to Middle Bronze Age ANE cities. This case study forms part of a broader, ongoing analysis of Ur and Nippur's development under various dynastic powers throughout the Old Babylonian period (2016–1710 BCE). While other city-based datasets offer abundant comparative evidence for the 19th and 18th centuries BCE, there remains a relative scarcity of data for the preceding century. What, then, can be discerned about these two cities—former centers of power for the Ur III state—now described as "free" or "independent"? How might we treat these records for mapping out a fiscal relationship between a city and its rulers?

Managing Temple Herds in the Old Babylonian Period (Virtual)
Marine Beranger[1]
[1] Freie Universitaet Berlin

Since the development of the first cities, temples have been at the center of the urban economy in Mesopotamia. Thousands of clay tablets bear witness to how they managed the production, distribution and consumption of resources essential to their activities. Many of these records are about the animals they owned, which played a crucial role in ensuring food self-sufficiency and a source of income. Cows produced the milk, butter, and cheese used to feed the gods, and the wool from sheep and goats was collected and sold. The entrails of these animals were used for divination, and their meat was offered to the gods. The temple staff also benefited from the resources, through the redistribution of food offerings. This paper will focus on the way Old Babylonian temples managed their herds and their products, focusing on several specific cases.

Discussant
Eva M. von Dassow[1]
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11D. Archaeologies of Memory I (Arlington)

Chair(s): Janling Fu, Harvard University; Tate Paulette, North Carolina State University

Anti-Colonial Sediments: Remembering Indigenous Archaeologies in 19th-Century Ottoman Writings from the Gulf of Antalya
Leticia R. Rodriguez[1], Jason R. Vivrette[2]
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This paper bridges the disciplines of archaeology and literature, focusing on intersections between two nineteenth-century Ottoman works set in the coastal environs of Antalya: Dimitri E. Danieloglou's Greek-language archaeological travelogue, Travels in Pamphylia in 1850, and Nabizade Nazım's Turkish novella of 1890, Karabibik,

notable for its narrative engagement with numerous ancient structures and archaeological layers (e.g., Lycian, Greek, Byzantine) in the local landscape. Previous studies (e.g., Özil, 2020, 2024; Gökalp Alpaslan, 2007) have acknowledged how these writers provide a glimpse into provincial (and multicultural) perspectives on life among the ruins. Yet there is still a tendency to give precedence to the Hellenophilic, colonial ideologies of previous European travelers (e.g., Charles Fellows, Charles Texier) that inform these Ottoman writings. Indeed, as members of elite communities with privileged mobilities (i.e., the son of a wealthy Greek land-owner, and a graduate of the Imperial School of Military Engineering in Istanbul), both Danieloglou and Nazım at times reproduce a kind of colonialism-through-archaeology: one that delegitimizes--and even erases from memory--non-elite knowledges and mobilities. Nevertheless, this paper contends that there are still significant "alternative archaeologies" (Greenberg and Hamilakis, 2022) to recover here. By removing the 'colonial sediments' projected onto the provincial archaeoscape (an elite 'backfill' of sorts), more inclusive counter-archaeologies (especially those of indigenous and migrant communities) alluded to within each text begin to come to the fore. In essence, by unsettling these layers, this paper provides access to highly local, syncretic ways in which the archaeoscape was viewed, experienced, and remembered by non-elite inhabitants.

Sym.Bowl. The Eye, the End of the Ubaid and Some Memorial Mechanisms trough Ancient "Cultural Apocalypses": A Case Study (Virtual)

Johnny Samuele Baldi[1]
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Although related to a radical and generalised cultural change, the anthropological and historical notion of "cultural apocalypses" (in E. De Martino's sense) has no violent, destructive or devastating connotations. Rather, it adapts to some transformations experienced by late prehistoric Mesopotamian societies in their pathways towards what archaeology tends to epitomise under the generic labels of "social complexity", or even "urbanisation". In the second quarter of the 5th millennium BCE, the end of the Ubaid phase coincides with an evolutionary shift taking place through a series of formal continuities and organisational discontinuities that affect society as a whole. In particular, the disappearance of painted ceramics has been widely discussed as a symptom of processes whose depth can be intuited, but whose meanings and developments cannot be defined. Through the case study of the Ubaid "eye" symbol painted on bowls, this paper tries to address post-Ubaid collective memory transmission mechanisms by applying a techno-iconographic (chaînes opératoires and painted motifs) analysis of pottery. This approach encompasses systems of memory creation and transmission within communities of practice (Wenger), as well as mechanisms conveyed by oral-iconographic memorial traditions, known as the "chimera principle" (Severi). The picture that emerges is that of a society engaged in profound transformations by reshaping dynamics of social competition into processes of integration between different groups.

Using the Past and Shaping the Present in Mid-first Millennium BCE Babylon: Whom Does Ishtar-of-Akkad belong to? (Virtual)

Odette Boivin
[1] University of Münster

In the seventh and sixth centuries BCE, the city of Babylon and Babylonia—the land of Akkad—looked back on a long history. Inscriptions from earlier kings were being copied, their steles were still on display, workers undertaking work on existing infrastructure found their inscriptions. The northern Merkes area in the capital Babylon underwent an important remodelling of its sacred topography in that period. One of the temples excavated there in the early twentieth century by the German expedition of Robert Koldewey is the Emashdari, dedicated to the goddess Ishtar-of-Akkad. This paper will present a re-evaluation of its history, based on archaeological and textual data, put it in the context with claims made by kings to appropriate the Old Akkadian past, and examine how certain actors were included or excluded from that story. This paper is partly based on research carried out in the ERC-funded project « Governance in Babylon: Negotiating the Rule of Three Empires » based at the University of Münster.

A Network of Table-Scribes at Dra Abu el-Naga in the Theban Necropolis

Emma Glenister[1]
[1] University of Pennsylvania

Dra Abu el-Naga is a section of the Theban Necropolis, the burial place of many high-ranking officials of the Egyptian New Kingdom. In a small section of Dra Abu el-Naga called the Ramesside Cluster, four of the tomb owners hold variations on a particular title, sš wdḥw, often translated "table-scribe" or “scribe of the (offering) table”. In tombs nearby, sometimes so close as to share walls, were buried other officials with whom the table-scribes seem to have been professionally connected. Several of these tomb owners, like the Viceroys of Kush Setau and Anhotep, were at the highest ranks of the Egyptian government. Between the proximity of the tombs and the shared institutional links between the tomb owners, the archaeological evidence gives the impression of a tight multi-generational professional network buried at the Ramesside Cluster.

But this is not the entire picture. This impression – of the closeness of these important officials – is not an organic one but one founded on the choices of the tomb owners: where they were buried, what titles they emphasized in their burial equipment, and who was represented in their tomb scenes. Just as important are the dozens of missing people – servants, lower officials, and other components of their social network left out of these records. This paper will consider this social network as both a real professional network and a deliberately constructed way of remembering an idealized clique of high officials, a memory designed to elevate the table-scribes in the minds of mourners at the necropolis.

Biography of Production: The Life Cycle of the Lamassū as a Window into the Laborer's Knowledge

Luke Ruff[1]
[1] Independent Researcher

Plenty of research has been done about the ancient lamassū from Dūr-šarru-kīn (Modern Khorsabad). This previous research largely focuses on its political meaning, symbolism, interaction with other reliefs, and the types of specialized craftsmen involved in their production. Yet the lamassū provides an avenue of research into the knowledge of the craftsmen themselves. This presentation reconstructs the life cycle of the lamassū from evidence including its own materiality, other palace reliefs, and Neo-Assyrian administrative documents. Investigating the many stages of the lamassū’s production provides an innovative perspective about the hidden knowledge of craftsmen and their perception of and in society.

11E. Alterity in the Ancient Near East I (Berkeley & Clarendon)

Chair(s): Lauren Cook, Johns Hopkins University; Georgia Vance, Johns Hopkins University

Archaeological Knowledge and the Construction of Ancient Anatolian ‘superiority’ at Kültepe-Kanesh

Yağmur Heffron[1]
[1] University C0llege London

This paper focuses on modern narratives of ancient ‘alterity’ by looking at archaeological knowledge production around Kültepe-Kanesh, the celebrated site which was home to a mixed population of local Anatolians and expatriate Assyrians during from ca.20th-18th centuries BCE. Excavations at Kültepe-Kanesh hold tremendous ideological significance, having been launched as a flagship project of the Turkish Historical Society in 1948 and placed in the charge of Tahsin Özgüç, a rising star of the first generation of Turkish-trained archaeologists. Promising a view into ancient Anatolian cosmopolitanism, the site of Kültepe-Kanesh was invaluable for modern Türkiye’s Early Republican preoccupation with asserting the position of ancient Anatolia among more sophisticated ancient Near Eastern civilisations. Despite its immense influence, knowledge production around Kültepe-Kanesh has received little critical attention in histories of Turkish archaeology, which focus principally on the first half of the Early Republic period (1923-1950), infrequently venturing beyond the mid-1940s. Beginning only in 1948, the early history of systematic excavations at Kültepe-Kanesh coincide with a new phase in nationalist archaeology in post-war Türkiye, which has yet to receive purposive historiographical attention. Through a close reading of the scholarly and gray literature in which discoveries from Kültepe-Kanesh were presented, this paper will offer a critical account of how archaeological interpretations of cultural contact between local Anatolians and foreign Assyrians were shaped by ongoing processes of identity-making in modern Türkiye, conflating ancient and 20th century societies living in Anatolia, and imagine them as sharing a superior indigenous ‘essence’.

Meeting, Mingling, and Building Identity in Cyprus (between II and I Millennium BC) (Virtual)

Simonetta Ponchia[1]
[1] University of Verona

Cyprus was a trade and travel transit point and conduit over time and became a frontier of I mill. empires, while remaining central for its position and resources. Languages and scripts (although their interpretation is in some cases problematic) and archaeological remains illustrate dynamics of dialogue and differentiation between various social and cultural levels and groups, and reveal the intention to manifest and preserve identities, as well as to adopt shared prestige habits and broadly circulating material symbols. The focus of the paper is mainly on the first centuries of the first millennium BC and cases that may be interpreted as the result of processes of entanglement of local and various intrusive/foreign elements. Evidence of internal boundary definitions and relations between sites with different characteristics and positions in the inland or on the sea – such as Tamassos, Idalion, Salamis, Kition, Paphos, Kourion – allows us to investigate the relations between economic activities and interests on the one side and cultural or identity manifestations and developments on the other.

Negotiating Presentation under Empire: Horse-and-Rider Figurines from the Temple of Apollo Hylates, Kourion

Emilie Nordhues[1]
[1] University of California, Los Angeles

“Persian” horse-and-rider figurines are a long-recognized form, but one whose use and function is not well-understood. This paper seeks to partially redress that issue through consideration of the assemblage of over a thousand votive horse-and-rider figurines from the Temple of Apollo Hylates, located near Kourion. These figurines were found in an early Roman favissae and can be dated to the 5th century BCE – 2nd century CE; this tertiary and mixed find context, while providing some valuable information, nevertheless renders their interpretation challenging. Thus, this paper will also consider the value of more art historical approaches which pay attention to the Persian and Greek influences on the iconography of selected examples from this assemblage against their wider background of Cypriot votive practice. The play and negotiation between these influences in a discrete assemblage provides insight into negotiations of presentation in this Cypriot world. Thus, in this analysis, a hybrid and nebulous third space is revealed, one which

saw individuals navigating between Greek, Persian, and Cypriot influences in a religious space.

Phoenicians" in the North? The Epigraphic and Ceramic Evidence from Northern Syria and Cilicia

Dylan Winchell[1], Leopoldo Fox-Zampiccoli[1]
[1] New York University

From the late 9th century BCE, the presence of "Phoenician" writing practices, material culture and iconography in the Syro-Anatolian region are often taken as a proxy for the economic or political influence of Central Levantine cities. Sources safely documenting their presence along the northern coasts, however, are scarce and late. In recent years it is becoming clearer that the historical reality defies the definition of groups along assumed ethnic, linguistic, and cultural lines. Exploring these intra-regional entanglements demonstrates the inefficacy of defining their material correlates in ethnic terms, which has been the dominant interpretation in the historiography of the region. We argue that any definition of North Syrian or Cilician material culture as "Phoenician" is not in line with this entangled historical reality though an investigation of the technical traditions of two classes of material culture - ceramic and epigraphy - which have previously been labelled "Phoenician" or "Central Levantine" by scholars in Cilicia and Northern Syria. While these present different problems, they can be investigated separately using the same conceptual framework that recognizes material culture as the ongoing work of distinct communities of practice. "Phoenician" ceramic and epigraphic evidence are instead considered as the materialized evidence of interaction between individuals partaking in recognizable production practices which do not necessarily emanate from the Central Levant. We argue that the chain of production for "Phoenician" inscriptions and pottery in the region demonstrate a small part of the ongoing and entangled interactions among unique technical communities that do not straightforwardly match any ethnolinguistic model.

11F. Home Away from Home: Disciplinary Migrations and Scholarly Identities I (Studio 1)

Chair(s): Danielle Candelora, College of the Holy Cross; Mahri Leonard-Fleckman, Princeton Theological Seminary; Jacob Damm, College of the Holy Cross

Some Unanticipated Benefits of Teaching Outside Your Comfort Zone

Amanda Podany[1]
[1] California State Polytechnic University Pomona

Sometimes, after reading and rereading a cuneiform text for years, you realize that it includes evidence that you'd somehow never noticed before. This can trigger a search for other documents that hadn't previously seemed relevant, and inspire new and unexpected research directions. "Disciplinary migrations," such as teaching courses outside one's research field, can be a source of these sudden insights. As a faculty member in a small history department at a state teaching university, I've experienced this many times, a few of which I will touch on in this paper. One example is in my adoption of microhistory for understanding aspects of the ancient Middle East. A microhistory generally focuses on a limited archive pertaining to one or more everyday individuals, revealing aspects of their lives and worldviews that might otherwise be invisible. Over many years, I've talked with colleagues in more modern fields about the conclusions they draw from quotidian documents, many with cuneiform parallels. I've taught general historiography courses in which we discussed microhistories in European and US history. And undergraduate students in my ancient Near Eastern surveys, with their fascination about the details of daily life, have posed questions I had never contemplated before, including about travel and travelers in Mesopotamia, which has become my latest project. Cuneiform archives are perfectly suited to a microhistorical approach, but I might never have adopted this method in my own work had I not found a "home away from home" in my department.

At Home in a Geography Department: Research Trajectories and Experiential Teaching Opportunities

Shawn Bubel[1]
[1] University of Lethbridge

Connections between archaeology and geography can be traced back to the beginnings of our discipline. In this sense, being in a geography department is not that odd. My study of sediments, soils, and formation processes at archaeological sites is, at least partly, understood by many of my colleagues. For me, my departmental home is home. However, archaeologists working in a geography department is atypical in North American post-secondary institutions. Being a Near Eastern archaeologist in a geography department definitely odd! I am fortunate that that tie was made by my predecessor, and together with one of my colleagues, we continue to do research in the field. I benefit from the equipment our department has for my geoarchaeological research, though I don't think they foresaw the muffle furnace being used to process phytolith samples, conduct ceramic experiments, or burn bone. The fridge has also contained "samples" for faunal reference collections that weren't appreciated by everyone. Oops. I have also built research connections with other science departments to conduct mtDNA studies and chemical analyses on artifacts and matrices. My smaller, liberal education institution makes these research synergies easier, and in many cases, hallway chats with colleagues have prompted new research ideas. This freedom to explore is supported by my institution and I am very fortunate that they also see the value of experiential learning. Almost every summer students join us in the field, where teaching and research are truly combined. That "home away from home" is the real home!

Magic, Hauntings, Witches, and Monsters: Ancient History in Religious Studies

Rangar H. Cline[1]
[1] University of Oklahoma

The email stated that an editor at Biblical Archaeology Review had learned of my course on the "History of Magic" via the Religious Studies Twitter account and asked if I could write something about ancient magic for BAR. I agreed to, but then I began to ponder how I had come to teach a course that shared a name with something from the Harry Potter universe. My career began like many others: Ph.D. in ancient history, Regular Member of the ASCSA, and excavations in Greece and Israel. I imagined myself in a Classics or History Department. However, I had migrated into a Religious Studies department, where my regular courses included material on religions in the ancient Mediterranean, but also subjects like alien worshippers and Mothman. While such an environment might seem distracting, it has resulted in research that combines methods from several different disciplines. My time in a Religious Studies department caused me to re-imagine my next research project about ghosts and hauntings in the Greek and Roman world. While the Classical sources for such material are well known, my engagement with colleagues and students who considered hauntings in more modern cultures caused me to reconsider what it means to be haunted in the ancient world and to think more broadly about the function of ghosts and monsters in the tales from antiquity. This paper presents examples of such material and discusses how the experience of working in a "foreign" department has enriched my approach to ancient material.

Secret Societies, World's Fairs, and Star Trek: Practicing Ancient Near Eastern Studies in a Liberal Education Setting

Kevin McGeough[1]

[1] University of Lethbridge

As someone who is employed in a Department of Geography & Environment, without any background in the geographic or environmental sciences, I share little in common with the colleagues I work with daily. Yet this has been more productive than disheartening, as I have been nearly constantly exposed to scholarship and research outside of my expertise. While many in my department are more scientifically or technically oriented, theoretical orientations related to construction of borders, identities, and imaginative geographies have been particularly influential on me. The liberal education philosophy of the University of Lethbridge encourages multi-disciplinarity, where scholars operate from a particular academic specialization but engage in wider conversations that cross traditional boundaries as part of a larger civic contribution. That environment has been part of what has shifted the focus of my research towards the multiple ways that different communities find value in the study of the ancient Near East through different kinds of media. In this presentation, I want to explore these kinds of constructions of meaning, as related to the ancient Near East, and archaeology more generally, especially as seen through the lenses of geographically-inspired critical theory.

11G. Ancient Inscriptions III (Studio 2)

Chair(s): Jessie DeGrado, University of Michigan; Madadh Richey, Brandeis University

The Tel Dan Inscription and the Aramaic Preterite, Once Again

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[1] Trinity Evangelical Divinity School

The Aramaic inscription on the Tel Dan Stela contains seven occurrences of a waw attached to a prefixed verbal form that contextually is describing a past action. Three occurrences of this same phenomenon are found in the Zakkūr Inscription. However, the Tel Dan inscription also has two occurrences of a prefixed verbal form with past tense nuance that do not follow a waw. This paper will briefly describe the different debated understandings of this phenomenon as they have invoked Hebrew for analogy. It will reinvestigate one of the cruxes to suggest a solution, as well as the likely vocalization of this form in Old Aramaic.

Sons, Daughters, and Amurru: New Readings in the Zakkur Stele (KAI 202)

Aren Wilson-Wright[1]

[1] University of Chicago

The Zakkur stele (KAI 202) represents an important source of information about the political and military history of northern Syria in the 8th century BCE. It narrates how Zakkur, the king of Hamath and Luash, defeated a coalition of 16 kings lead by Bar Hadad of Damascus and went on to undertake several construction projects. Unfortunately, the stele is broken in several places and these breaks obscure key passages within the text, including the list of kings mobilized against Zakkur in lines A7–9 and the curses against those who would tamper with the stele in lines B21–22. In this paper, I propose several new readings of these damaged passages based on the RTI sequences of the stele produced by the West Semitic Research Project. I also confirm and refine several proposed restorations of lines A7–8. With the help of RTI, I am able to read an additional letter at the end of line B21 and two additional, partially preserved letters in line B22, which yields the sequence 21 …mn . yšlḫ . br 22 [ʔw .]ʳbrʾth 'whoever will send his son or his daughter'. I also substantiate Lemaire's suggestion that the end of line A 8 and the beginning of line A9 should read 8 …wšbʕt [.] ʳmʾ[lky] 9 [ʔ]ʳmʾr . wmḥnwt . hm 'and the seven kings of Amurru, them and their armies' rather than 8 …wšbʕt [. mlkn] 9 [h]ʳmʾw . wmḥnwt . hm 'and seven kings, them and their armies'.

The Neirab Scribe's Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day: New Evidence for Two False Starts on the Border of the Neirab I Inscription (KAI 225)

Abigail Beech[1], Aren Wilson-Wright[1]

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Neirab I (KAI 225) is an 6th century BCE Old Aramaic epitaph for Sin-zer-ibni the priest of Sahar at Neirab. In this paper, we identify two groups of partially erased letters along the border of the stele using the RTI sequence produced by the West Semitic Research Project. Starting at 12 o'clock and continuing counterclockwise, we read group 1 as: y? kʳmʾr [š]ʳhʾr bn?r[b] mt '…i, priest of Shahar in Neirab is dead'. Group 2 begins at 2 o'clock and, from right to left, we read: š[n]z, 'Si[n]-ze…'. Until now, none of these letters have been recognized, with the exception of the z in group 2. Since these groups match portions of the main text on the stele, but are nonetheless separate, we suggest that they represent two unsuccessful attempts to inscribe Sin-zer-ibni's epitaph. The scribe first wrote along the border of the stele starting at 12 o'clock, ran out of room, and partially erased what they had written. They then began again on the right border around 2 o'clock, writing from left-to-right, and stopped again. This time they either omitted the n of Sin-zer-ibni's name, or changed their mind about starting on the border. These epigraphic observations lead to three potential conclusions about the Neirab scribe's epigraphic habits: (1) they worked alone; (2) they did not write the epitaph in ink before carving it; and (3) they lacked either time or experience, leading to poor spatial planning.

Palmyrene Funerary Busts in the Museo Barracco: Analyzing Iconography, Epigraphy, and Social Identity Through Reflectance Transformation Imaging (RTI)

Ali Kesserwani[1], Konstantin Klein[2], Jeremy Hutton[3]

[1] Emory University, [2] University of Amsterdam, [3] University of Wisconsin-Madison

The Museo Barracco (Barracco Museum of Ancient Sculpture), situated in Rome, houses over four hundred works of ancient art collected from throughout the Eastern Mediterranean. The collections of the museum have received minimal attention in academia, despite possessing an array of artifacts from the ancient Mediterranean. Three of the objects currently in the museum's collection are Palmyrene funerary busts, each bearing an Aramaic inscription commemorating a member of the Palmyrene elite. In this study, we analyze all three reliefs, providing discussions of their iconographic features, onomastics and prosopography, and script-styles, with particularly detailed descriptions attending the latter. Through the use of Reflectance Transformation Imaging (RTI), we confirm prior readings and make additional observations regarding the subjects' professional and social identities. The significance of this paper lies in its contribution to the study of Palmyrene funerary art and epigraphy, specifically the under-examined context of the Museo Barracco's collection. By closely analyzing these three reliefs, we offer new insights into the iconographic conventions and stylistic variations present in these funerary busts, and shed light on the artistic traditions of the city. Furthermore, this paper highlights the use of RTI and how it can be used to enhance the study of ancient inscriptions, particularly in cases where surface details have been obscured by erosion, damage, or previous misreadings. This demonstrates the potential of advanced imaging techniques in epigraphy, advocating for their broader application in the study of ancient inscriptions. Publication in Maarav: https://www.journals.uchicago.edu/doi/10.1086/731528

A Palmyrene Aramaic Forgery at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (M76.174.249)

Larissa St. Clair[1], Catherine E. Bonesho[1], Tyler Jarvis[1]
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This paper investigates a Palmyrene funerary relief and inscription currently housed at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (M.76.174.249). While the relief itself bears some stylistic hallmarks of Palmyrene portraiture, the object's inscription presents significant difficulties. Its letter forms do not follow known Palmyrene epigraphic forms but instead appear to be poor imitations of northwest Semitic letter forms in diverse orientations and spacing, raising serious doubts about its authenticity. Such difficulties have already been briefly noted by scholars (e.g., Marcoe 1981 and Parlasca 1990, who each see the inscription as a likely forgery); however, to date, a detailed investigation of M.76.174.249, its paleography, and its history of possession, has yet to be published. We hope to fill this lacuna by conducting a full paleographical analysis of the inscription, comparing the inscription's forms to Palmyrene script traditions, as well as to known Palmyrene and other northwest Semitic forgeries of the past century. We will ultimately argue that the inscription of M.76.174.249 is indeed a forgery. As part of our study, we will also investigate the object's history of possession and the possible origins of the forged inscription (e.g., whether the inscription can be connected to any other known Palmyrene forgeries, forgers, and their methods). Overall, our study of the LACMA relief will contribute to the field of Palmyrene Aramaic paleography and the complex problems of assessing forged inscriptions, objects, and their creation in the last century.

11H. Interconnectivity and Exchange with Northeast Africa III

(The Loft)

Chair(s): Iman Nagy, University of California, Los Angeles; Annissa Malvoisin, Brooklyn Museum

Building Knowledge: Alexandrian Architecture from Meroë to Pompeii

Shiro Burnette[1]
[1] New York University

Evidence of a 3rd c. B.C.E papyrus fragment presents a school teacher's use of slender decorated columns as architectural framing for panels of epigraphic exercises. The teacher, likely from the Fayum Oasis, potentially constructed these supports as visual aids connected to the framed poetic content. Prior scholarship notes connections between these columns and contemporary Hellenistic-Alexandrian structures, Graeco-Egyptian tombs, and Roman wall painting. Tracing Alexandrian architectural elements, especially mosaics, in new locations has historically fueled the city's cosmopolitan reach. Though heightened manufacture may speak to the ubiquity of Alexandrian imagery across geography, the implementation and reception of these visual forms detail a sense of scholasticism employed by makers and patrons. To read these columns as an Alexandrian type, the producer and the viewer must be aware of the type itself. Further evidence may include the use of columns in Meroë, where the Alexandrian type is seemingly present, though it does not compromise the local identity. This paper argues that the decision to employ Alexandrian architectural language outside of its borders extended one's knowledge of local and foreign systems. This paper is not an overview of Alexandria's passive "influence" over other regions and peoples. Rather, it details how differing interlocutors actively wielded Alexandrian imagery for discrete educational, social, or religious means. This study, thus, communicates the power of the visual archive and privileges the agency of makers, builders, and viewers across North Africa and the Mediterranean.

Pre-Aksumite Communities and Interconnectivity in Northeastern Africa and the Southern Red Sea: A Review of Existing and Emerging Themes and Directions (Virtual)

Matthew Curtis[1]
[1] California State University Channel Islands

During the mid-second to late first millennium BCE the highlands of the northern Horn of Africa (Tigray, Ethiopia and Eritrea) witnessed the growth of dispersed villages and hamlets, proto-urban settlements, political centralization, and specialized ceremonial centers. These highland communities commonly referred to as "Pre-Aksumite" practiced sedentary agropastoralism, cultivating tropical African and Near Eastern domesticated cereals and legumes and managing mixed livestock centering on cattle and sheep/goat herds. Critical scholarly debates about the formation and qualities of Pre-Aksumite sociopolitical organization have centered on the nature of Pre-Aksumite interaction with peoples in wider northeastern Africa and the southern Red Sea region, as well as on epigraphic and archaeological evidence for a polity named Dʿ MT (Daʿamat) believed by some scholars to have been centered at Yeha in Tigray and commonly interpreted as a nascent kingdom or small state. Both regional archaeological survey and site-specific excavations in recent years by several international archaeological research projects in the northern Horn have produced new understandings of Pre-Aksumite settlement, economic organization, and intercultural interaction. This paper identifies the key themes in these debates and reviews new archaeological insights from across the northern Horn, highlighting existing and emerging perspectives for investigating the nature of Pre-Aksumite cultural contacts and interconnectivity in northeastern Africa and the southern Red Sea regions.

Kushite Internationalism and the "Phoenician" Style

Stuart Tyson T. Smith[1]
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The second kingdom of Kush was deeply engaged with the Mediterranean world, but is typically seen as a consumer, rather than active participant, in larger phenomena like the Iron Age international style, which appears on portable high value objects in decorative motifs associated with both royal and private contexts in Sudanese Nubia. Feldman argues that the conflict between Egypt and Assyria resulting in Egyptian alliances in the Levant in the eighth and seventh centuries BCE may have triggered an aesthetic shift to the more "Egyptianizing" trend of the "Phoenician" style shared widely across the region. However, the kings of Egypt at this time were Kushite, not Egyptian, so the influence may have had a more southerly origin than is usually acknowledged. A review of older evidence from sites like the royal cemetery at el-Kurru combined with objects from recent archaeological work at Tombos in northern Sudan provides a robust corpus very early portable objects from this period that engage with, and given their early date may have influenced the motifs and techniques found in the greater Levant and Aegean. This evidence places ancient Kushites at the center of the fluid cultural and stylistic entanglements that characterize the "Phoenician" style, not as passive consumers but actively engaged with their Levantine and Aegean counterparts in intersecting international spheres of practice extending deep into Africa.

The Egyptian Water Lily in Chad

Annissa Malvoisin[1]
[1] Brooklyn Museum

A close reading of a unique flared-rim vessel located at the site of Koro-Toro in Chad bears distinct likeness to a similarly morphological vessel located at the site of Faras in Nubia. Both dated to the African Iron Age (ca. 250 BCE – 1000 CE), the decorative program on these vessels contribute to scholarship that investigates connections between the Nile Valley and understudied regions to its west. The petals of the Egyptian Water Lily concretize a Saharan-Sahelian transculturalism and continues to challenge the colonial imaginary that distances the Nile Valley from non-Mediterranean or Red Sea relationships.

Discussion

11I. (Re)excavating Karanis 100 Years Later: New Research on the Legacy Collections and Archival Records I (Whittier)

Chair(s): Laura Motta, University of Michigan; Tyler D. Johnson, University of Michigan

Introduction

Laura Motta[1], Tyler D. Johnson[1]
[1] University of Michigan

Archive Archaeology at Karanis: Recontextualizing the Michigan Documentation

Tyler D. Johnson[1]
[1] University of Michigan

Archive Archaeology at Karanis: Recontextualizing the Michigan Documentation Although far from modern standards, the University of Michigan excavations at Karanis (1924–1935) employed advanced recording techniques for their time. Documenting the site's evolution through a system of "levels," the excavators left behind a dense archival record of photographs, tables, notes, drawings, plans, artifact inventories, and survey results. Housed at the Kelsey Museum of Archaeology, this documentation has been consulted for a century but never systematically analyzed or disseminated. The most authoritative source remains an unfinished manuscript by Enoch Peterson (professor at Michigan from 1924–1962), never published or made publicly available. Today, a revival of interest in Karanis has created a demand for better curation and accessibility of these records. In response, researchers at the Kelsey Museum are leading a digital initiative with two objectives. First, drawing upon legacy survey data and new radiocarbon results, we are using the game engine Unity to reconstruct and reinterpret the site's chronological evolution in three dimensions. Second, we are transforming Peterson's manuscript and related materials into an interactive, open-access resource. These efforts go beyond digitization, requiring the restructuring and reassessment of excavation data within an updated framework. As we integrate new insights and methodologies, our work sometimes calls the Michigan excavators' original interpretations into question. This raises the need to balance faithful preservation of archival materials with that of reassessing the excavation results through contemporary archaeological lenses. This paper explores the challenges and possibilities of conducting "archive archaeology" at Karanis, creating new tools for exploring, cross-referencing, and reinterpreting this essential legacy dataset.

The Karanis Housing Project: Using GIS and Big Data to Re-Assess Site Occupation

Andrew Wilburn[1], Grayson Ross[1]
[1] Oberlin College

The Roman site of Karanis, in Egypt, provides a wealth of materials – architecture, artifacts, and texts - that shed light on the lives of its multicultural inhabitants during a period of immense cultural change. To increase access to this rich archive of legacy archaeological data, the Karanis Housing Project has developed a digital reconstruction of the University of Michigan's excavations from 1924 to 1935, translating the analog maps into a GIS format that incorporates all discovered finds through a relational database. Preliminary investigations indicate that it is possible to reassess the depositional history of the site by leveraging the analysis of the full corpus of recovered artifacts, including chronological markers derived from ceramics, a dateable category that was not incorporated into the initial evaluations of the settlement. The paper first will detail the digital framework employed to share the archaeological data. Focusing on the analysis of one sector of the site that includes a large granary (C65), an adjacent barracks (C63), and several domestic structures, the paper will analyze archaeological finds from this area to articulate the chronology of habitation and patterns of deposition. By quantifying and assessing the objects associated with these buildings, particularly granary C65, and comparing these finds with those discovered in the additional nine large granaries at the site, the project team will explore patterns of artifact distribution that may be specific to the granaries. Finally, the paper will evaluate the effectiveness of the GIS platform for big-data analyses of legacy archaeological data.

A Revised Chronology for Roman Karanis

Laura Motta[1]
[1] University of Michigan

The late occupation and abandonment of Karanis, a Greco roman settlement in the Fayum oasis, Egypt, is still a matter of debate one century after its excavation. New C14 analysis on botanical specimens from domestic contexts conserved at the Kelsey Museum of Archaeology, University of Michigan, provides the first reliable absolute chronology for the site. The radiocarbon dates show the settlement was still inhabited well beyond the middle of the fifth century AD, the time of the abandonment suggested by the first excavators. Most of the radiocarbon dates span from the beginning of the fifth century to the second half of the sixth century AD, with evidence of structures still being renovated at this time. The latest samples reach into the middle of the seventh century, placing the final abandonment of the site in a period of dramatic political transitions and environmental change with important implications for the Fayum region and beyond. Moreover, the revised chronology challenges the current discourse on the process of decline and abandonment of the settlement suggesting different interpretations for the re-use of unoccupied spaces.

Re-covering Karanis Papyri in the Legacy Data

Mike Sampson[1]
[1] University of Manitoba

This presentation critiques common methodologies and theoretical assumptions framing the contextualization of Karanis papyri in the archaeological record. More than thirty years after Peter van Minnen's seminal "House-to-House Inquiries" inaugurated papyrology's interdisciplinary turn, such case studies have proliferated, but the archaeological bases for many commonly-held assumptions about the project of contextualization – viz. involving deposition and archives – remain relatively uninterrogated. The goal of the presentation is to illustrate via a pair of case studies the differing outcomes of a papyrologist's and archaeologist's respective analyses. After introducing the former's interdisciplinary procedure, which takes the text as its starting point, I repeat the investigation

from an archaeological perspective, examining instead what a comprehensive assessment of the legacy data and associated finds reveals. The cases of the so-called 'archives' of Ischyras and Sarapion (TM Arch 595) and of Gemellus Horion (TM Arch 90) are illustrative: unlike a top-down (or text-based) approach, which excels at making connections and compiling 'archives' of material, a bottom-up (or data-driven) analysis is more resistant to large-scale generalization or the construction of a sweeping narrative. Put simply, where the former might gloss over the archaeological questions raised by the project of contextualization, the latter lays them bare. In positing the 're-covery' of papyri, the presentation therefore aims not only to extract new contextualizing insights, but also to recenter papyri within the larger picture constituted by the legacy data.

11J. Archaeology of the Near East: The Classical Periods (White Hill)

Chair(s): Simeon Ehrlich, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem; Robyn Le Blanc, The University of North Carolina at Greensboro

Re-envisioning the Ancient Mediterranean Market: Imported Attic Fine Wares from Persian Period Tell en-Nasbeh

Sophie Cassarino[1]
[1] Boston University

My paper concerns the imported fine wares from Tell en-Nasbeh that date to the Persian period (historically ca. 535-330 BCE). The imported pots come from both sides of the Aegean, as well as southern Anatolia. My research delves into what trade networks brought these pieces to Nasbeh, how they were used there, and what they indicate about consumer preferences and social behaviors in the city. The majority of the imports come from Attika, the region controlled by the city of Athens and her allies. The uneven distribution of Attic material in the southern Levant has encouraged scholars to consider examples of imported pottery as products of acculturation in coastal sites – an unremarkable summation for cities with busy Mediterranean ports and regular contact with foreigners. I disagree with this untextured characterization and seek to use the material from Tell en-Nasbeh and other select inland sites to show that Greek imports were accessible, inexpensive, and more commonplace than is often assumed, and, as such, were not mere byproducts of acculturation.

New Horizons in Ancient Lycaonia: the late Hellenistic period at Türkmen-Karahöyük

Nancy Highcock[1]
[1] Ashmolean Museum

Although the Hellenistic period (c. 323- 30 BC) in Anatolia is well understood through the stone-built cities of the Aegean and Mediterranean coasts, inland it is virtually a terra incognita. In 2024, the Türkmen Karahöyük Archaeological Project (TKAP) was launched at the site of Türkmen-Karahöyük, Konya as an international research effort to better understand the long historical trajectory of a prominent settlement in this region, including its culminating phase in the 1st c. BCE-1 st c. CE. Indeed, it is during the Hellenistic period, when the rider region was known as Lycaonia, that the site was at its maximum extent. Excavation of two 10 x 10 m squares of a large Late Hellenistic domestic mud-brick building (1st c. BCE) in 2024 revealed a destruction level that has left building's architecture and contents in an incredible state of preservation, including a wealth of reconstructable in situ materials. This paper will situate these initial results in the wider study of Late Hellenistic Anatolia with a particular focus on early 20th century reconstructions of historical geography. In addition, the excavation of the Late Hellenistic settlement at Türkmen-Karahöyük presents a ripe opportunity for an integrated collaboration between Classical and pre-Classical archaeologists that will shed light on the complex constructions of identity in a relatively region that experienced transformative societal changes at the end of the 1st millennium BCE.

The Triumphal Arch at Tiberias

Rami Arav[1]
[1] University of Nebraska at Omaha

Remains of impressive triumphal arch were discovered in the Roman city of Tiberias during the early 1970's. The excavations were conducted by the late Gideon Foerster on behalf of the Department of Antiquities of Israel. Unfortunately, very little has been published. Since I served as the area supervisor of the area, I am able to add information also from my memory. The arch consisted of two round towers, The bases of the towers have Cyma ovolo style, like the Hadrian gate in Jerusalem. Two square structures are attached to the north of the towers also in a Cyma ovolo style. Two niches for statues are located at the northern side of the square structures and two columns' bases are in front of the towers. No walls or structures were attached to the arch and until the Early Islamic period the arch was totally isolated. From 129 to 130 Hadrian launched a major campaign to the east. He endowed monuments and visited troops. Triumphal arches were built for him in various places, such as Gerasa and Jerusalem. A very large inscription, the largest Latin inscription found in the Levant, probably originated from a triumphal arch, this, in addition to a Lifesize bronze statue of the emperor, was discovered at the campsite of the legion south of Beth She'an. Foerster dated the arch to Herod Antipas. Since it is not a city gate but a triumphal arch it is more plausible to associate it with Hadrian.

Reevaluating 'T-Shaped' Artifacts from Egypt's Eastern Desert: New Insights into Function and Pastoralist Practices

Laurel Hackley[1], Jennifer Gates-Foster[2]
[1] University of Memphis, [2] University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

In this paper, we present several examples of an enigmatic object type from Egypt's Eastern Desert: flat "t-shaped" or tri-lobed artifacts, many with evidence of wear from cordage under the "arms." The objects range in size from less than 5cm across to more than 50cm and are made of several types of stone as well as from reworked ceramic sherds, predominantly of late Roman date or later. Although small ceramic and stone examples of these objects have been identified by other Eastern Desert surveys, their precise function remains unclear and until recently only a few examples have been documented or discussed. This winter, however, the Wadi el Hudi Project recognized more than two dozen objects of this type in and around areas with evidence of pastoralist camping and stopping activity. T-shaped pieces were recorded in four distinct areas within the Wadi el Hudi, including a large cache of finished and in-progress examples. These were in a variety of sizes and materials and were stored in a rock shelter at Site 51, a major road stop and camping site. Near the shelter, we also identified a possible tool type that could be associated with the production of these pieces. Here, we will present the corpus of "t-shaped" objects from the 2025 Wadi el Hudi season and discuss our preliminary theories of their date and function, particularly their relationship to pastoralist material culture and practices.

11K. Rural Communities: Social and Spiritual Rites (White Hill)

Chair(s): Helena Roth, Tel Aviv University

Ritual Landscapes of the Intermediate Bronze Age: Burial, Domestic, and Communal Rites in the Rural Southern Levant (Virtual)

Karen Covello-Paran[1]
[1] Israel Antiquities Authority

The decentralized rural society of the Intermediate Bronze Age (IBA) in the southern Levant offers a unique opportunity to explore the intersection of funerary, domestic, and communal rituals. Unlike the urban-centered ritual landscapes of preceding and succeeding periods, the IBA is characterized by dispersed settlements, extended family structures, and localized ritual practices. This period provides a unique framework for examining how burial practices within family units intersected with domestic and communal rites, shaping the social and spiritual dynamics of rural communities. Focusing on excavated burial sites and settlements in the Jezreel Valley and the Lower Galilee, the research investigates the spatial and material expressions of ritual behavior, aiming to reconstruct how these practices contributed to social cohesion and the formation of community identity. Particular attention is paid to the relationship between private and public rites, emphasizing the investment in ritual activities within non-urban contexts. Through this lens, the study seeks to uncover how rituals in burial sites, domestic spaces, and communal areas functioned to reinforce social bonds, assert cultural belonging, and negotiate individual versus collective identity. This research offers new insights into the rural ritual landscapes of the IBA, highlighting the importance of local practices in shaping the broader spiritual and social fabric of the period.

From Household Rites to Communal Practice: Memory, Cosmology, and Social Change in the Bronze Age Judean Highlands

Helena Roth[1]
[1] Tel Aviv University

The rural settlements of the Judean Highlands were occupied during both the Intermediate Bronze Age (IBA) and the Middle Bronze Age (MBA), with a hiatus of several centuries between them. Despite this gap, cultural continuity is evident in cultic practices and burial customs. This paper examines these transformations, shedding light on shifting cosmologies, the transmission of intergenerational memory, and increasing social complexity. During the IBA, cultic activity was primarily house-centered, with domestic cultic corners serving as focal points of worship. Burial customs included single to multiple internments per tomb, in designated cemeteries. In contrast, the MBA saw the emergence of public temples, marking a shift toward communal religious structures. Burial practices expanded, with multiple interments spanning generations in the same cemeteries and sometimes even tombs utilized in the IBA. This return to previous settlement, worship, and burial sites suggests continuity in belief systems despite the temporal rupture. The transition from household-based rituals to centralized worship, alongside the aggregation of burial practices, reflects growing social complexity. These transformations also indicate an intergenerational transmission of knowledge in shaping residential and sanctified spaces, where place-making practices reinforced long-term communal identities. These changes occurred alongside the expansion of urban centers during the MBA, suggesting broader socio-political shifts.

Rural Ritual in the Realms of Ashur, Ra, and Yahweh: The Case of the Post-Assyrian Foothills of the Southern Levant ca. late 7th–early 6th century BCE

Alexandra Wrathall[1]
[1] Tel Aviv University

As a post-imperial landscape, the foothills of the Southern Levant encompassed a patchwork of ravaged cities, each individually reshaped by a diverse assemblage of Neo-Assyrian imperial policies. This paper presents the results of recent studies of rural agricultural communities located in the foothills of the Southern Levant i.e., settlements, ceramics, iconography, and cultic objects. In doing so, this paper will propose a reconstruction of rural ritual and spiritual practice following the influence (and withdrawal) of the Neo-Assyrian Empire during the Iron Age IIC ca. early 7th–early 6th century BCE. The archaeological reconstruction suggests that neighboring rural centers and their peripheries were diverse in their ontological practices. This diversity is further contextualized within the historical context of individual communities and their interactions with Empires and Kingdoms. Rural ritual practice is ultimately presented as a community effort to reconcile known tradition with the world-altering impact of colonization. Finally, these efforts are framed within the agency of individual rural communities, whereby ontological agility is understood in the context of subaltern histories.

Sardinian Thymiateria: Evaluating the Glocalization of Punic Votives

Katie Breyer[1]
[1] Bryn Mawr College

Female-headed incense burners, commonly referred to as thymiateria, are the best studied Punic votives from the western Mediterranean from the fourth through second centuries BCE. Identified as representations of either the Greek goddess Demeter or the Punic goddess Tanit, the thymiateria are captivating illustrations of ritual and material entanglements that resulted from intensive colonial encounters between indigenous communities, Carthaginian migrants, and later Roman settlers. Yet, despite all the iconographic analyses, few studies have fully grappled with why the thymiateria have been found at indigenous sites throughout Spain and Sardinia. In this paper, I demonstrate how a contextual and glocalizing approach to two sites in Central Sardinia, Nuraghe Genna Maria and Nuraghe Su Mulinu, can illuminate the possible reasons why the Punic thymiateria were integrated into localized ritual practices. Although the use of the thymiateria may have been introduced by Punic settlers at Nuraghe Genna Maria, rural communities in central Sardinia had been using ritual incendiary objects since the 14th century BCE, as exhibited at Nuraghe Su Mulinu, approximately 15 kilometers east of Nuraghe Genna Maria. By evaluating and comparing the votive assemblages from both nuraghi, I reveal how the thymiateria were integrated into ritual practices at Genna Maria due to changing consumption patterns that resulted from processes of colonial interaction and glocalization. Finally, I propose why the Punic votives appealed to the worshipers at Nuraghe Genna Maria yet were excluded from rituals at Nuraghe Su Mulinu by considering the wider context of Carthaginian expansion of the island.

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 21, 2025 | 4:25pm-6:30pm (EST)

12A-C. No sessions scheduled (rooms on hold)

12D. Archaeologies of Memory II (Arlington)

Chair(s): Janling Fu, Harvard University; Tate Paulette, North Carolina State University

Familial Change and Generational Memory in the Tomb of Apollophanes at Maresha

Helen Wong[1]
[1] University of Pennsylvania

Maresha, located in ancient Idumea (today, southern Israel), was a regional center turned administrative base for the Ptolemies during the 3rd-2nd centuries BCE. Prior to the Hellenistic period, burials in Idumea were almost exclusively single-interment affairs. But the typical Hellenistic Mareshan tomb became a hypogeum containing multiple loculi, meant to serve entire families over multiple generations. In this paper, I conduct a close analysis of the familial relationships within one such multigenerational tomb, the Tomb of Apollophanes. I outline the relationships between relatives, analyze which loculi were reused and by whom, and discuss how this tomb and its use reflects the construction of familial identity under Ptolemaic rule. In doing so, I argue that this tomb documents changes in the notion of family in Ptolemaic Maresha, expressed through the use of generational memory to delineate personal inclusion and exclusion in the tomb itself. I base my treatment of "generational memory" on Van Dyke and Alcock's concept of "communities of memory," which states that group social memory is supported by a material matrix in the environment and maintained by both individuals and communities (Van Dyke and Alcock 2003). I extend their idea into a familial context, so that "generational memory" refers to the material matrix which maintains and transmits social memory within a single family over time. In this tomb, such social memory was predicated on the deliberate inclusion or exclusion of various family members, forming a fundamental dynamic within the function of this tomb as a material marker of collective identity.

Forgotten Guardians: The Untold Legacy of Ancient Egypt's Monument Restorers

Hossam Hegazi[1]
[1] Ministry of Tourism, Egypt

Imagine seeking the first baker, the one who first struck flint to spark a fire and knead the dough of civilization. That's how mysterious the first monument restorer of ancient Egypt is – a figure lost in the swirling mists of time. Yet, their legacy endures in the majestic temples and monuments that still stand today. The unsung heroes who rescued these monuments from oblivion are revealed, especially during the chaotic First Intermediate Period (c. 2181-2055 BCE). A time of collapsing dynasties, warring conflicts, and a world turned upside down, this era threatened to erase the greatness of Egypt's past. But these forgotten guardians of memory emerged from the chaos, ensuring that the story of Egypt would live on. Driven by a deep love for their heritage, they preceded celebrated restorers", who would later relish their preservation efforts' glory. The tombs of Sheikh Said hold a secret: dedicatory texts that unveil the work of individuals like 'IHA' and '+Hwty-nxt.' These preservation pioneers labored to repair the shattered tombs and funerary monuments, ensuring that the stories of the past wouldn't be lost to time. Imagine a world in turmoil, where the very foundations of society crumble. Yet, amidst this chaos, dedicated individuals, driven by a profound reverence for their ancestors, laboured to mend shattered monuments and renew faded glories. These were not just skilled technicians but guardians of ancient souls, ensuring that the names and deeds of the past would endure. The inscriptions and symbols they left are explored, their profound meaning revealed, and their legacy as "Guardians" ultimately cemented.

Merneptah's Decorative Campaign at Karnak Temple: Memory, Celebration, and Legitimization

Mark Janzen[1]
[1] Lipscomb University

In his brief reign (c. 1213-1203 BCE), Pharaoh Merneptah campaigned once in western Asia and also claims to have defeated a coalition of Libyans who attempted to enter Egypt early in his reign. This presentation examines the battle scenes and texts on both the exterior west wall and interior east wall of the Cour de la Cachette at Karnak Temple in order to better understand Merneptah's overall iconographic agenda in the face of dynastic political pressures. Due to spatial limitations Merneptah and his artisans made several changes to the typical pharaonic celebration of military deeds, while retaining the overall ideology inherent in such scenes and texts, demonstrating Merneptah's priorities and the value he placed on these campaigns but also evidencing a slightly hurried approach compared to his illustrious predecessors. Furthermore, these reliefs give evidence of damnatio memorae, particularly in select cartouches where one finds the names of Merneptah have been erased. This action is tangible evidence of issues of succession that plagued the end of the 19th dynasty and likely impacted Merneptah's decorative campaign. All of this contributes in important ways to our understanding of the end of the 19th dynasty and the role that royal ideology played in memory and legitimation.

Remember the Name: The Memory Motif in Babylonian Personal Names (750-100 BCE)

Nathanael Shelley[1]
[1] Columbia University

Names are among the best understood aspects of ancient Assyro-Babylonian culture, providing a key resource for research into ancient identities and social values. One particularly striking and salient feature of Akkadian personal names is the frequent use of memory concepts, especially in the first millennium BCE when naming conventions were at their most sophisticated. Memory plays a primary role in historical-, ancestor-, substitute-, and heritage-names, and is an elemental component of several name formulas and meanings. This paper will trace the motif of memory in the onomastics of Neo-Babylonian personal names, analyze its role in the expression of social identity, and consider what it reveals about cultural memory as an instrument of inclusion and exclusion.

Who Remembers the Wild Goddess? The Rural Sanctuary of Artemis at Lousoi and the Politics of Memory

Carla Ionescu[1]
[1] York University

The sanctuary of Artemis at Lousoi provides critical insight into the role of rural sanctuaries in shaping religious memory and identity. This paper examines how Lousoi preserved pre-urban traditions of Artemisian worship while being increasingly excluded from dominant civic and pan-Hellenic religious developments. Through an analysis of archaeological remains, inscriptions, and literary sources, this study demonstrates that Lousoi's religious practices functioned as mechanisms of cultural resilience amid broader political and social transformations. Hellenistic urbanization and Roman religious policies significantly altered the sanctuary's role, illustrating the shifting boundaries of religious inclusion and exclusion. By tracing these changes, this paper highlights the ways in which rural sanctuaries acted as contested spaces where religious memory was maintained, adapted, or erased. The study argues that Lousoi's marginalization was not simply a byproduct of political change, but an active process influenced by power structures

seeking to redefine sacred landscapes. This research contributes to broader discussions on religious memory, rural religious landscapes, and the politics of sacred space in antiquity. It challenges prevailing assumptions that rural sanctuaries were static or peripheral by demonstrating their active role in negotiating cultural and religious identity over time.

12E. Alterity in the Ancient Near East II (Berkeley & Clarendon)

Chair(s): Lauren Cook, Johns Hopkins University; Georgia Vance, Johns Hopkins University

The Reach of Empire: Local Responses to Urartian Expansion

Annarita Bonfanti[1]
[1] New York University

Urartu emerged as an expansionary polity along the shores of Lake Van in the late 9th century BCE. By the 8th century BCE, it had extended its influence across much of the Armenian Highland, propelled by a formidable military apparatus and a pronounced religious ideology. This expansion led to the apparent unification of diverse local communities under a centralized regime, likely ruled by a non-local elite. What is commonly termed 'Urartian culture' is a remarkably cohesive material assemblage dated between the 9th and 7th centuries BCE, encompassing characteristic architectural styles, artistic traditions, and pottery. The spread of this material culture across eastern Anatolia closely corresponds with the territorial expansion of the kingdom, as attested by royal inscriptions found both in the capital, Van, and in distant regions conquered by Urartian rulers. Notably, the Urartian assemblage is closely tied to the royal dynasty, which likely constituted only a small segment of the broader population inhabiting the Armenian Highlands. With the decline of the elite, the Urartian language, religion, and material culture also vanished. However, the nature of interactions between the Urartian ruling stratum and local communities remains underexplored, largely due to the limited excavation of non-royal settlements. This paper examines several artifacts from recent excavations that shed light on these interactions, offering insights into how Urartian authority was perceived and received at different levels of society. By reassessing these objects, this study aims to provide a more nuanced understanding of Urartian sociopolitical dynamics beyond the elite sphere.

Alterity as an Analytical Lens: Opening Up Interpretational Leeway for Visual-Material and Textual Sources in Early Globalized Contexts

(Virtual)

Melanie Wasmuth[1]
[1] University of Helsinki

ALTERITY is a concept used in the social and cultural sciences to denote an essential aspect of identity. On a basic conceptual level it signifiesthat the perception of the self or of a group inherently requires a counter foil from which to distinguish oneself (or one's group) as a dissociated entity. In reality, ALTERITY is closely related to and often used in partial overlap with the neighboring concepts of DEVIANCE and OTHERING. As analytical lenses, which focus on their core connotations, DEVIANCE describes the perception of appearances and behavior as outside the expected, and thus accepted, norm; OTHERING marks an explicitly negative attitude usually resulting in discriminatory actions towards people perceived as deviating from the constructed group norm. Drawing on the conceptual section of my paper published in the Avar deviance volume (M. Wasmuth in Avar 1.1, 2022, 139–183), I showcase how the contextualization of any given source complex under the analytical lenses of ALTERITY, DEVIANCE, and OTHERING changes the presupposed and reconstructed social setting of the sources. I exemplify this for three samples deriving from the textual documentation for Egyptians in 7th c. Assur, from the visual-pictorial data for Carians in 7th and 6th c. Memphis, and from the strategraphic-material records for return migration in 7th c. Caria. By choosing a textual, a pictorial, and a stratigraphic-material case study, I illustrate the potential of an alterity-based research approach for ancient historians with philological, iconographical, and archaeological research outlooks.

The Enemy Within: Demarcating 'foreignness' within the Late Assyrian Army

Amy Barron[1]
[1] Fleming College

Much of the study of the Late Assyrian military has focussed on the detailed relief sculptures decorating the palaces of Nineveh, Kalhu, and Dur-Sharrukin. These reliefs go to great lengths to show the might of the Assyrian army against their enemies. Many details are employed to indicate the types of foreign peoples and terrains they are fighting in, but even their own army shows quite a variety of equipment and dress. These appear to suggest a strong need on the part of the Assyrian artist to designate different groups within their own forces. Groups which have traditionally been assumed to suggest foreign auxiliary units. Gradual changes over time, combined with a look at what the archaeological materials from both the centre and peripheries tell us, suggest that these clear distinctions were not as black and white as they appear in the reliefs. Are we seeing the uniforms of particular units, traditional dress of different cultural groups within the army, or an artistic need to clarify who is truly "Assyrian" or at least "Assyrianized"? If the latter is the case, what can be deduced from a blurring of the lines seen in some of the final reliefs of Ashurbanipal?

Carved in Contrast: The Role of Difference in Neo – Assyrian Art and Architecture (912 – 609 BCE)

Bianca Hand[1]
[1] University of California, Davis

Recent scholarship has explored how alterity and violence operate in Neo-Assyrian relief programs, particularly in their impact on viewers, artists, and even Assyrians themselves. Building on this discourse, my paper focuses on how anxiety manifests as both physical and systemic violence in Neo-Assyrian relief programs and how it shapes imperial ideology through artistic choices that emphasize both control and vulnerability. A common theme throughout recent scholarship is the effect of violence on the viewer, the artists, and even the Assyrians themselves. Building on this discourse, I focus on how anxiety manifests as both physical and systemic violence. This anxiety is evident in the scrupulous depictions of enemy subjugation, where artistic choices emphasize both control and vulnerability. Such representations may have reinforced ideological narratives while simultaneously revealing internal uncertainties within the empire. By analyzing these tensions, I aim to shed light on how the Assyrians perceived both themselves and the 'other' in their imperial ideology. By analyzing the interplay of anxiety, violence, and alterity, I reveal how Assyrian art both reinforced and destabilized imperial narratives. Ultimately, this paper will deepen our understanding of Neo-Assyrian art and raise broader questions about the interplay between dominance and anxiety in imperial visual traditions. By considering how Assyria constructed its identity in relation to the 'other,' this project contributes to wider discussions about the visual rhetoric of power, the role of violence in state formation, and how empires past and present negotiate their ideological boundaries.

12F. Home Away from Home: Disciplinary Migrations and Scholarly Identities II (Studio 1)

Chair(s): Danielle Candelora, College of the Holy Cross; Mahri Leonard Princeton Theological Seminary; Jacob Damm, College of the Holy Cross

Cosmesis and Fragmentation in the Book of Judith and the Liberal Arts

Mahri S. Leonard-Fleckman[1], Dominic Machado[2]
[1] Princeton Theological Seminary [2] College of the Holy Cross

This paper considers the relationship between cosmesis ("dressing up") and fragmentation ("breaking apart") in our collaborations within a liberal arts college and in the Book of Judith. We begin by reflecting on our interdisciplinary teaching and scholarly work together over the past seven years. We consider how the tension between cosmesis and fragmentation within our own interdisciplinary context, not to mention within the context of modern imperial orders (e.g., capitalism, racism, misogyny, etc.) informs and distorts our disciplinary practices as historians and literary scholars of the ancient Mediterranean world. We then turn to our case study, the Book of Judith, in which we explore the tension between the fragmented realities of Jews living under Hellenistic imperial rule, and the concomitant desire to imbue those realities with beauty and order.

Ancient Egyptian Borderlands: An Interdisciplinary Approach to Borders and Immigration

Danielle Candelora[1]
[1] College of the Holy Cross

In the modern world, issues of borders, citizenship, and immigration are examined across fields as diverse as Political Science and Sociology to Comparative Literature and the Visual Arts. Exploring these multiple approaches allows for new insights into the entangled concepts of borders and identity in ancient Egypt. By treating borders not as fixed lines demarcating sovereignty and territorial control, but as processes that define differences and belonging, it is possible to focus more on lived experience and local expressions of identity. This paper will investigate several case studies of border communities, arguing that these regions, and the diverse peoples who lived in them, developed and performed identities unique to the borderland. Common refrains in the scholarship suggest that immigrants to Egypt would have quickly shed any indications of foreignness and tried to act, and therefore to be, as Egyptian as they could. Yet in these borderland zones, which could occur both along the boundaries of the Egyptian state and within it, there was social capital to be gained by preserving and advertising aspects of foreignness alongside Egyptian cultural adaptations. In fact, by re-centering the border as the focus of study, it emphasizes the numerous expressions of regional identity that were present in Egypt itself.

Syncretism at Byblos: a Classic(s) Problem

Ellen Morris[1]
[1] Barnard College

Egyptologists typically range over two or three millennia of history in the classes they teach. But what happens when a specialist in Egypt's Bronze Ages becomes embedded in a Classics Department? The answer for me has been a drastic expansion of the temporal depth and scope of my research. The case study that forms the core of this meditation considers the evolution and afterlives of Bronze Age deities. I focus on a variant of the ancient Egyptian tale of Isis and Osiris, narrated by Plutarch, in which the goddess takes a detour to Byblos. In the course of her time there, her storyline overlaps with that of Demeter (the events of which take place in Greece). The two goddesses thus experience broadly similar plot points as they mourn two very different people. Unpacked, this otherwise unknown episode in the Isis myth is illustrative of how living traditions might be consciously altered to serve a variety of practical, social, and material purposes.

Stones and the Mesopotamian "Natural" World

Elizabeth Knott[1]
[1] College of the Holy Cross

It is widely recognized that the Mesopotamian heartland—the area of the world that corresponds today to southern Iraq—is resource-poor when it comes to rocks and minerals. Metals and semi-precious stones, along with other materials, were imported from neighboring mountainous regions. While we know that this geophysical reality impacted the socio-economic dynamics of life in the ancient world, it may have also influenced the ways in which peoples from Mesopotamia thought about the "natural" world. Building upon work by specialists in the history of science, this talk considers the ways in which "stones" are classified in ancient and modern times and the consequences of those terms for our understanding of "nature" and "reality." The talk invites us to consider the perceptions and biases with which we approach the interpretation of ancient archaeological and textual evidence.

Dangerous Beans and "Naughtie Iuce?" Toxic Legumes, Agricultural Resiliency, and the Intellectual Scourge of "Famine Foods"

Jacob C. Damm[1]
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Whether by nonsensical entanglements of Greek and Roman authors with modern epidemiology reviews, opaque lexicography of ancient languages, middling engagement with ethnographic or modern agronomic literature, or even the vagaries of site formation processes, archaeologists and ancient historians have a particularly jaded understanding of toxic legume species—especially those of the genera Vicia and Lathyrus. Sometimes discussed as "poisonous," but nearly always regarded as fit only for livestock or as a last resort during famine, modern preoccupation with diseases of overconsumption like lathyrism have oversimplified ancient foodways and muddied our understanding of ancient farming and culinary strategies. As will be argued in this paper, overstated concerns about toxicity fail to recognize not only that these species remain cornerstones of foodways among modern, non-Western peoples, but also, that they formed a key element in agricultural resiliency and risk management strategies within ancient farming communities throughout the Near Eastern, Mediterranean, and broader southern European worlds. Intrinsically, our erroneous preoccupation with their lack of suitability for human consumption seems to be fueled by a longstanding tendency to interpret ancient agricultural systems in terms that make sense to us moderns, rather than viewing them as coherent systems that operated within their own emic—and often profoundly productive and sustainable—logics.

12G. The Future of Ancient West Asia Collections in Museums (Workshop) (Studio 2)

Chair(s): Pınar Durgun, The Morgan Library and Museum

Maximizing the Potential of Permanent Gallery Displays

Anastasia Tchaplyghine[1]
[1] The British Museum

Participating in this workshop, I hope to exchange ideas on how curatorial interventions and updates can be implemented in permanent galleries, which in many museums were installed several decades ago. While many museums are currently in various stages of multi-year renovation and re-design projects—including the British Museum—spaces exhibiting permanent collections can and should be (re)activated in the meantime. By November 2025, several cases will have been re-designed and re-installed in the British Museum's

Mesopotamian galleries. These cases seek to make interconnections between monumental objects and portable objects; between cultures; and across time (by focusing on a particular theme). The opportunities to re-imagine these cases arose from objects going out on loan or long-term loans returning to their lending institution. How can we most effectively engage with such opportunities while working within institutional limitations and looking forward to larger-scale re-design projects? Such temporary interventions can potentially function as experimental pilot-projects. Ultimately, however, how can permanent galleries incorporate diverse visitor feedback and be flexible enough to accommodate changing interpretations in the future?

Beyond the Palette: Mediating Missing Colour in The Met's Assyrian Sculpture Court

Talah Anderson[1]
[1] The Metropolitan Museum of Art

The Assyrian Sculpture Court, which presents monumental gypsum wall reliefs and gateway sculptures from the ninth century BCENorthwest Palace of the Assyrian king Ashurnasirpal II at Nimrud (ancient Kalhu) in Northern Iraq, is currently closed as part of a capital project to reimagine the stories and renovate the spaces that present The Met's permanent collection of ancient West Asian art to the public. A major consideration for the project is the potential role of the digital restoration of colour in activating the reliefs for a new generation of Museum visitors. This presentation will consider how the projection of synthetic colour reconstructions shapes visitor engagement with the polychromy that today is missing on Assyrian reliefs. It will share research conducted with the Met's Department of Ancient Near Eastern Art in collaboration with the Departments of Objects Conservation and Scientific Research and, in particular, the methodological reframing that this prompted for the development of new digital projections.

"For the first time in my life": Reaching New Adult Learners through Virtual Museum Galleries

Hannah M. Herrick[1]
[1] Simon Fraser University

While many museums offer wonderful online resources to help K-12 educators teach about AWA history and archaeology in their classrooms, far fewer online learning materials are targeted towards curious adult learners exploring AWA archaeology for the first time. The innovative, virtual practices that brought museum collections into visitors' homes during the height of the COVID-19-related institutional closures are still needed for adult learners—this is especially true for senior citizens, who are more likely to miss out on in-person museum visits due to difficulties with health, mobility, or travel. This paper proposes one online tool to address this gap in community engagement resources: virtual, thematic "mini museum galleries". Online galleries of 3-5 objects relating to specific themes (for example: foodways, pottery production, family dynamics, etc) accompanied by accessible informational narratives allow virtual visitors to experience how museum objects tell the stories of the past—in a way that values their perspectives as adult learners.

What's Missing? An Argument for Increased and Scaled Information Sharing Concerning the Modern History of Ancient Western Asian Objects

Sophia Slotwiner-Nie[1]
[1] Yale University

A demand from the public for increased information on the provenance of objects from ancient West Asia has been met, in many cases, with increased resource allocation and research on the provenance of museum collections. However, much of this research is conducted under conditions of restricted information sharing and the products of research are often kept entirely internal to institutions. What's missing in these cases is information sharing and a digital space for hosting said information. This paper considers questions such as what kind of information can we reasonably share with external partners? How does discussing provenance and reconstructing dealer biographies lead to a greater understanding of our collections? How can we collaborate to understand our Western Asian collections' modern histories? To consider these questions, the paper explores the benefits of transparency and information sharing between institutions and museums concerning provenance data. It argues that by discussing acquisition histories in the context of dealer biographies, we not only gain greater trust from the public, but allow for future cross-collection discoveries vital to understanding the ancient and modern context of collections.

The Bible Museum That Almost Opened in Toronto

Liat Naeh[1]
[1] University of Toronto

Long before the opening of the Bible Lands Museum in Jerusalem in 1992, antiquities dealer Elie Borowski was hoping to find a new home for his biblical collection of biblical antiquities. Since the 1970s, he has been searching for an academic institution that would cement the collection's authenticity. Borowski was lobbying with Canadian government officials and the leadership of the Royal Ontario Museum in Toronto (ROM), and became incredibly close to opening a dedicated gallery of Biblical Archaeology in this prominent, encyclopedic museum in North America. A Jewish Holocaust survivor, Borowski first arrived at the ROM with a special visa for displaced scholars. Purchased off the antiquities market, his objects were meant to demonstrate the veracity of the Hebrew Bible and illustrate the richness of the biblical world, showcasing ancient peoples such as the Assyrians and the Egyptians first and foremost through a biblical lens. Famously, to Borowski, his collection was a tribute to lost Jewish life in Europe. In order to be accepted by the ROM, however, he was willing to curate his collection with no religious affiliation whatsoever, appealing to all Canadians interested in art history. Yet, even though papers were signed and the ROM held a celebratory exhibition in Borowski's honour, the ROM then pulled back. In the aftermath of the UNESCO 1970 convention and following the Yom Kippur War of 1973, Borowski's collection raised grave ethical and political concerns and was no longer welcomed in the same way.

Discussion

12H. Orientalism in Biblical Archaeology and Scholarship: A Legacy or a Prevailing Methodological Obstacle (Workshop) (The Loft)

Chair(s): Emanuel Pfoh, University of Helsinki; Erez Ben-Yosef, Tel Aviv University

Distorted Mirror: Orientalism and the Perception of Nomads in Biblical Archaeology and Scholarship

Erez Ben-Yosef[1], Zachary Thomas[2]
[1] Tel Aviv University, [2] Australian Catholic University

Recent archaeological research on the copper production centers of the Arabah Valley revealed evidence of an early Iron Age nomadic kingdom, identified with early Edom. This kingdom, based on a tribal confederation that controlled vast regions, is radically different from the common perception of nomads in biblical archaeology and scholarship. In both disciplines, biblical-era nomads have been considered marginal to the history of the southern Levant. The possibility that nomadic (or semi-nomadic, polymorphous) societies played a substantial role in geopolitical processes has never been taken seriously, let alone their potential to establish early states (like the biblical kingdoms of Edom, Moab, Ammon, and ancient Israel). We argue that this narrow perception of nomads is deeply rooted in orientalism. The approach to understanding the biblical nomad in early biblical scholarship and later biblical archaeology epitomizes 'orientalism' in its essence. The 'model' for this nomad, the Bedouin, was perceived as both exotic (hence, an attractive model) and "lowly." A mixture of savagery and wilderness with beauty and romance, ingredients that on the one hand posited the nomad as the ultimate 'other' to the civilized European, and on the other paved the way for this distorted image deep into scholarship, basing a fixation that still prevails today. This problem and its orientalistic roots are evident in early biblical scholarship and the accounts of travelers and explorers to the southern Levant, upon which biblical scholars based their interpretations, in the lack of proper ethnography before WWI.

The Impact of Victorian Orientalism on Biblical Studies and the Historiography of Ancient Israel

Emanuel Pfoh[1]
[1] University of Helsinki

Since Napoleon Bonaparte's invasion of Egypt, the West's rediscovery of the Orient has been driven, to a greater or lesser degree, by the question of biblical historicity and the material evidence supporting the reality of biblical revelation. The exploration of landscapes and the identification of biblical names in the Levant's toponymy led to the development of biblical archaeology during the second half of the nineteenth century, alongside the proto-ethnography of the region's contemporary inhabitants, who were essentially seen as "living fossils" from the biblical past. Early biblical archaeology, and especially the proto-ethnography conducted by travelers and missionaries, was shaped not only by a biblical framework of interpretation in the Holy Land but also by arguments from the emerging discipline of anthropology, where concepts like race and diffusionism (the spread of cultures and peoples) were applied to the ancient history of the Levant, including the history of ancient Israel. This presentation critically explores the situation during the nineteenth century, offering an evaluation of its impact on biblical studies and ancient Israel, and extending into the twentieth century.

The Persistence of Nineteenth-Century Orientalism in Contemporary Pseudoarchaelogy

Kevin McGeough[1]
[1] University of Lethbridge

One of the surprising elements of pseudoarchaeology related to Biblical and ancient Near Eastern studies is how remarkably consistent the tropes are, despite the fact that such approaches rely on neither hard evidence or highly structured reasoning. The same kinds of claims, using the same kinds of "absences" of evidence, and the same kinds of internal logics, are offered over and over again in the different media forms in which pseudoarchaeology is transferred. This contribution to the workshop will explore how many of these trends are rooted in nineteenth-century Orientalist conceptions of the disciplines, and how that foundation in older scholarship legitimizes these works in non-academic communities today.

Orientalism and Israelite Pillared House Reconstructions

Jennie R. Ebeling[1]
[1] University of Evansville

In Bible side-lights from the mound of Gezer (1906), R.A.S. Macalister – steeped, like all western archaeologists in Palestine at that time, in the 19th century Orientalist construct of "biblical Israel" – included a chapter called "The Home of Rebekah" in which he used an excavated house and its installations and artifacts to illustrate events described in Genesis. While he warned of the limitations of treating "the Bible as the literally exact picture of a modern Oriental life lived in a remote past" (86), Macalister interpreted the archaeological finds based on his own observations of traditional lifeways in Palestine. While hundreds if not thousands of Iron Age houses were excavated in the decades that followed, it was only at the turn of the 21st century that archaeologists began to adopt household archaeology methodologies developed outside of southwest Asia to excavate and interpret these spaces. This can be seen in scholarly publications of pillared/four-room houses and "daily life in biblical times" books published in the early 2000s. Both the academic and popular publications are illustrated with artists' reconstructions of pillared houses; many of them include imagined scenes of Iron Age domestic life clearly inspired by 19th century Orientalist tropes ("the woman at the mill;" "women gathering water"). These images essentialize daily life activities and reinforce entrenched ethnic and gender stereotypes about people in the ancient and recent past.

Imagined Capitals and Invisible Communities: The Five-Fold Aggrandizement of King Sihon's Heshbon as Orientalist Legacy

Oystein S. LaBianca[1]
[1] Andrews University

This paper examines how the biblical narrative of Sihon, King of Heshbon, exemplifies the persistent influence of Orientalist frameworks in biblical archaeology. Despite decades of excavation at Tall Hisban yielding no material evidence for an impressive Amorite capital or King Sihon's grand kingdom, the site continues to be primarily framed through its biblical significance. This discrepancy reveals five distinct patterns of aggrandizement that persist as methodological biases. Territorial aggrandizement inflates Sihon's domain as stretching "from the Arnon to the Jabbok" without supporting archaeological evidence. Architectural aggrandizement generates expectations of monumental structures at Hisban that excavations have not revealed. Political aggrandizement transforms what was likely a leader of mobile pastoralist coalitions into a conventional ancient Near Eastern monarch. Cultural aggrandizement elevates "Amorite identity" in ways that obscure the fluid, multiethnic realities of frontier zones within Burke's "Arc of Uncertainty." Finally, narrative aggrandizement privileges biblical storytelling over indigenous historical traditions, shaping research regardless of material findings. Using the Sihon narrative as a case study, I demonstrate how these Orientalist legacies continue to obscure the "invisible people" who actually populated the

Transjordanian highlands, imposing state-centric frameworks where alternative sociopolitical organizations prevailed. By reconsidering Sihon's Heshbon as part of a dynamic landscape of shifting alliances rather than a fixed urban capital, we move toward methodologies that better recognize the diverse populations and power structures that characterized the ancient Levant.

12I. (Re)excavating Karanis 100 Years Later: New Research on the Legacy Collection and Archival Records (Whittier)

Chair(s): Laura Motta, University of Michigan; Tyler D. Johnson, University of Michigan

Violence in Karanis: Potential Evidence for the Effects of the Revolt of Domitius Domitianus

Irene Soto Marin[1]
[1] Harvard University

Although the numismatic evidence from Karanis is widely known among those who study the monetary history of Roman Egypt, thearchaeological contexts of the large quantity of hoards found at the site has not received substantial scholarly attention. Of the 39 hoards recovered from Karanis during the excavations conducted by the University of Michigan in the early 20th century, 24 came from a single complex, originally named “house” C401. This building did not seem very typical for houses in Egypt, however, with high stone steps and a stately entryway showing signs of arson. The total quantity of coins found inside the complex, around 27,000, raises further questions about the function of this building. Analyzing the date of the coins in the hoards, as well as the physical aspect of the archaeological context where they were found, raises questions about Diocletian’s monetary reforms of the end of the third century, and the potential degree of violence that the subsequent revolt of Domitius Domitianus created in the Fayyum. This paper will suggest that perhaps what was uncovered was not a house, but some kind of local government building in charge of coinage recall, and that the burial of the hoards, which clearly were never recovered in antiquity, along with the signs of arson in the structure, could actually be indicators of the widespread, violent revolt.

The Karanis Cornucopia: New Insights from the Plant Remains of the Kelsey Museum of Archaeology Collection (Virtual)

Annette Hansen[1]
[1] Rijksuniversiteit Groningen; Vrije Universiteit Brussel

This paper will present the preliminary results of the archaeobotanical study of the Karanis collection held at the Kelsey Museum of Archaeology at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. This paper is significant as it represents the first systematic archaeobotanical study of this legacy collection that serves as an important case study for Greco-Roman to Late Antique Egypt. It furthermore studies a one-of-a-kind assemblage composed of extraordinarily preserved desiccated plants remains, which besides bulk samples of seeds, contains many plants remains that rarely survive, such as whole fruits, bulbs, and flowers. This rare combination of quantitatively and qualitatively abundant material enables an in-depth assessment of the agricultural and food economy of Karanis. The results thus far have allowed us to draw some important (sub)conclusions. The archaeobotanical remains indicate that the inhabitants of Karanis had access to a wide variety of crops/foodstuffs that were cultivated locally/regionally and that various basic foodstuffs were imported into the village from across the Roman world, indicating its great economic connectivity. The paper will also showcase insights obtained from this unique collection regarding the various crop/food related activities that the inhabitants engaged in such as the functional mixing of different crops, crop storage, and the production of animal fodder, and the environmental conditions that they faced and which could be reconstructed from the weed flora and evidence for crop predation. This research is funded by the Belgian Excellence of Science project AGROS (Agriculture, diet and nutrition in Greco-Roman Egypt. Reassessing ancient sustenance, food processing and (mal)nutrition.).

The Faunal Material Collected from Karanis during the University of Michigan Excavations

Maurzo Rizzetto[1]
[1] Vrije Universiteit Brussel

This paper presents the preliminary analyses of the faunal remains recovered from Karanis during the University of Michigan 1920-30s excavations, one of the work packages of the AGROS Project. The materials collected reflect the selective interests of archaeological research in the early 20th century, being mainly represented by large anatomical elements from medium- and large-sized animals. Complete crania, mandibles and horns make up a good part of the collection, along with large-sized mollusc shells. The species represented include domestic mammals such as cattle, pig, sheep, goat, equids and dog; wild animals include fish as well as species that are now either regionally extinct or endangered, such as the hartebeest, gazelles, the hippopotamus and the Nile crocodile. The malacofaunal assemblage consists of large shells imported from the Red Sea and the Mediterranean, as well as of many freshwater mollusc shells. The collection includes a group of domestic mammal bones that, at some point in the history of the town, had been recovered clean from waste deposits and painted over using standardised decorative patterns. The material recorded is being dated through a re-analysis of excavation data and radiocarbon dating, before being selected for further analyses that include bone and dental isotopic analyses, and 3D dental microwear analyses. Despite the biases implied by the selective recovery strategy, the faunal assemblage under study will open a window into past animal husbandry practices at the site and human-animal-environment relationships more generally, contributing to ongoing studies on food production, natural resources and trade at ancient Karanis.

Recent Research on Dyes, Pigments, and Color at Karanis, Egypt

Suzanne L. Davis[1], Caroline Roberts[1], Laurel Fricker[1]
[1] University of Michigan

This paper discusses recent scientific investigation of dyes and pigments on more than 200 objects from Karanis, Egypt. While the study of color on ancient objects is well-established, it has focused primarily on sculpture and artwork held in the collections of fine art museums. These objects often lack provenience and rarely, if ever, represent quotidian household items—a knowledge gap the Karanis corpus is perfectly poised to fill! This paper discusses colorants observed on textiles, baskets, terracotta figurines, panel paintings, and sculpture excavated during University of Michigan-led excavations at Karanis in the 1920s and 30s and now housed at the Kelsey Museum of Archaeology. Results indicate plant-based dyes for fibers, including indigo, madder, tannins, and yellow colorants, as well as alum-based mordants. Pigments observed on objects include organic colorants such as indigo, madder, and carbon black, and inorganic colorants like lead white, earth (iron oxide) pigments ranging from red to yellow to green, and the synthetic pigment Egyptian Blue. Dyes and pigments at Karanis were combined and applied in skillful ways, and even utilitarian items, like mats made of goat hair, are decorated with color. Our investigative techniques have included multispectral imaging, X-ray fluorescence, and optical microscopy; these relatively affordable methods are portable, nondestructive, and readily transferrable to the study of color in other legacy collections. Dye analysis with liquid chromatography

and DART mass spectrometry is also planned, and we hope to report these findings as well.

Discussion
Nicholas Hudson[1]
[1] University of North Carolina Wilmington

12J. Ancient Languages and Linguistics (White Hill)
Chair(s): Victoria Almansa-Villatoro, Yale University; Brendan Hainline, The Metropolitan Museum of Art

At the Roots of Ancient Egyptian: Linguistic, Cultural, and Climatic Factors
Marwan Kilani[1]
[1] University of Basel

This paper investigates the emergence of unique linguistic features in early Egyptian and explores how socio-historical dynamics in the 4th millennium BCE influenced the linguistic landscape of ancient Egypt. The first part of the presentation focuses on the linguistic aspects of early Egyptian development. It begins with an overview of several typologically unusual features as well as parallels with geographically and linguistically distinct regions. These observations suggest that early Egyptian may have emerged as a contact language or undergone significant restructuring due to intensive linguistic interactions. Such phenomena, evident as early as the third millennium BCE, appear to align with the formative stages of the Egyptian state in the late fourth to early third millennium BCE. Building on this linguistic foundation, the second part addresses the question of why linguistically diverse communities converged in the Nile Valley during this period. Drawing from climatological and archaeological data, it is argued that the late 4th millennium BCE marked the culmination of progressive desertification in surrounding regions, particularly the Sahara. This climatic shift likely drove communities to migrate toward the Nile Valley, resulting in sociolinguistic interactions that shaped the distinctive linguistic features of Egyptian. The paper concludes by discussing the sociocultural dimensions of these processes, emphasizing how environmental pressures, population movements, and sociopolitical changes contributed to the linguistic and cultural integration foundational to the Egyptian state.

Investigating Etymologies of Early Egyptian Toponyms
Brendan Hainline[1]
[1] The Metropolitan Museum of Art

Toponyms are conservative lexical items—that is, the names of places can last long after the people or languages from which they received their original names. Examples of this phenomenon can of course be found in modern Egyptian Arabic toponyms that preserve ancient Egyptian names, relics that preserve remnants of the Egyptian languages long after they stopped being spoken (Asyūṭ from Zꜣwt, Qift from Gbtjw, El-Kab from Nḫb, etc.). The earliest toponyms within the Nile Valley and the Delta, then, have the potential to record lexemes of what might be considered Proto-Egyptian or even those of Pre-Egyptian languages. This talk will examine (some) toponyms recorded in the Early Dynastic and Old Kingdom sources with an aim to identify those with (1) a clear Egyptian name analyzable in the language of the time; (2) an identifiable Proto-Egyptian etymology, able to be derived from a reconstructable root; or (3) an obscure Pre-Egyptian source language.

Translating Ancient Egyptian Conceptual Metaphors: A Pragmatic Approach (Virtual)
Ahmed Osman[1]
[1] University of Cologne

The translation of ancient Egyptian conceptual metaphors into modern languages requires a methodology that accounts for both linguistic meaning and cultural cognition. Traditional philological approaches often prioritize lexical equivalence, but pragmatics—the study of meaning in context—offers a clearer perspective. This study applies insights from pragmatics and cognitive linguistics to explore how ancient Egyptian metaphors functioned within their cultural and communicative environments and how they can be effectively translated today. A case study is the metaphor TIME IS SPACE, as seen in the ancient Egyptian phrase ḥr-ʿ ("upon length"), traditionally translated as "immediately." However, pragmatic analysis suggests that its meaning was context-dependent, encompassing both short and extended durations. This variability is mirrored in modern Egyptian Arabic, where ʿalá tūl (على طول) can mean both "immediately" and "forever," depending on discourse context. By examining the pragmatic conditions under which these expressions are used, we gain a clearer understanding of their semantic range and potential shifts in meaning over time. This study promotes a translation methodology that prioritizes pragmatic equivalence rather than strict lexical substitution. Drawing on theories of distributed cognition and embodied meaning, it argues that ancient Egyptian conceptual metaphors must be interpreted within their communicative and cultural contexts. Through a pragmatic translation of conceptual metaphors, we can refine the translation of ancient texts for a better understanding of the ancient Egyptian language and community.

Hebrew Šānâ Ṭaʿam in Light of Akkadian Ṭēmam Šanûm: An East Semitic Idiom Preserved in West Semitic Literature
Julian Chike[1]
[1] Baylor University

In 1 Samuel 21 David flees from Saul to Achish, king of Gath. When Achish is informed of David's military prowess, we are told that David "changed his mind" or "disguised his behavior" (וישנו את טעמו). Scholars have long been perplexed by this linguistic oddity. There are two main reasons for this. First, is the verbal form וישנו. Some scholars view the final ו in the form וישנו as an "anticipatory pronominal suffix." Some scholars perceive the final ו as part of the verbal root based on Ugaritic šnw, in which case the Hebrew text would reflect a contracted form. Unconvinced of these two propositions, some scholars emend the Hebrew to read וישנה following the Old Greek (OG) reading "καὶ ἠλλοίωσεν." The second issue concerns the noun טעם which is governed by וישנו. Nowhere else in the Hebrew Bible can one find the combination of these two words. Nor do these words appear in tandem anywhere in Northwest Semitic. Because of this, some scholars follow the OG which reads πρόσωπον αὐτοῦ (= Heb. פניו). What if we do not emend the Hebrew text, however? What does the idiom שנה טעם mean? Textual evidence from Mesopotamia can shed some light on this linguistic quandary. Using these sources, I demonstrate that וישנו את טעמו is a West Semitic analog influenced by the East Semitic idiom "ṭēmam šanûm" which can mean "to become deranged, insane." Eventually, the idiom וישנו את טעמו became obscure, leading later editors of 1 Samuel to insert the gloss ויתהלל ("and he feigned madness") for clarity.

The wa (u) of Apodosis in East Semitic: Contact, Reconstruction, and Loss

Andrew Zulker[1]
[1] University of Chicago

In many West Semitic languages, a reflex of *wa (normally 'and') may be used to introduce the apodosis of a conditional sentence, and similarly in other dependent constituent + main clause structures. This use of *wa, traditionally called the "wāw of apodosis," may be reconstructed to Proto-West Semitic. Its reconstruction to Proto-East Semitic, however, is less straightforward. The feature (with wa or u) is absent from the major Mesopotamian dialects of Akkadian, and its occurrence in Eblaite, Mari Old Babylonian (pace Streck 2021), Old Assyrian, and other more peripheral varieties may each possibly be explained as the result of contact with West Semitic, Hittite, Hurrian, and/or Elamite. A similar u appears in a few Sargonic Akkadian texts, but the significance of these examples has recently been questioned (Kogan and Krebernik 2021). In this talk, I first argue that, despite the possibility of borrowing in many varieties, a *wa of apodosis may indeed be reconstructed to Proto-East Semitic, based primarily on a positive reevaluation of the Sargonic evidence. I then propose an explanation for its eventual loss in the major Akkadian dialects. Namely, with the shift in pronunciation from *wa to u and the shift in word order from VSO to SOV, the u of apodosis came to be often immediately preceded by the subordination marker u, and became difficult to hear. In this way, the loss of the u of apodosis in many Akkadian dialects may parallel the loss of the coordinating u in Neo-Assyrian (Bjøru and Pat-El 2024).

12K. Theoretical and Anthropological Approaches to the Near East (Tremont)

Chair(s): Matthew Winter, University of Arizona

In With the Old: The Transition to the Early Bronze Age IB (c. 3400 BCE) through the Creation of Collective Memory and Invented Tradition

Julian M. Hirsch[1]
[1] The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

Collective memory is a powerful social medium, linking people to a shared notion of the past and allowing for the creation and maintenance of new social formations. Various scholars have emphasized that collective memory is constructed or invented and that its transmission is an active process, carried out both through everyday practice and through acts such as communal rituals. In this presentation, I will draw attention to similarities between sites, practices, and objects belonging to the Late Chalcolithic southern Levant (c. 4500-4000 BCE) and the Early Bronze Age IB (c. 3400-3100 BCE). The Late Chalcolithic is characterized by a richly endowed symbolic and ritual system underlined by temples, sacred spaces, a rich corpus of visual imagery, and extramural burial in caves. By contrast, the succeeding Early Bronze Age IA possessed none of these features with the transition between the two periods viewed by some as involving the intentional dismantling, forgetting, or avoidance of Chalcolithic lifeways and worldviews. In this presentation I will argue that the transition from EB IA to B involved an intentional return to a variety of Chalcolithic traits, places, and practices, many related to communal ritual. Despite the re-use of Chalcolithic templates, EB IB people did not simply re-use those templates but rather adapted them to the different conditions and worldview of their time. I argue that by 'inventing' new collective memories of the Late Chalcolithic, the architects of the EB IB were able supplant EB IA lifeways, establishing and legitimizing a new lifeway.

Tales of Kings: A Conceptual Approach to Narrativity in Royal Reliefs in Ancient Egyptian Temples

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[1] University of California, Irvine

The discussion surrounding the presence or absence of narrative in ancient Egyptian images is contentious. A multiplicity of definitions for
narrative, most of which derive from literary texts, leads to highly subjective analyses. This subjectivity is amply visible in considerations of royal scenes on temple walls, commonly interpreted as propagandistic, canonized, "magically efficacious," and therefore as ahistorical and not narrative. Braun (2020) recently correctly moved away from equating narrative and historicity in thinking about ancient Egyptian imagery, but her new proposal that narrative images must have "tellability" (content that deviates from the norm) similarly excludes most royal monumental scenes from the narrative category. More recently, Rogner (2022) helpfully differentiated between ancient Egyptian images "used to tell a story" and those with a "narrative effect" on viewers, an effect which may not be felt today. Building on Rogner's recent work, this paper uses the Opet Festival procession sequence from the Colonnade Hall of the Luxor Temple to explore narrativity in royal monumental reliefs. When the Egyptian understanding of artistic representations, history, and kingship itself are considered, it becomes clear that timeless representations of kingship and narrative imagery should not be considered mutually exclusive. By applying elements of narrative theory, prioritizing the ancient Egyptian worldview, and dialoguing with narrative studies of Ancient Near Eastern art more broadly, a case will be made for the inherent conceptual narrativity of monumental temple reliefs that depict the Egyptian king in his role as protector of Egypt and provider of the divine.

On the Function of the Göbekli Tepe Monumental Special Buildings— the "T-pillar rings" (Virtual)

Donna J. Sutliff[1]
[1] Independent Researcher

Göbekli Tepe (c. 9,500-8,000 BCE) is a World Heritage site in SE Turkey. Its monumental special buildings—megalithic T-pillar rings with towering central T-pillars—constitute the earliest evidence of religious architecture in SW Asia. The T-pillars display recurring, enigmatic imagery of animals, anthropomorphs, and hieroglyphic-like geometrics. Previous and later excavations in the Urfa region and beyond suggest that Göbekli Tepe was the epicenter of a hunter-gatherer "T-pillar" culture. In this presentation I discuss the function of the T-pillar rings from the point of view of mainstream cognitive science. The current Zeitgeist in anthropology to interpret prehistoric art, including Göbekli Tepe art, by referencing "neuroscientific" evidence of altered states of consciousness is pseudo-scientific. A better approach is to consider human cognition as information seeking for adaptation to the real world and as empowered by metaphor. Hunter-gatherers congregating at Göbekli Tepe were semi-sedentary and participated in a vast, obsidian-trade network. Important information for them would have been how to navigate by sky objects, how to tell calendrical and daily time, and how to control the weather for wild vegetal crops. I discuss and reject the arguments that the Göbekli Tepe pillar rings were roofed and the Khabarova et al. (2024) argument that evidence of SW Asian rotating tectonic plates refutes archaeo-astronomical evidence of celestial alignments in 4th-m. Rujm el-Hiri (Israel) architecture. I argue that the Göbekli pillar rings were for sky monitoring and summoning lightning, and that Göbekli art was symbolic.

Between Food and Therapeutics: A Future for Interdisciplinary Studies of Ancient Egyptian Medicine

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Therapeutic recipe compendia from both Egypt and Mesopotamia are incredibly formulaic and primarily practice oriented – correlations between perspectives of sickness and selected recipe, as well as any material-discourse entanglement pertinent to the therapeutics presents a major challenge. New perspectives in this subfield have justly problematized past analyses of ancient 'medicine' that sought to appraise ancient practices through modern, often biomedical lenses. Nevertheless, as argued here, biochemical analyses of ancient therapeutics can offer new insights into entanglements for recipes when used as an additional tool to the prescribed philological analysis. This paper presents the results of an interdisciplinary study of particularly salient therapeutic recipe categories found across surviving therapeutic manuals. For this, ancient concepts behind a small selection of sickness categories were re-examined following traditional philological inquiry. The recipes used to treat these sicknesses were then examined for potential trends in structuring and item clustering, and their materiality reconsidered through experimental recreations that enabled considerations of any potential correlation with observed trends in concepts. Finally, samples of recreated recipes were then subjected to metabolomic profile analyses (NMR; GC+LC-MS) to determine potential bioactive compounds in the processed products. While metabolites were identified, the results instead indicated varied motivations. Key amongst these are 'medicalisations' of technical procedures known from other social contexts (brewing, baking, embalming, etc.), shedding new light on elusive entanglements. The study advocates for future research in this direction.

What is Community Religion?: An Anthropological Case Study of Ancient Egyptian Religious Sites

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Ancient Egyptian material remains of cultic practice in both desert and Nilotic landscapes from the Middle through New Kingdoms provide a data set upon which anthropological theories of religion can be evaluated in relation to the archaeology of private religion. The evidence in the desert includes minor modifications to the natural setting, fabrication of cairns, rock cut shrines, and the construction of fully developed temple complexes. Within the Nile Valley, the evidence consists of slightly modified natural features, ancestor cult installations within settlements, neighborhood chapels and shrines, and shrines/temples utilized during festivals. Inscriptions in various formats found in these environments describe the nature of the cultic architecture, the underlying belief system(s) surrounding deities and private/royal ancestors, and the associated rituals and festivals conducted to venerate these entities, all of which evince community participation. Applying the anthropological theories of religion, namely structuralism, functionalism, and individualism/phenomenological approach, and the paradigm of "great" and "little" tradition to this material allows for it to be contextualized within this larger field of study and helps to provide further insight into the understanding of ancient Egyptian religious practices at the individual/community level. This investigation also identifies the permeability between state and private religion from a social perspective and how this overlap occurs, independent of the formality of the religious environment, leading to the proposal that the common moniker of "private religion" be abandoned for the more descriptive label of "community religion."