2026 ASOR ANNUAL MEETING ABSTRACT BOOKLET

Chicago, November 18-21, 2026

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 BOOKLET

Times and dates are subject to change.
Updated: November 2, 2026

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 18, 2026

12:00–8:30pm (CST) **ASOR Registration Tables and Help Desk Open** (Normandie Lounge)
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 (CST) Welcome to the Annual Meeting and Plenary Address (Grand Ballroom)
Lapis, Gold, Clay, Copper: Presenting Ancient West Asian Art at The Met
Dr. Kim Benzel | Curator in Charge, The Metropolitan Museum of Art

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 19, 2026

8:15–10:20am (CST)	SESSION BLOCK 1	LOCATION
1A.	Jerusalem and the Archaeology of a Sacred City I	Continental A
1B.	Archaeology of Mesopotamia I	Continental B
1C.	Interdisciplinary Approaches to Seals, Sealing Practices, and Administration	Continental C
1D.	Ancient Climate and Environmental Archaeology	Waldorf
1E.	Archaeology of the Southern Levant I	Marquette
1F.	Bring in the Crowds (Workshop)	Williford A
1G.	Digital Archaeology and History I	Williford B
1H.	Archaeology of Anatolia I	Williford C
1I.	Violence in the Ancient Near East and Hebrew Bible I	Astoria
1J.	Archaeology of Egypt I	Private Dining 2

10:40am–12:45pm (CST)	SESSION BLOCK 2	LOCATION
2A.	Jerusalem and the Archaeology of a Sacred City II	Continental A
2B.	Archaeology of Mesopotamia II	Continental B
2C.	How to Prepare for When Disaster Strikes (Workshop)	Continental C
2D.	Publishing Scholarship of the Ancient World in the Mid 21st Century (Workshop)	Waldorf
2E.	Archaeology of the Southern Levant II	Marquette
2F.	The Field Still Is Not Safe: Confronting Cultures of Harassment on Archaeological Field Projects (Workshop)	Williford A
2G.	Digital Archaeology and History II	Williford B
2H.	Archaeology of Anatolia II	Williford C
2I.	Violence in the Ancient Near East and Hebrew Bible II	Astoria
2J.	Archaeology of Egypt II	Private Dining 2

12:45–2:00pm (CST) Early Career Scholars Brown Bag Lunch and Panel (Boulevard C)

12:45–2:00pm (CST) Roundtable Discussions (Grand Ballroom) - View list here and sign-up in advance

All presentations in the Annual Meeting program have been reviewed in accordance with applicable ASOR policies, including ASOR's Policy on Professional Conduct. Acceptance of a presentation reflects compliance with applicable program requirements.

2:00–4:05pm (CST)	SESSION BLOCK 3	LOCATION
3A.	Urbanism and Polities in the Bronze and Iron Age Levant I	Continental A
3B.	The Archaeology of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq I	Continental B
3C.	Tell en-Naṣbeh at 100 Years: Past, Present, and Future I	Continental C
3D.	Interconnectivity and Exchange with Northeast Africa I	Waldorf
3E.	The Archaeology of the Kingdom of Judah	Marquette
3F.	Gender in the Ancient Near East I	Williford A
3G.	New Approaches to Ancient Animals I	Williford B
3H.	Archaeology of Anatolia III	Williford C
3I.	Violence in the Ancient Near East and Hebrew Bible III	Astoria
3J.	Negotiating Elites: Strategies of Elite Practices and Consumption as Reactions to Political Dynamics I	Private Dining 2

4:25–6:30pm (CST)	SESSION BLOCK 4	LOCATION
4A.	Urbanism and Polities in the Bronze and Iron Age Levant II	Continental A
4B.	The Archaeology of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq II	Continental B
4C.	Tell en-Naṣbeh at 100 Years: Past, Present, and Future II	Continental C
4D.	Interconnectivity and Exchange with Northeast Africa II	Waldorf
4E.	Archaeology of the Southern Levant III: Papers in Honor of Yosef Garfinkel	Marquette
4F.	Gender in the Ancient Near East II	Williford A
4G.	New Approaches to Ancient Animals II	Williford B
4H.	The Medieval Village (Workshop)	Williford C
4I.	Petra and the Kingdom & Influences of the Nabataeans	Astoria
4J.	Negotiating Elites: Strategies of Elite Practices and Consumption as Reactions to Political Dynamics I	Private Dining 2
4K.	Archaeology of Religion in the Levant during the Second and First Millennia BCE I	Boulevard

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 20, 2026

8:15–10:20am (CST)	SESSION BLOCK 5	LOCATION
5A.	The Age of Transitions: Imperial Successions and Local Transformations in the First Millennium BCE I	Continental A
5B.	Cultural Heritage: Preservation, Presentation, and Management I	Continental B
5C.	Archaeology of Israel I	Continental C
5D.	Archaeology and Biblical Studies I	Waldorf
5E.	Archaeology of the Near East: The Classical Periods	Marquette
5F.	Dwelling in Past: Scales of Settlement, Time, and Society in Anatolia I	Williford A
5G.	Archaeology of Rural Communities: Landscape Approaches I	Williford B
5H.	Re-imagining the Final Excavation Report: Exploring New Approaches to Publishing Archaeological Data (Workshop)	Williford C
5I.	Archaeologies of Memory	Astoria
5J.	Archaeology of Jordan I	Private Dining 2

10:40am–12:45pm (CST)	SESSION BLOCK 6	LOCATION
6A.	The Age of Transitions: Imperial Successions and Local Transformations in the First Millennium BCE II	Continental A
6B.	Cultural Heritage: Preservation, Presentation, and Management II	Continental B
6C.	Archaeology of Israel II	Continental C
6D.	Archaeology and Biblical Studies II	Waldorf
6E.	Computational Methods and Simulations in the Near Eastern Archaeology	Marquette
6F.	Flipping the Script: Museum Reinterpretations in Practice (Workshop)	Williford A
6G.	Archaeology of Rural Communities: Landscape Approaches II	Williford B
6H.	Archaeology of Syria	Williford C
6I.	Theoretical and Anthropological Approaches to the Near East	Astoria
6J.	Archaeology of Jordan II	Private Dining 2

12:45–2:00pm (CST) ASOR Members' Meeting (Waldorf)

2:00–4:05pm (CST)	SESSION BLOCK 7	LOCATION
7A.	Urbanism and Polities in the Bronze and Iron Age Levant III	Continental A
7B.	Cultural Heritage: Preservation, Presentation, and Management III	Continental B
7C.	Archaeology of Israel III	Continental C
7D.	Archaeology of Islamic Society I	Waldorf
7E.	Art Historical Approaches to the Near East I	Marquette
7F.	Dwelling in Past: Scales of Settlement, Time, and Society in Anatolia II	Williford A
7G.	Ancient Inscriptions I	Williford B
7H.	The Region of Aqaba in La Longue Durée (Workshop)	Williford C
7I.	Archaeology of Lebanon	Astoria
7J.	Archaeology of Cyprus I	Private Dining 2

4:25–6:30pm (CST)	SESSION BLOCK 8	LOCATION
8A.	Recent Work in the Archaeological Sciences	Continental A
8B.	Gardens of the Mediterranean, the Ancient Near East, and Beyond	Continental B
8C.	Use and Reuse of Tombs in the Theban Necropolis	Continental C
8D.	Archaeology of Islamic Society II	Waldorf
8E.	Art Historical Approaches to the Near East II	Marquette
8F.	Dwelling in Past: Scales of Settlement, Time, and Society in Anatolia III	Williford A
8G.	Ancient Inscriptions II	Williford B
8H.	The Sampling Trilemma: Balancing Conservation, Curation, and Research (Workshop)	Williford C
8I.	History of Archaeology I	Astoria
8J.	Archaeology of Cyprus II	Private Dining 2

8:00-10:00pm (CST) Early Career Scholars' Reception (720 South Bar, Lobby Level)

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 21, 2026

8:15–10:20am (CST)	SESSION BLOCK 9	LOCATION
9A.	Africa in the Ancient World I	Continental A
9B.	Archaeology of Arabia I	Continental B
9C.	The LCP Handbook Series: Eastern Sigillata A (ESA)	Continental C
9D.	Intangible Cultural Heritage: Bridging the Past and the Present I	Waldorf
9E.	Archaeology of the Near East: Bronze and Iron Ages I	Marquette
9F.	Approaches to Dress and the Body	Williford A
9G.	Ancient Inscriptions III	Williford B
9H.	Towards a Working Ancient Economy I	Williford C
9I.	History of Archaeology II	Astoria

10:40am–12:45pm (CST)	SESSION BLOCK 10	LOCATION
10A.	Africa in the Ancient World II	Continental A
10B.	Archaeology of Arabia II	Continental B
10C.	Ancient Mesopotamia – A Social History. Methods for Reconstructing Lived Worlds I	Continental C
10D.	Intangible Cultural Heritage: Bridging the Past and the Present II	Waldorf
10E.	Archaeology of the Near East: Bronze and Iron Ages II	Marquette
10F.	What's Up With That?: Museum Objects that Defy Interpretation (Workshop)	Williford A
10G.	Ancient Languages and Linguistics I	Williford B
10H.	Towards a Working Ancient Economy II	Williford C
10I.	Archaeology of the Black Sea and the Caucasus	Astoria

12:45–2:00pm (CST) ASOR Poster Session (Grand Ballroom Foyer)

2:00–4:05pm (CST)	SESSION BLOCK 11	LOCATION
11A.	Africa in the Ancient World III	Continental A
11B.	Archaeology of Iran	Continental B
11C.	Ancient Mesopotamia – A Social History. Methods for Reconstructing Lived Worlds II	Continental C
11D.	Provenance and Middle Eastern Collections I of Memory I	Waldorf
11E.	The Archaeology of the Lands of Alalakh I	Marquette
11F.	Teaching with The Ancient Near East Today (Workshop)	Williford A
11G.	Ancient Languages and Linguistics II	Williford B
11H.	Prehistoric Archaeology I	Williford C
11I.	Archaeology of Religion in the Levant during the Second and First Millennia BCE II	Astoria

4:25–6:30pm (CST)	SESSION BLOCK 12	LOCATION
12A.	Archaeology and History of Feasting and Foodways	Continental A
12B.	Art, Archaeology, and History of Central Asia	Continental B
12C.	Ancient Mesopotamia – A Social History. Methods for Reconstructing Lived Worlds III	Continental C
12D.	Provenance and Middle Eastern Collections II	Waldorf
12E.	The Archaeology of the Lands of Alalakh II	Marquette
12F.	Archaeology of the Late Antique and Byzantine Near East	Williford A
12G.	Ancient Languages and Linguistics III	Williford B
12H.	Prehistoric Archaeology II	Williford C

7:00-8:00pm and 8:15-9:15pm CST | Institute for the Study of Ancient Cultures (ISAC) Museum Reception

After the sessions end on Saturday night, the Institute for the Study of Ancient Cultures (ISAC) Museum will host a reception for ASOR attendees—two time options are being offered to accommodate as many people as possible. Tickets are complimentary for ASOR attendees.

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7:00–8:30pm (CST) ***Plenary Address (Grand Ballroom)***
Lapis, Gold, Clay, Copper: Presenting Ancient West Asian Art at The Met
Dr. Kim Benzel | Curator in Charge, The Metropolitan Museum of Art

8:30–9:30pm (CST) ***Welcome Reception (Grand Ballroom)***

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 19, 2026

8:15am – 10:20am (CST)

1A. Jerusalem and the Archaeology of a Sacred City I (Continental A)

Chair(s): Yuval Gadot, Tel-Aviv University; Yiftah Shalev, Israel Antiquities Authority

Bathing Culture in Jerusalem – New Archaeological Evidence for Bathhouses Development West of the Temple Mount, from the Roman to the Early Islamic Periods
Ari Levy (Israel Antiquities Authority)

During excavations conducted in Jerusalem beneath the Western Wall Plaza, a public bathhouse was uncovered that operated continuously from the Roman through the Early Islamic periods (3rd–9th centuries CE). The bathhouse served both local residents and pilgrims, functioning as a center for hygiene, leisure, and social interaction. This lecture examines the bathhouse within its broader historical context, assessing its role during the Roman, Byzantine, and Early Islamic periods and its contribution to our understanding of Jerusalem's cultural, social, and urban development. It begins with a brief overview of the development of bathhouses in the Land of Israel and their integration into the urban landscape. The main discussion focuses on the architectural and chronological analysis of the bathhouse across its various phases. Particular attention is given to construction techniques, spatial organization, and functional changes over time. The structure is compared with other bathhouses built and operated contemporaneously in the surrounding area, highlighting the prosperity and distinctive character of this urban zone. The lecture also addresses the bathhouse's topographical setting and its relationship to urban infrastructure, including water supply systems—especially the possible use of Jerusalem's Lower Aqueduct—and drainage installations. Excavation data indicate that the bathhouse's earliest core developed following the foundation of Aelia Capitolina, with continued modifications throughout the Byzantine and Early Islamic periods. Overall, the findings underscore the centrality of this area and illuminate broader patterns of continuity and transformation in Jerusalem's urban space.

Archaeology in Complex Contexts: Methodological Reflections from the Excavations at the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem
Francesca Romana Stasolla (University of Roma Sapienza)

The archaeological investigations conducted within the complex of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem offer a paradigmatic case for reflecting on methodology in highly stratified, architecturally layered, and devotionally active sites. Excavating in such contexts entails confronting a dense superimposition of construction phases, continuous liturgical use, limited accessibility, and the legal-administrative constraints imposed by multi-confessional custodianship. This paper proposes to examine the Holy Sepulchre not merely as an object of archaeological inquiry, but as a methodological laboratory for the archaeology of complex sacred environments. Particular attention will be devoted to three interrelated dimensions: stratigraphic reasoning in conditions where vertical excavation is severely restricted and where standing architecture constitutes a primary archaeological source; the integration of material data with textual, liturgical, and historiographical traditions; and the management of excavation within a living monument, where conservation, ritual continuity, and scholarly investigation must coexist. Drawing on recent fieldwork and reassessment of earlier excavation records, the paper will discuss strategies such as micro-stratigraphic analysis, architectural archaeology, non-invasive documentation techniques, and interdisciplinary collaboration. The Holy Sepulchre thus becomes a case study for addressing broader theoretical questions: How can archaeological method adapt to sites characterized by extreme diachronic density? How should interpretation proceed when material evidence is inseparable from centuries of theological and political meaning? And to what extent can methodological transparency mitigate the interpretive risks inherent in contested sacred spaces? By situating the Holy Sepulchre, this contribution aims to articulate a transferable methodological framework applicable to other multilayered and ritually active sites across the Mediterranean and the Near East.

"Do good in your good pleasure unto Zion; build the walls of Jerusalem" (Psalm 51:20). Dating the Byzantine Wall of Jerusalem: A Reassessment of the "Eudocia Wall"
Yehel Zelinger (Israel Antiquities Authority)

The Byzantine city wall of Jerusalem, traditionally attributed to Empress Aelia Eudocia, represents a key element in the study of the city's spatial

development from the fourth to sixth centuries CE. The attribution to Eudocia derives primarily from the account of the Byzantine historian Evagrius Scholasticus, who records that the empress undertook construction of the city walls during her residence in Jerusalem in the fifth century. While this testimony is relatively late, it has only recently been corroborated by archaeological evidence. The paper reexamines the dating of the wall in light of archaeological data from excavations on the southern slope of Mount Zion. The uncovered fortification line exhibits characteristic Byzantine construction techniques, including a substantial wall of large ashlars. In two excavation loci, coins allowed more precise dating. These numismatic data indicate construction within the timeframe of Eudocia's residence in Jerusalem, approximately 445–460 CE. Attempts by some scholars to assign the southern line of fortifications to an earlier period—whether to Constantine or even Diocletian, as proposed for the northern city wall—are not supported by the numismatic evidence. The findings thus reinforce the association of the southern fortifications with mid-fifth-century Byzantine activity and underscore Eudocia's likely role in the expansion and reinforcement of Jerusalem's urban defenses.

Fortifications and Symbols: The Discovery of Jerusalem's Northern Moat and the In-Situ Fatimid-Period "Hamsa" Carving

Zubair A. Adawi (Israel Antiquities Authority)

In 2022, a large-scale salvage excavation was conducted along Sultan Suleiman Street, adjusting to the northern wall of Jerusalem's Old City, in preparation for development work. The excavation revealed a continuous 60-meter segment of dry moat (fosse'), dated probably to the Early Islamic period. The moat was hewn in the bedrock at the base of the fortification walls, forming a primary component of Jerusalem's municipal medieval defensive system. It reflects the intensive efforts invested during this period. A unique and extraordinary discovery was identified on the side of the moat, cut into the bedrock: an intentional In-situ carving of five-fingered hand. Based on its stylistic features and architectural context, we identify this symbol as the "Hand of Fatima" (Hamsa)- an apotropaic charm associated with the Shi'ite-Fatimid religious world. The presence of the Hamsa as integral, rock-cut element of the moat, rather than a portable artifact found in debris, provides rare evidence regarding the identity of the laborers and defenders of the city in the eve of the Crusader conquest in 1099. This finding supports the historical hypothesis that the moat was refurbished and deepened by the Fatimid administration as part of the strategic preparations for siege. This presentation will provide an overview of the revealed fortification system in light of researches on Jerusalem's walls and discuss the significance of integrating physical fortifications with symbolic-spiritual protection at the city's front line of defense.

From Abundance to Abandonment: When and Why did Birkat al-Hamra Go Out of Use?

Itamar Berko (Israel Antiquity Authority), Nahshon Szanton (Israel Antiquity Authority), Michael Chernin (Israel Antiquity Authority)

Situated at the southern tip of the Tyropoeon Valley is the Pool of Siloam, a substantial reservoir fed by the waters of the Gihon Spring. Its origins trace back to the construction of a massive dam wall, dated to the late 9th century BCE. During the Second Temple period, two pools were situated in this vicinity, the precise locations of which have been a subject of past scholarly debate. These pools remained in use throughout the Late Roman and Byzantine periods, with historical records indicating that the Pool of Siloam served as a healing site for Christian pilgrims. While the pool at the outlet of the Siloam Tunnel—known as Birkat Silwan—remained functional until modern times, there has been no clear evidence regarding the continued use of Birkat al-Hamra following the destruction of the Church of Siloam during the Persian-Sassanid conquest of 614 CE. Furthermore, the precise date when Birkat al-Hamra fell out of use has never been addressed in research. Based on renewed archaeological excavations at Birkat al-Hamra, this article proposes that the pool remained functional during the Early Islamic period (specifically the Umayyad period). The site underwent intensive renovations, including the installation of a new plaster floor and the re-plastering of the pool's walls. Moreover, epigraphic evidence discovered at the site suggests that the pool continued to serve as a healing sanctuary during this era. Finally, the archaeological findings attribute the cessation of Birkat al-Hamra's usage to the earthquake of 749 CE, after which the pool was abandoned and subsequently filled with silt and refuse.

1B. Archaeology of Mesopotamia I (Continental B)

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

Tracing Transformation: Network and Multivariate Analyses of Chalcolithic Households in Greater Mesopotamia

Khaled Abu Jayyab (University of Toronto), Elizabeth Gibbon (University of Toronto), Lisa Wolff (University of Toronto), Lianna Sternklar (University of Toronto), Deniz Dernek (University of Toronto), Koushan Amir-Khosravi (University of Toronto), Emmett Kohl McPherson (University of Toronto), Rowan Berrian (University of Toronto), Aly El Hemasy (University of Toronto), Brittany Mayers (University of Toronto)

Archaeological discussions of social change in Chalcolithic Mesopotamia have often focused on regional settlement dynamics. While these approaches highlight shifting settlement hierarchies and inter-site interactions, they frequently overlook the household as a primary locus through which social, economic, and spatial transformations were articulated. This paper re-centers the household as a fundamental unit of analysis in order to explore diachronic changes in societal organization across Mesopotamia from the Ubaid through the Late Chalcolithic periods (ca. 5400–3600 BC). To address these issues, we compile a comparative dataset of domestic architectural and contextual variables from sixty sites (with multiple houses from each) across greater Mesopotamia. The dataset includes measures such as house size, number of rooms, inferred room functions, evidence for crafting activities, counts of ovens and hearths, and the presence of intramural burials. Through multivariate and network analyses, we examine how domestic organization, productive and consumptive practices, and relationships between households both within and outside of their respective settlements changed spatially and diachronically. Our analysis addresses several key questions: whether changes in the average size of houses represent long-term diachronic trends or regionally specific cultural practices in the organization of domestic space; whether increasing household size correlates with a diversification of craft activities within domestic contexts; and whether the spatial separation of craft production from domestic spaces had impact of household scale. By situating household organization within broader settlement and production networks, this study highlights the dynamic role of domestic institutions in shaping Chalcolithic social and economic transformations across Mesopotamia.

The City of Adab (Bismaya): Reassessing the Site's History and Architecture Based on the Results of the Iraqi Excavations

Mustafa Hasan (State Board of Antiquities and Heritage (SBAH)-Iraq)

This paper presents the results of the Iraqi excavations that have not been studied before and will be published for the first time. It begins with a brief presentation of the location and history of the city of Adab, as well as some of the names of its kings, in addition to a short review of the early American excavations at the site. The paper then discusses in more detail the modern Iraqi excavations and the architectural discoveries found in the city, with a comparison between these discoveries and those uncovered during the earlier American excavations. It also examines the architectural plans discovered by the Iraqi mission, explaining their locations and possible functions, which provide a clearer picture of the city's urban layout and its administrative and cultural functions. The paper also addresses the illegal digging activities that affected the site and caused damage to the shape and layout of the city. This research aims to provide a new reading and reassessment of the history and urban layout of the city of Adab by combining the results of the early American excavations with the modern Iraqi excavations. This helps highlight the importance of the city for understanding the development of early urbanism and material culture in southern Mesopotamia.

Dining on the Edge: Foodways in 7th Century BCE Nippur, Iraq

Augusta McMahon (University of Chicago, ISAC), Erin Braner (University of Chicago)

Nippur in the 7th century BCE was a thriving religious and economic center, recently emerged from centuries of neglect and settlement contraction after the collapse of the Kassite state. Assyrian royal reconstruction of the Enlil ziggurat and meddling in regional politics intermeshed with local economic revitalisation, and these are linked to the rapid re-expansion of Nippur, especially the reoccupation of its southern edge zone. This expansion affected Nippur's hinterland, which included settlements of long-established Babylonian farmers and both settled and nomadic tribal groups (Aramaean and Chaldaean), who may have been drawn to Nippur for safety or economic opportunities. Nippur's southern urban edge may have been the optimal place to purchase land and build houses for newly arrived administrators, nomadic households and other recent immigrants. This paper will compare ceramic assemblages from 7th century BCE houses in Nippur's southern area to those on the traditionally occupied main East mound. These assemblages include the same luxury glazed vessels, stump-based cups, serving bowls and storage jars, but subtle variations in type frequency and vessel size may suggest household diversity and selective emulation.

Smart Management of Cultural Heritage in Iraq: Integrating Advanced Technologies for Digital Documentation and Archaeological Site Preservation

Harith Jasim (Salah al-Din Museum)

This study addresses the results of archaeological excavations in Sector (22) Jubairiya within the archaeological city of Samarra. Jubairiya is considered one of the important residential and administrative quarters within the Abbasid urban fabric of the city. The excavation works were conducted between August 2025 and February 2026. The excavations covered an area of approximately 50 dunams within the archaeological site boundaries. The researcher directly participated in fieldwork, documentation, and analysis. The excavations resulted in the discovery of 26 architectural units varying in plan and function. Some units exhibited large and complex architectural designs, suggesting elite or high-status use. Other units were characterized by simpler designs, indicating ordinary residential functions. This variation reflects a clear social stratification within the urban structure of the area. In addition, a collection of archaeological finds was uncovered, including pottery, glass, and metal artifacts. These finds reflect diverse daily activities and functional uses within the site across different historical phases. The results highlight architectural and functional diversity that enhances understanding of the internal organization of Abbasid Samarra. Overall, these findings contribute to reconstructing a more accurate historical picture of the city's urban fabric.

1C. Interdisciplinary Approaches to Seals, Sealing Practices, and Administration (Continental C)

Chair(s): Pınar Durgun, The Morgan Library and Museum

Artificial Stones, Authentic Meanings: Rethinking Our Value Judgements Around Materials of Seals

Pinar Durgun (The Morgan Library and Museum), Ellen Purdy (The Metropolitan Museum of Art), Rebecca Pollak (The Morgan Library and Museum)

Cylinder seals made of "artificial lapis lazuli" (Egyptian blue) and other vitreous blue materials have traditionally been interpreted as "cheap imitations" of lapis lazuli. Even though seals made of synthetic blue materials were used in various administrative and ritual contexts, often alongside lapis lazuli rather than as its replacement, museum displays as well as art historical presentations tend to prioritize stone seals over these non-stone seals. This case study questions our imposition of modern aesthetics onto the ancient world by situating blue synthetic materials within Mesopotamian systems of material and color meaning rather than evaluating them against lapis lazuli and its economic value alone. Through scientific analyses and experimental studies in collaboration with the Metropolitan Museum of Art's Scientific Research and Objects Conservation Departments, we identified sophisticated and distinct ways of producing blue seals that challenge our judgements around color, material, and value. By presenting blue seals from the Morgan Library and Museum Collection, the results of these analyses, and the experimental production processes of cylinder seals, this paper investigates the magical power of blue through material performance.

Cult, Lack of Cult, and the Numinous Worldview in the Persepolis Fortification Archive

Natalie DeGeeter (University of Colorado-Boulder)

Archives of sealed documents provide a unique avenue to explore imagery and texts together in order to examine the behaviors and tastes of individuals in antiquity. The Persepolis Fortification Archive (509-494 BCE) records disbursements of food and beverages to people, animals, and gods at and around Achaemenid Persepolis. This study of seals used by personnel associated with cult in the archive offers new insights into how these individuals approached cultic functions and represented their involvement in such functions. Their seals display a wide variety of imagery, with no apparent selection for unusually cultic iconography. These findings suggest two important conclusions: (1) the Achaemenid administration did not mandate that cultic officials or offices and other individuals involved in cultic functions display a certain type of seal imagery and, instead, allowed for individual choice; and (2) individuals involved in cultic duties, including cultic officials and/or offices, did not prefer cultic worship scenes over others. This recognition demonstrates that cultic officials were more interested in displaying their inclusion in the larger Achaemenid elite than in distinguishing themselves through targeted glyptic imagery. Indeed, it seems that the imagery of seals in the archive was inherently numinous. The seals used by cultic personnel at Persepolis, with their wide array of imagery, thus fit already into a worldview that incorporated worship and the divine in every element but did not differentiate them from other administrative personnel.

All the Pretty Colors: The Role of Social Memory in the Embodiment of Luxury in Iron Age Stamp Seals at Achziv

Erin Anderson (Harvard University)

Although seals and glyptic studies have long been a focus across the scholarship of the ancient Near East, few analyses have centered on their materiality and ability to represent the identities of their owners. The Iron Age stamp seals at the Phoenician site of Achziv present a unique opportunity to examine the identity ties within a community through objects and the memories that they hold. Achziv is known mostly for its Phoenician cemeteries, which hold hundreds of stamp seals. These seals, overwhelmingly crafted from common steatite, are often glazed in bright and luminous colors, changing their outward appearance from an everyday stone to precious materials like carnelian or quartz. Using a social memory approach based in bodily encoding systems used to build connections and memories within communities, I will explore the ways in which the community members of Achziv created common bonds of identity through the practiced glazing of their seals. Moreover, I will argue that the colors of the seals hold a greater significance than their cosmetic appearance; the colors allow the seals to adopt qualities of rare precious stones, giving their owners access to a wider community of luxury which would have been previously unattainable. These seals are more than tools; in fact, they are markers of a shared identity held within Achziv and representations of that identity in life and in death.

A Seleucian Society: A Reassessment of the Sealings at the Kelsey Museum of Archaeology and Their Socioeconomic Context

Ezequiel Martin Parra (University of Michigan)

The collection of sealings found in the private archives of Seleucia on the Tigris (currently held by the Kelsey Museum, University of Michigan) comprises some two hundred bullae and token sealings. Next to the larger collection unearthed in the city's public archive, this relatively small assemblage has often been neglected; when not, scholars have tended to focus on iconographical analysis. However, some elementary questions have not yet been answered, fundamentally, how exactly they were used and in what universe of archival and sealing practices they belonged. This paper's goal is twofold. In the first part, I will present preliminary results

from my research, offering a quantitative reassessment of the sealings and observations on their classification. In the second part, I will consider two key features of the sealings which seem to have been disregarded so far: the incredible heterogeneity of motifs, which points to a once-time usage of the seals, and the considerable amount of similar but not identical impressions, which suggests that the seal producers and bearers did not consider their uniqueness as a key feature. Altogether, these features point to an unusual set of sealing practices, rather informal and simple in character, which makes the case of Seleucia stand apart from neighboring settlements, such as Uruk and Babylon, as well as from other Greek cities. I propose that these practices resulted from the specific social and economic conditions of a city with a mixed population and the communicative challenges that arose therefrom.

Getting Sirius about Interpreting Seals

JoAnn Scurlock (Elmhurst College (retired))

The images on cylinder seals are often a bit of a puzzle. They can be enigmatic, and even seals where the basic mythological event being depicted is clear, there can be an awful lot of apparently extraneous imagery. It is the purpose of this paper to attempt to unpack two such seals with some help from astronomy. I make two assumptions to this end. One is that everything represented on a seal is there for a reason and the other is that, as in more modern times, persons could be named after the month in which they were born if something important happened in that month. In the case of these two seals that significant event, I will argue, is the twice-yearly passage of Sirius across the night sky.

1D. Ancient Climate and Environmental Archaeology (Waldorf)

Chair(s): Brita Lorentzen, University of Georgia; Kathleen Forste, Brown University

Reconstructing Bronze Age Cultivation Strategies in the Amuq Valley through Functional Weed Ecology

Ebrar Sinmez (Middle East Technical University)

*Virtual

Understanding how agricultural systems responded to environmental changes requires approaches capable of reconstructing cultivation regimes and management strategies at the field scale. Functional weed ecology provides a powerful method for identifying these agricultural strategies by analyzing the ecological traits of wild plant communities associated with crop remains. This study applies functional weed ecology to archaeobotanical assemblages from the Amuq Valley of Hatay, Türkiye, focusing on material from Tell Atchana (ancient Alalakh) and Toprakhisar Höyük. Tell Atchana served as the capital of the Kingdom of Mukish during the Middle Bronze Age and was later incorporated into the Hittite hegemony, while Toprakhisar Höyük functioned as a peripheral center that likely specialized in grape and olive production. Previous archaeobotanical and stable carbon isotope studies from these sites have identified signals of climatic stress, including a shift toward drought tolerant cereals and water stress during crop growth. Textual evidence also suggests attempts by Hittite authorities to construct irrigation infrastructure in the region. By applying the functional weed ecology to both previously published assemblages and newly analyzed material, this study reconstructs cultivation conditions and evaluates agricultural intensification through practices such as irrigation and manuring. Integrating weed ecological indicators with archaeobotanical datasets reveals how agricultural management strategies were negotiated between climatic stress and the political-economic demands of Bronze Age state systems in the Amuq Valley.

Environmental Insights from Phytolith-Rich Layers at Tell es-Safi/Gath

Marc Ramrekha (Rutgers University), Dan Cabanes (Rutgers University), Elisabetta Boaretto (Weizmann Institute of Science), Aren M. Maeir (Bar-Ilan University)

This study examines phytolith-rich layers from Tell es-Safi/Gath to explore their potential for reconstructing past environmental conditions. Samples were collected from multiple contexts, including the Iron Age destruction layer and several additional contexts associated with the Early and Late Bronze Age. Preliminary results indicate that phytolith-rich layers reflect diverse assemblages, including grass silica short cell phytoliths (GSSCPs). These assemblages provide insights into local vegetation patterns and suggest variability in environmental conditions across occupational phases. In particular, the concentration and composition of phytoliths within these layers highlight their potential as valuable archives of paleoenvironmental information. These findings demonstrate that phytolith-rich layers at Tell es-Safi/Gath offer a compelling source of data for paleoclimate reconstruction, especially when compared to phytolith assemblages within earth-based construction materials. This approach may be adopted across multilayered sites in the southern Levant.

Ugaritic ʾILQṢM & The Industrial Birth of Attica

Nikolas Lund (Aristotle University of Thessaloniki)

The birth of Erichthonius, primordial king of Athens, is attested in numerous mythographies: Hephaestus attempts to violate Athena, but she dodges and receives his unsolicited emission on her thigh. In disgust, she wipes it away with a piece of wool and casts it to the ground. The discarded wool inseminates Gaia, who in turn gives birth to Ἐριχθόνιος, subsequently celebrated as Athens' autochthonous founder.

For centuries, commentators have explained the ever-present detail about the wool [ἔριον] as etymological wordplay on ἔρι-χθον-, treating it as a lexical aetiology for the king's unusual name. From a linguistic standpoint, however, this interpretation is unstable and likely secondary folk etymology.

This paper proposes that the "wool" originally referred to metallurgical slag in eastern Attica, where centuries of silver–lead processing left dense fields of slag and litharge—the literal "offspring" of Hephaestus and Gaia. We present photographs of Bronze Age slag specimens collected in the Lavrio region, many of which display flow-banded, fibrous, textile-like surfaces that closely resemble wool fabric.

We argue that encounters with these unusual byproducts helped shape the core of the myth in the Iron Age, and that later literary sources preserve a reframed version in which the wool becomes a relic or "proof" of Erichthonius' autochthonous birth. This reinterpretation likely solidified in the Classical period, when Athens' economy was increasingly driven by intensified silver extraction in eastern Attica. Reading the Erechtheids as a mythic condensation of early metallurgical authority offers new clues about the landscape of early Attica and aligns suggestively with recent archaeometallurgical research.

New Insights into the Plant Economy at Islamic Tall Hisban

Kathleen M. Forste (Brown University)

This paper presents the newest phase of research into the plant economy at Islamic Tall Hisban (Jordan) from the 2025 excavation season. The site's robust excavation history includes a battery of environmental and scientific analyses, and each excavation season reveals rich and well-preserved deposits of carbonized plant remains, making it an ideal site to study long-term plant-use and cultivation practices. The 2025 excavation focused on a neighborhood of vaulted houses with shared courtyards and cisterns. While these residences were originally constructed during the Byzantine period, they continued to be (re)used and remodeled through Early and Middle Islamic eras. Three houses were targeted for excavation, continuing work from previous seasons, with the goal to reach Abbasid (10th century) levels. Flotation and charcoal samples were collected from all deposits, creating an assemblage of 36 samples. The samples under study here come from one house that was used as a pottery workshop during the Mamluk era, which was comprised of a series of burned deposits within and around combustion features, as well as possible remains of wooden workshop furnishings and supplies. The second house served as a shared kitchen space in the Ayyubid period, and had multiple layers of plaster flooring atop fill, within which was abundant and well-preserved carbonized botanical remains. The third house was used as a residence in the Mamluk period, and its previously excavated kitchen area was expanded to uncover living and working space towards its vaulted front door. These results provide a glimpse into the food, fuel, and furnishings used by this community over multiple phases.

Multi-Scalar Environmental Histories from Dendrochronology of Underwater Heritage in Cyprus and Israel

Brita Lorentzen (University of Georgia)

Underwater wooden heritage—including wooden ships—are embedded with information on shared cultural-environmental histories linking humans and forest and marine ecosystems over multiple spatial and temporal scales. This multi-scalar complexity is especially apparent in the East Mediterranean, which contains a rich and lengthy history of cultural interconnections and exchange facilitated via maritime transport, as well as an unequal distribution of forest resources. Dendrochronology and wood materials analysis are critical tools for untangling the multifaceted biographies of underwater cultural heritage sites, including reconstructing a precise timeline for ship construction, identifying and characterizing forest sources and timber selection strategies, and assessing post-depositional heritage material preservation and interaction with the surrounding marine environment. I focus on two underwater heritage sites demonstrating such multi-scalar connectivity—the Nissia shipwreck from eastern Cyprus and the Akko Tower shipwreck from Akko (Israel). Both ships were constructed and in service during Ottoman rule in the Eastern Mediterranean and sank in Ottoman coastal waters. I show how combined dendrochronology, 14C, and materials analysis of each ship's timbers and contents reveal complex—and contrasting—biographies of social, technological, and natural resource exchange that occurred during the 17th-19th centuries among the Ottoman Imperial government, European states, and local Mediterranean populations under Ottoman rule. Additionally, I discuss both sites' environmental impact legacies, including how archaeological materials analyses may be effectively integrated into efforts monitoring in situ shipwreck interactions with surrounding modern marine ecosystems in shallow, heavily developed near-coastal locations.

1E. Archaeology of the Southern Levant I (Marquette)

Chair(s): Sarah Richardson, North Carolina State University

Lithic Exchange and Provisioning in the Early Bronze Age Southern Levant: A Perspective from Tell es-Safi/Gath, Israel

Jeremy A. Beller (University of Bergen), Haskel J. Greenfield (University of Manitoba), Mostafa Fayek (University of Manitoba), Shira Albaz (Bar-Ilan University), Aren M. Maeir (Bar-Ilan University)

* Virtual

The early urban society of the Early Bronze Age southern Levant was supplied with a combination of local, regional, and inter-regional provisioning systems. These included the widespread distribution of lithic implements, such as tabular scrapers, Canaanean blades, and various ground stone tools. Current interpretations propose that the tabular scraper and sandstone ground stone supply originated in the Negev Desert, where they were possibly produced by pastoral groups who exchanged these items northward to urban settlements. In contrast, Canaanean blade production appears to have been concentrated in the north and conducted in 'workshops' that probably operated within most local polities. These interpretations rely primarily on macroscopic raw material attributes, core abundance, and distance-decay patterns rather than direct provenance evidence. To evaluate these interpretations, we present collated results of robust provenance analyses of various lithic implements from the Early Bronze Age of Tell es-Safi/Gath, a large urban settlement in central Israel. In doing so, this study casts new light on the organization of lithic technology and provides new insight into Bronze Age exchange networks.

A Grave Matter: Philistine Burial Practices at Tell es-Safi/Gath

Shani R. Guterman (Bar-Ilan University), Shira Albaz (Bar-Ilan University), Aren M. Maeir (Bar-Ilan University)

The question of 'How did the Philistines bury their dead?' reveals a complex socio-cultural landscape ("deathscape") characterized by significant intra-regional variation. Current archaeological data highlights a distinct lack of uniform burial patterns across the Philistine 'Pentapolis'. Excavations from Ashkelon provide the only example of a formal cemetery (recently published) which has been discovered at a Philistine site, except perhaps from Tel Erani, which due to its border location and artifacts of varied cultural nature, cannot be definitively attributed to the Philistines. At Ashkelon burials of over 200 individuals have been discovered in a dense cemetery outside of the city boundaries, buried in simple pits, built tombs, and cremation jars. These burials contained various grave goods to accompany the dead, including jewelry, weaponry, and various whole and intentionally broken ceramics. Conversely, evidence from Ashkelon, Ekron, and Gath include the discovery of infant burials beneath floors of domestic buildings. At Ashdod, non-formal remains from an 8th century mass grave were discovered. Additionally, at Ashdod, a single pit grave was excavated, containing an adult male buried with a bimetallic knife. At Tell es-Safi/Gath, in addition to the infant burials, at least 39 rock-cut caves have been identified, a number of them containing evidence of burial throughout various periods, primarily of the Iron Age. Of the identified tombs, two have been excavated, bearing evidence of Philistine burial. This paper will evaluate the Philistine funerary remains from Tell es-Safi/Gath, specifically analyzing tomb architecture and associated grave assemblages.

Crucibles, Tuyères, and 'Phoenician-ness': A Search for Identity through Technological Tradition

Alex King (Hebrew University of Jerusalem)

* Virtual

The 'Phoenicians', as a cultural entity, are often accredited with the transfer of complex metallurgy to the Western Mediterranean region in the Early Iron Age (9th to 7th centuries BCE). However, this unidirectional interpretation of cultural exchange is based on their reputation as a collective of 'expert craftsmen' that is rooted in ancient myth and reinforced by modern scholarship. In order to challenge this characterization, this thesis analyzes the typologies of metalworking paraphernalia on the Iberian Peninsula during the Phoenician expansion through a lens of 'communities of practice'. The comparison of the crucibles and tuyères with local Iberian, southern Levantine, and other foreign forms suggests that the newfound paraphernalia was the result of an interrelating community network between settlers and natives on the peninsula. Of the nine new tool-forms: three seem to derive from the southern Levantine tradition; three others may be related to Cypriot and Aegean forms; and the last three are likely innovations of the Iberian-Phoenician community network. The paraphernalia that was transferred from other cultures underwent typological modifications, indicating that the Phoenician colonies adopted new traditions on the peninsula that were influenced by–but set apart from–the Levantine homeland. The evidence of exchange and invention in these forms in turn suggests that the newfound metallurgical processes in Iberia (e.g. bronze cementation, and jarosite extraction) were shared developments of the community network. Ultimately, this analysis roots the crafting traditions of the Phoenician colonies in archaeological data rather than mythological narratives.

Royal Egyptian Iconography in the Late Bronze Southern Levant: The Case of the Uraeus

John Will Rice (Leipzig University)

Through presentation of the various non-glyptic finds featuring the Egyptian uraeus from the LB southern Levant, this paper attempts to show that the motif of the uraeus was, by and large, limited to or directly linked to Egyptian presence in the region: various objects from Ramesside Beth Shean, a sandstone statue fragment from Timna, a plaque from Tell el-'Ajjul, monumental inscriptions from Timna and the Hauran, and two Egyptian ivories found at Gezer and Megiddo, respectively. The exceptions are two bronze cobras from Gezer, a bronze cobra pendant from Hazor (but apparently drawing on MB style), an ivory box from Pella, and a bronze deity from Tall Abu al-Kharaz. This suggests that the motif saw relatively little adoption into the local iconographic repertoire during the time of Egyptian rule and stands in line with previous studies observing an avoidance of certain royal Egyptian iconography in the early Iron Age glyptic (e.g., Keel and Uehlinger, Gods, Goddesses, and Images of God, 128–130; Münger in JANEI 18 [2018]: 42–45). The findings of this presentation, then, would extend the observation back into the Late Bronze Age when looking outside of the glyptic evidence (which, in any case, was dominated by Egyptian rather than local production). It concludes with a suggestion for why, then, this changed in the Late Iron IIA and Iron IIB.

Assessing Animal Management Within Cycles of Urbanism in the Southern Levant through Zooarchaeology and Isotopic Analyses
Elizabeth R. Arnold (Grand Valley State University), Haskel J. Greenfield (University of Manitoba), Aren M. Maeir (Bar-Ilan University)

There is extensive archaeological evidence for social stratification in material culture, architecture, and widespread trade in large settlements in the southern Levant. These characteristics often define these sites as cities. However, the archaeology also documents phases of growth, change and/or decline that calls into question whether these sites always contain the required characteristics to be considered "urban". In addition, little is known about how the food economy and associated domestic animal management strategies connect with these cycles of urbanism. The provisioning of food to cities was a fundamental component of urban economies in the past. However, there is little agreement in the literature about the nature of animal product provisioning in these early cities and none of them deal with whether food provisioning was a local, micro-regional or macro-regional affair. This talk will examine the domestic animal component of the food economy in "urban" settlements through the Bronze and Iron Ages through zooarchaeological analyses and isotope analyses.

1F. Bring in the Crowds (Workshop) (Williford A)

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

The Role of Crowds in the Ancient Egyptian Opet Festival
Brent Davis (University of Melbourne)

Large open crowds featured prominently in ancient Egyptian religious festivals, the best-known example being the annual Opet Festival, which took place in Thebes during the second month of the Inundation. This was the most important festival of the year, as it renewed the connection between Egyptian society and the Theban triad—Amun, his consort Mut, and their son Khonsu—thus ensuring the fertility and abundance brought about by the Inundation. Gold statues of the Triad were placed in barques and carried from the Great Temple at Karnak to the banks of the Nile, where they were ferried upstream to the Temple at Luxor. There, the king underwent a mystical rebirth and recrowning ceremony in their presence, reaffirming him as the son of Amun, and then the statues were carried back to Karnak along the Avenue of Sphinxes. As the Opet festival occurred during the Inundation, the entire population of Thebes—around 75,000 people in the New Kingdom—were free to take part in it, gathering in large crowds to cheer the procession of divine barques southward to Luxor, and northward back to Karnak. Bread and beer were distributed to the celebrating crowds, who played a crucial role in this religious/political festival. In this talk, I examine the role of crowds in the Opet Festival, drawing some illuminating insights from the annual modern Egyptian celebration of the Abu el-Haggag Festival at Luxor Temple two weeks before Ramadan—a celebration with intriguing parallels to the ancient Opet Festival.

Where's the Party? Proto-Literate Glyptic and Commensal Crowds in Ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia
Sarah J. Scott (Wagner College)

How might proto-literate glyptic provide evidence for crowd control in ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia? Sealings from pharoah U-j's tomb serve as the springboard for this paper. Scholars suggest the context of these sealings may be in part a gathering of celebrants to usher the pharoah into the afterlife. Indeed, evidence suggests that Pre- and Early dynastic drinking festivals served communal needs in various ways, not only funerary. Concurrently, seals and sealings in protoliterate Mesopotamia secured goods that were also used for celebratory events. I will explore how planned (closed) agglomerations of people (following Bobrycki) might be accessed through a close look at glyptic imagery in each of these two contexts. Although such planned crowds vary in each context (funerary and administrative), I will suggest that the visual conceptualization of crowd control appears remarkably similar in that both cultures relied on animal metaphor.

The Incredible Invisible Public in Assyria
Christopher W. Jones (Union University)

Despite conquering much of their known world and building large cities in the heartland with tens of thousands of inhabitants, our sources from the Neo-Assyrian empire leave us very few clues as to what the majority of Assyrians thought about any of it. Crowds in Assyrian sources appear only as passive recipients of largesse from the king, as in the famous 'Banquet Stele' of Ashurnasirpal II. This makes for an interesting contrast with contemporary sources from southern Mesopotamia, which attest to both actual crowds and rhetorical appeals to the crowd as a source of moral authority. The latter are attested by an entire genre of letters to the Assyrian king sent by "the people of Babylon," "the people of Ur," and the like; the likelihood that the contents of these letters reflect the views of the oligarchic elite of southern Mesopotamian cities does not discount the importance of the rhetorical appeal to popular will. Tentatively, this paper will argue that the recent construction of many Neo-Assyrian cities and their economic dependence on imperial largesse meant that they lacked a strong sense of civic identity or solidarity, and this is reflected in the lack of interest in or concern for crowds in Neo-Assyrian sources.

Gathering the Living for the Dead: How Crowds Crafted Judahite Ethnicity
Kristine S. Garroway (Hebrew Union College)

The role of crowds has been studied heavily in Roman Antiquity, whose urbanism produced a history replete with crowded riots, circuses, gladiator events, military processionals, columbaria, and the likes. More recently, Shane Bobrycki (OUP 2024) pushed the question of crowds and their roles into an overlooked space, the Middle Ages. Taking inspiration from Bobrycki, this paper applies questions of crowd theory (LeBon 1894; Durkheim 1912; Khalil 2014; Steffen 2019) to the realm of Iron II Judahite mortuary ritual. I have argued elsewhere (Garroway 2025) that during the Iron II period there was an uptick in the desire to bury all family members in a manner that marked them ethnically as Judahite. Various actions comprise the Judahite mortuary ritual including: the construction of the rock-cut tomb, its (re)opening, the funeral procession and lamenting, funerary meals, and final deposition of the dying individual into the repository collective. Here I focus on the repository pits and tomb floors as a locus of crowded Judahite burial spaces. I will argue that crowds play a role in establishing and standing witness to the Judahite ethnic identity of the burial.

Crowd Control at Ancient Beer Sheva
Fredric R. Brandfon (Independent Scholar)

The Royal Administrative center at 8th Century BCE Beer Sheva was a walled settlement with a single gateway. The gate was flanked by two towers each with two bench lined rooms. The gate began at 7 meters wide but quickly narrowed to 5 meters. The gate passage was approximately 10 meters long. At the end of the entrance there was a 10 x 15 meter courtyard. Beer Sheva housed extensive store rooms, a subterranean water system, and a location for animal sacrifice, as well as a considerable number of dwellings. Ancient Beer Sheva was crowded. But the throngs of people who sought access to food, water, or even spiritual services all had to go through the narrow gate. And those entering--persons and animals--had to contend with those who were existing. The gateway was probably densely populated. The narrow gate served as a measure of crowd control and the rooms in the gate may have been used by literal "gatekeepers" as well as guards. Often city gates have been analyzed for their military function. But that was an intermittent use. Most often the gates restricted access to peaceful persons who nevertheless had to wait to enter and leave. Any analysis of life in ancient settlement should begin at the gate and with an understanding that managing the crowds coming and going at the gate was essential to the functioning of the administrative center.

Empty Spaces to Crowded Places: Repopulating the approach to the Second Temple
Leann C. Pace (Wake Forest University)

In the heart of the Covid-19 pandemic, professional soccer matches took place in empty stadiums. The lack of crowd noise, movement, and vital

energy gave the events an unsettling, ghostly, and otherworldly feel. This ghostly emptiness mirrors how many modern reconstructions of ancient places often portray sites like the Second Temple in Jerusalem, which would have hosted immense, bustling crowds, especially during major religious holidays. For example, physical models, such as Conrad Schick's detailed creation for the 1873 World's Fair in Vienna or Avi-Yonah's influential 1st century CE Jerusalem model, are completely devoid of people, existing in perfect, static silence. However, the advent of crowd simulation software now provides a means for populating digital renderings of these ancient places. This software, utilized in films like the Lord of the Rings trilogy, allows individual digital characters to react intelligently and autonomously to the changing environment around them. With these new capabilities come new challenges and responsibilities for researchers and programmers alike as they set the parameters for individual motivations and actions in the crowd. We must imagine and model human interactions in this crowd: how pilgrims would respond to bottlenecks, to being jostled, a child running back to retrieve a dropped toy, or the unpredictable movements of animals. The power to think about individual actors within the massive throngs of a holiday setting like the Second Temple and its surrounding landscape compels us to consider the diverse lived experiences of Jerusalem's many citizens and visitors.

This land is your land, and this land is my land? Crowd Control, Order, and Ownership in the Code of Hammurabi, Freemasonry and the Social Contract Theory of John Locke

Louise A. Hitchcock (Independent Researcher)

Hammurabi ushered in an era of stability in Mesopotamia through alliances, and by undertaking military campaigns to unify fractured societies. He followed this by implementing a strict, uniform Code of 282 laws to reinforce stability. Inscribed on a tall basalt stela, the code has survived intact from 1754 BCE. It's famed for harshness (lex talionis or eye for an eye) and for depicting the sun god Shamash handing the pious king emblems of sovereignty and order, symbolically represented as architectural measuring instruments. My interest lies not in the stela's dominant theme of retributive justice, but in promoting discussion of the historical reception (long-term significance) of its iconography and of law 30 (a new occupant acquires ownership of a property after three years of maintenance). I focus on its relationship to the labor theory of property in John Locke's Second Treatise of Government (18th-century CE). Social contract theory philosophically underpins modern concepts of "Western" civilization. In equating ownership of land with settling it and mixing one's labor with it, as spread through colonization and homesteading, Locke's theory was used to legitimize terra nullus, dispossessing and, in fact, rendering invisible crowds of indigenous hunter-gatherers. Locke's theory was conversely used to legitimize the decolonization of America from the British crown through violent revolution. This era also witnessed the transformation of builders' guilds into a new, political elite through emphasizing the divine and symbolic aspect of order in Freemasonry as represented in architectural tools, a concept embodied in the iconography of Hammurabi's stela.

1G. Digital Archaeology and History I (Williford B)

Chair(s): Leigh Anne Lieberman, Princeton University

AI-Assisted Detection of Archaeological Sites in Historical Satellite Imagery: Case Studies in the Northern Fertile Crescent

Jesse Casana (Dartmouth College), Casey Shi (Dartmouth College)

Since the 1980s, researchers have attempted to automate the detection of archaeological sites in satellite and aerial imagery using a range of classification and object detection tools, with decidedly mixed results. Challenges ranging from sites' highly variable reflectance characteristics to conceptual ambiguity surrounding their definition have usually produced results with low confidence and high error rates, rendering them both inefficient and unreliable. However, an emerging suite of AI-assisted computer vision technologies now offers more promising potential to advance archaeological knowledge in substantive ways. This paper presents initial results of a new research project that is exploring AI tools to aid in archaeological site discovery using historical aerial photography and declassified satellite imagery. Rather than seeking to replace human analysts, we are working to automate identification and measurement of distinctive archaeological features. Our results from investigations in the Northern Fertile Crescent have successfully located hundreds of previously unrecorded sites and features, including square forts, truncated conical mounds, and radial route systems. Integration of these finds with archaeological survey and excavation data is reshaping our knowledge of the settlement and land use histories of the region, while offering a model for AI-assisted imagery analysis in archaeology more broadly.

A Tale of Two Valleys: A Comparative Landscape Archaeology and Vernacular Architecture Study of the Bamiyan and the Ziz River Valleys Using Remote Sensing

Pablo Gutierrez de Leon (Harvard University), Fernando Casamayor Molina (Harvard University), Shireen Shah (Harvard University)

Remote sensing through satellite imagery represents one of the most useful tools that archaeologists working overseas have. Landsat and commercial firms like Airbus allow us to travel virtually to regions that we would not be able to reach easily, and perform preliminary studies with a landscape perspective. This talk constitutes a comparative remote sensing-based study of the vernacular architecture and landscape of two valleys, the more touristic Ziz river valley in eastern Morocco, and the rather notorious Bamiyan valley in Afghanistan. Surrounded by arid lands, both case-studies possess remarkable similarities in their environmental characteristics, and, above all, their architectural traditions and spatial patterns. The first part of the study will compare the two architectural traditions, both dominated by walled villages or mansions with tall adobe walls and towers, known as Ksars in Morocco and Qala in Afghanistan. Published literature, plus images and plans obtained through imagery will be key for characterizing them. The second part will focus on the spatial distribution of sites using GIS. By comparing both landscapes, the authors conclude and demonstrate how similar environmental constraints resulted in akin strategies, social organizations and settlement partners in which the inhabitants of both valleys favored the construction of relatively isolated independent fortified settlements, rather than bigger open cities. Furthermore, their similar spatial distribution and size variation of sites tell us about inegalitarian societies and competition dynamics between groups.

GIS Approaches to Communication and Inter-Urban Connectivity Across 9th Century Byzantine Anatolia

Annalise P. Whalen (University of Central Florida)

This research employs GIS methods to investigate the spatial logic and administrative continuity of systems in 9th century Byzantine communication networks. Here we discuss a multidisciplinary approach integrating GIS spatial analysis with qualitative data to reimagine Byzantine defensive architecture and communication infrastructure. Through viewshed and Least Cost Path (LCP) modeling, potential urban hubs and fortification infrastructure are identified and the visual and terrestrial connectivity of sites evaluated. To populate the nodes for these macro and meso-scale analyses, spatial data is obtained from a diverse corpus of historical and modern sources including Greek, Arabic, and Syriac records, administrative seals, and modern travelers' reports and surveys. The SRTM dataset will serve as the primary topographic surface input for both visibility and terrestrial movement modeling. Using a singular, consistent DEM ensures that the relationship between visual and terrestrial connectivity is analyzed on a standardized landscape. Viewsheds play a role in interpreting the use and significance of archaeological sites, their interactions with landscape features, as well as shed light on site selection, settlement patterns, ritual landscapes, and landscape connectivity and communication. LCP offers a valuable means by which to predict trade and migration, social connectivity, and movement logic, with models incorporating wind data, hillslope condition and other environmental conditions to achieve realistic hypotheses. Results of the spatial analyses provide insight into the continuity and efficiency of communication networks across the larger Byzantine empire, but also evaluate Anatolia's connectivity and accessibility as a cognitive network. Interpretation of these analyses offers a multidisciplinary perception of Byzantine rural infrastructure suitable for modern applications in rural adaptation, landscape resilience, and defensive architecture.

Integrating GIS-based Modelling and Traceological Analysis for the Study of Quarry Cuts on Gareb Hill (Basilica of the Holy Sepulchre, Jerusalem)

Giulia Previti (Sapienza University of Rome), Federica Vacatello (Sapienza University of Rome)

Research Objective: This study investigates the reconstruction of quarrying activities in contexts with limited direct archaeological evidence, focusing on the Malaky stone outcrop beneath the Basilica of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem. Its aim is to identify extraction techniques, operational sequences, and phases of quarry exploitation. The significance of this research lies in showing how an integrated methodological workflow, combining GIS-based modelling and traceological analysis, can recover technological and chronological information from rock-cut features and expand the methodological scope of digital archaeology.
Method: The research develops a multi-scalar methodology integrating spatial and traceological analysis. Quarry cuts were systematically recorded and organized in QGIS 3.34 to identify recurring parameters through density and spatial distribution analyses. In parallel, tool marks were documented using non-invasive silicone moulds. These were processed into resin casts and analyzed under optical microscopy, enabling detailed comparison with published experimental reference collections. This integrated workflow allows the correlation of spatial data with micro-scale surface analysis.
Results: The combined approach reveals that tool marks provide detailed information on the direction of blows, gesture types, strike frequency, and levels of technical skill, while also supporting the identification of specific tools. Density analysis highlights clusters of activity and suggests distinct phases of quarry exploitation, contributing to the reconstruction of extraction areas and operational organization.
Conclusions: This approach enables a more nuanced reconstruction of quarry organization and diachronic exploitation, bringing together two analytical domains that have rarely been integrated and extending landscape analysis from macroscopic to microscopic scale.

Settlement and Connectivity: Increasing Territorialization in the Middle Bronze Age in South Central Anatolia

Anna Berlekamp (University of Chicago)

The early second millennium on Anatolia's central plateau is best known as the time of the Old Assyrian Trade Network. Foreign merchants came to the central plateau and, along with local Anatolians, moved throughout Central Anatolia. Traditional narratives of movement in Middle Bronze Age Anatolian studies have focused on the itineraries of these merchants described in the karum texts. 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. 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 the distribution of this trade network, as well as socio-political organization and increasing territorialization on the plateau by creating an artificial boundary dividing the two regions. This paper begins to address these problems by applying circuit analysis and gravity modeling to assess settlement patterns. The results indicate several different strategies of socio-political organization present on the plateau and a pattern of increasing territorialization in the southernmost part of the plateau. By assessing the southern half of the plateau, this paper deepens our understanding of changing political structures in the Middle Bronze Age, emphasizing political integration of larger territorial areas than previously seen in Anatolia and complicating our understanding of the distribution of the Old Assyrian trade network, particularly the location of Purushaddum.

1H. Archaeology of Anatolia I (Williford C)

Chair(s): Nancy Amelia Highcock, Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford; Oya Topçuoğlu, Northwestern University

The 2026 Season of the Kerkenes Project

Scott Branting (University of Central Florida), Dominique Langis-Barsetti (University of Laval), Joseph W. Lehner (University of Sydney), Sevil Baltalı Tırpan (Istanbul Technical University), Gökçe Bike Yazıcıoğlu (Simon Fraser University), Nilüfer Baturayoğlu Yöney (University of Central Florida), Soran Avcıl (Kerkenes Project), Sarah R. Graff (Arizona State University), Laurien Folkerts (University of Groningen)

For 34 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 2026 campaign. It will also detail ongoing work in community engagement, material science (particularly the investigation of pigments and gilding on ivory plaques), cultural heritage monitoring, and modeling and simulation.

Bookends: The Chalcolithic and Byzantine Periods at Çadır Höyük

Sharon R. Steadman (State University of New York, Cortland), Burcu Yıldırım (Leiden University), Deniz Erdem (Middle East Technical University), Gregory McMahon (University of New Hampshire)

Excavations in 2026 primarily concentrated on the Çadır Höyük Chalcolithic and Byzantine occupational areas. At the end of the 2025 season, Chalcolithic excavations indicated that there may have been a significant socioeconomic shift in settlement organization in the early fourth millennium BCE. During the majority of the fourth millennium, food processing and storage took place within domestic compounds. 2025 excavations suggest that storage, and possibly food processing, may have been more communal in nature in the early fourth and fifth millennia BCE. If this shift is confirmed, it is possible that a major causative factor for the change was the 5.9 ka climate event. Our other major focus will be the Byzantine occupation on the mound summit. Previous work has documented a 10th to 13th century narrative of robust and then declining economy, a period of apparent fear of invasion, and eventual abandonment. Our focus in 2026 is on the earlier Late Roman occupation. We have documented the presence of a Late Roman gate leading into the summit area and a unique Late Roman room nearby that may have served as a shrine. 2025 excavations yielded evidence of a possible pathway between the two. New excavations in 2026 will investigate whether this is the case, and if so, whether we should add pilgrimage destination to the Çadır Byzantine narrative. In 2026, work will also be carried out in our Bronze Age trenches to continue documenting the Early Bronze to Hittite occupation at the site.

Early Holocene Riverine and Deltaic Adaptations: The Case of the Neolithic Settlement at Çatalhöyük and the Çarşamba River Catchment

Arkadiusz Marciniak (University in Poznan)

Research on Neolithic mounds in south-western Asia has historically focused on the mounds themselves, while the broader spatial contexts in which they functioned remain insufficiently explored. In particular, adaptation to local environments has rarely been examined in the context of the continuous environmental transformations that occurred throughout the Early Holocene. The Neolithic settlement of Çatalhöyük provides an instructive case of such dependencies, as it was located within the delta of the Çarşamba River. In this paper, I examine how the inhabitants of the settlement adapted to deltaic and riverine environments during the 7th millennium BC and how these adaptations changed over time. In particular, it will examine the availability of resources that sustained the settlement, including clay and timber; agricultural and pastoral exploitation; the availability of wild fauna; and the presence of settlement outposts. Key

issues addressed include environmental responses of different components of the biosphere, patterns of biodiversity, the challenges of reconstructing past landscapes, and how alluvial environments may have been perceived and utilised by Neolithic communities.

Renewed Excavations at Konya Karahöyük: Results from the First Five Seasons (2022–2026)

Gonca D. Dardeniz (Istanbul University)

This paper will present the results of the first five years (2022–2026) of renewed excavations at Konya Karahöyük, a key Bronze Age site located on the Konya Plain in south-central Anatolia. Long known in the archaeology literature for its sealings that attest to far-reaching connections from northern Syria to the Aegean during to the Old Assyrian Trading Colonies period (i.e., Middle Bronze Age), new excavations have uncovered a previously undocumented 16th-century BCE occupation phase. This talk will discuss recent stratigraphic, ceramic, dating, and iconographic evidence along with results of interdisciplinary research ongoing at the site. Recent investigations suggest much more dynamic social and cultural dynamics at play on the Konya Plain, which was often considered peripheral during the Old Assyrian Trading Colony period and assumed to have been abandoned during the Old Hittite period.

The Türkmen-Karahöyük Archaeological Project: Results of the 2026 Field Season

James F. Osborne (University of Chicago), Michele Rüzgar Massa (Bilkent University), Hüseyin Erpehlivan (Bilkent University)

The Türkmen-Karahöyük Archaeological Project (TKAP) is a large-scale excavation project that was begun in 2024 at the site of Türkmen-Karahöyük, the largest mound in the alluvial Konya Plain. Although the region is justly famous for its Neolithic archaeological record, including the World Heritage Site of Çatalhöyük, it has barely been explored for subsequent millennia. For three seasons, TKAP has been addressing this imbalance and asking research questions of both culture-historical and anthropological significance. Standing 35 m over the valley floor, Türkmen-Karahöyük contains a continuous occupational sequence from approximately 3000 BCE to 50 BCE. In its first three years of excavation, TKAP has brought to light remains dating primarily to the mid-second millennium BC, the transition from the late second into the first half of the first millennium BC, and the Late Hellenistic period. In this paper we present TKAP's most important findings, focusing on the 2026 season, including the results from a newly opened excavation area in Türkmen-Karahöyük's off-mound cemetery. We situate these findings within TKAP's overall research aims including elucidating the sociopolitical trajectory of early states in Anatolia and building a diachronic portrait of human-environment interaction in a semi-arid climatic region.

1I. Violence in the Ancient Near East and Hebrew Bible I (Astoria)

Chair(s): Anthony SooHoo, Pontifical Biblical Institute (Rome); Megan Cifarelli, Manhattanville College

Mythico-Solar Violence and the Creation of Sovereignty: Reconsidering the Egyptian Cannibal Spell

Katja Goebs (University of Toronto)

The so-called Cannibal Spell (Pyramid Texts 273–274) is among the most strikingly violent compositions of ancient Egyptian mortuary literature, portraying the deceased king as a devourer of gods. Earlier scholarship often treated this imagery as the vestige of a primitive tradition. In previous work, I argued instead that the spell constitutes a mythological description of sunrise: the rising sungod, with whom the king is equated, absorbs and annihilates the celestial beings that populated the night sky, the "fathers and mothers" who preceded it in the heavens. The present paper revisits this interpretation to explore its ideological implications. The Cannibal Spell reflects a cosmological model in which multiplicity is violently reduced to unity. The sungod emerges as the sovereign "One" by devouring the "millions" of the night sky and subsuming their powers within himself. Destructive imagery—massacre, devouring flame, and blood-red dawn—thus articulates a process of cosmic renewal rather than disorder. Such mythic violence has direct implications for Egyptian kingship. As the earthly manifestation of the solar creator, the king participates in the same logic of sovereign concentration. Comparable motifs appear elsewhere in the ancient Near East, for example in the triumph imagery associated with Anat and Ishtar. A further precedent lies in the Egyptian myth of Horus and Seth, in which the rightful ruler must violently defeat his rival. In this framework, violence is not the antithesis of order but the mechanism through which cosmic unity is produced. The rising sun becomes the One by devouring the Many; royal violence mirrors this mythico-solar act of sovereign concentration.

When is Life Grievable? War and Mourning in Ancient Egypt

Uros Matic (University of Graz)

This paper examines the motif of foreign grief in ancient Egyptian battle representations and juxtaposes it with the absence of public commemorative monuments to fallen Egyptian soldiers. From the Old Kingdom through the New Kingdom, battle scenes in private tombs and temples regularly included images of grieving foreign noncombatants, such as women, the elderly, and children. Although violence against foreign women and children is not visually represented during the New Kingdom, the traumatic experiences associated with the loss of members of their communities become an essential component of battle scenes. At the same time, textual records and visual representations of war in ancient Egypt remain largely silent about Egyptian losses and avoid depicting Egyptian soldiers as victims of wartime violence. This discrepancy can be explained as a consequence of an ideology that attributed to men the duty of caring for and protecting the vulnerable. By portraying foreign women, the elderly, and children as grieving, Egyptian artists emphasized the failure of foreign men to provide care and protection for those under their responsibility. This perspective may also explain the absence of commemorative monuments for Egyptian men who died in war, since such monuments would imply that they failed to return home and fulfil their role as protectors of their own vulnerable.

"From east to west, Enlil permitted him no rival": Divine Justification for Wars in Early Mesopotamia

Mark S. Schwartz (Grand Valley State University)

In the Early Dynastic Period of Mesopotamia, cities vied with each other for greater power and influence. As the kings of these cities became more independent from religious institutions, warfare served as one source to legitimize their position. This paper examines the ideological development of divinely sanctioned wars in the ancient Near East while also highlighting the ways aspiring rulers throughout Mesopotamian history engaged with and manipulated religious ideology. Eannatum of Lagash is perhaps the first king in Mesopotamia to use divine justification for a war, but other Early Dynastic Kings would follow suit such as En-šakušuana of Uruk a century later who sacked Kish "when the gods commanded him". Interestingly, while a city's patron god could assist a king in battle this aid was never perceived as in opposition to, or in conflict with, a rival city's god. The gods of Mesopotamia could also be invoked after a military loss. When Lugal-zage-si of Umma sacked the chapels and shrines of Lagash, its king, URU-KA-gina, beseeched the god of Umma to punish the people of that city for the wrongdoings of their king. In the subsequent period, military activity played a larger role in Mesopotamian society with the formation of the Akkadian Empire. Sargon of Akkad modified the motifs found in the earlier victory stele of Eannatum, removing the separation between the scenes of the gods and the scenes of battle, thus emphasizing the divine sanctioning of his campaigns. These developments serve as the seeds of the later ideology of Ancient Near Eastern Empires.

Sacred Violence in the Ancient Iranian World: Between Continuity and Innovation in Longue Durée of Imperial Iranian Hegemony

Mark K. Gradoni (University of California, Irvine)

Do the depictions of royal, sacral violence in the ancient Iranian world reflect perceived crises of legitimacy or crises of faith? This paper explores the ways in which Achaemenian and Sasanian monarchs deployed depictions of violence to demonstrate the legitimacy of their claims to kingship. Contrasting the depictions of the Achaemenid Great King Darius I (r. 522-486 BCE) on the Bīsotūn relief with the investiture relief of the first Sasanian King of Kings Ardašīr I (r. 224-240 CE) at Naqš-ē Rostam, this paper

argues that while the emphasis on the subjugation of opponents places both reliefs clearly within long traditions of depicting rulership in ancient Mesopotamia art, the evolution of the image of kingship in the ancient Iranian world demonstrates innovations in the conception of the figure of the king as divine agent. Whereas Darius sought to communicate his divinely sanctioned assumption of kingship to visitors to the site, and perhaps the gods themselves, Ardašīr I inaugurated a program of royal art that identified himself and his successors as divine instruments of the Ohrmazd, the central Zoroastrian divinity. What is more interesting, however, is the way in which Ardašīr I's artistic program established a conception of religious violence explicitly wedded to the coercive apparatus of the state in service of suppressing religious minorities and reformists among imperial subjects. These innovations are intrinsically related to the development of Mazdaean traditions in the Sasanian era into the faith we understand as Zoroastrianism and its codification of a decidedly more monotheistic presentation.

1J. Archaeology of Egypt I (Private Dining 2)

Chair(s): Danielle Candelora, College of the Holy Cross; Jeffrey Newman, University of California, Los Angeles

What Petrie Did Not Publish: The Qa'a Stela and Colonial Documentation

Amany A. El Hameed (Penn Culture Heritage Center), Robert Vigar (University of Pennsylvania)

* Virtual

This article examines the overlooked history of the stela of King Qa'a, discovered by Flinders Petrie during the 1900–1901 excavation season at Abydos. Despite its significance as an early royal monument, the stela was never published in Petrie's official excavation reports nor recorded in the documentation he submitted to the Egyptian Antiquities Service. Evidence from Petrie's correspondence with Sara Yorke reveals that the object circulated through informal institutional networks rather than standard academic and administrative channels. Drawing on archival research, the article analyzes unpublished letters exchanged between Petrie and Stevenson between 1900 and 1902. These documents show that the stela was selected and negotiated as a special "gift" to the Penn Museum, arranged outside formal publication and documentation processes. The correspondence highlights how Egyptian antiquities could be strategically mobilized to strengthen relationships between British and American institutions, particularly between the Egypt Exploration Fund and the Penn Museum, an important supporter of excavations at Abydos. The study employs the concept of archival silence, not as accidental but as the result of curatorial and institutional decisions. While the stela is missing from Petrie's official reports, it appears prominently in private letters, where it is described as an object of political and institutional importance. Reframed through this perspective, the stela becomes a material witness to the colonial structures shaping the production and circulation of archaeological knowledge. By tracing the stela's movement from excavation to museum collection, the article contributes to debates on documentation ethics, colonial archaeology, and the politics of museum acquisition, demonstrating how archives themselves function as sites of power in the construction of Egyptological history.

Horus, the High Steward of Senusret I, and his Monuments at Abydos and Wadi el-Hudi, Egypt

Amy Wilson (Heritage Projects)

This paper presents a study of Horus, the high steward of Senusret I, and his monuments from Abydos and Wadi el-Hudi, Egypt. His tenure is considered based on his sole dated monument, stela Louvre C2, and his place within the succession of high stewards during the reign of Senusret I. Based on this information, the dates of Horus's tenure can be further refined to Years 3-11 of Senusret I. During his tenure, Horus led an expedition to Wadi el-Hudi, where he commemorated this event with stela WH143. While WH143 is undated, previous scholarship has dated Horus's expedition to Year 16/17 or Year 22. The new discovery of a falcon statue (WH264) inscribed with the Horus name of Amenemhat I, wḫm ms.wt or "Repeater of Births," may also be attributed to the high steward based on material, workmanship, and conceptual pairing with Horus's stela, WH143, which may have been located within an outdoor sanctuary at Wadi el-Hudi. The invocation of the divinity represented by falcon statue WH264 on stela Louvre C2 indicates that his expedition must have taken place prior to the stela's inscription in Year 9, and as a consequence, represents the earliest record of mining activity at Wadi el-Hudi during the reign of Senusret I. In the first third of his reign, Senusret I chose stewards to lead his earliest expeditions, while in the latter two-thirds of his reign, he favored members of the vizierial bureau.

The Legal System of Egypt's Early Middle Kingdom

Emma Glenister (University of Pennsylvania)

Egypt's Middle Kingdom (~2050-1750 BCE) produced an efflorescence of legal thought, one that has been the subject of much detailed analysis. Middle Kingdom instructional texts like The Maxims of Ptahhotep provided models for officials engaged in and adjudicating disputes while other philosophical works like The Tale of the Eloquent Peasant meditated on the nature of justice itself. For all we know about the abstract legal principles of Middle Kingdom society, however, the practice of law and justice in that period remains understudied. This paper seeks to partially remedy this gap with a detailed analysis of the judiciary of the Early Middle Kingdom (~2050-1880 BCE). The primary focus of this analysis will be the individuals who actually performed judicial functions, particularly judges and overseers of police. The prosopographical analysis of these individuals and their titles will be combined with a study on self-laudatory epithets in biographical texts to uncover officials with non-judicial-sounding titles (like "overseer of the interior") who also served judicial functions. The picture that the evidence reveals is of a pluricentric judicial system (or systems) with power split between both local officials ("nomarchs") and the highest officers of the central government. Even within the central government, judicial power seems to have been divided between the high stewards and the viziers. As a result, this paper is relevant not only to our understanding of ancient law more generally, but also to the study of the vizierate, department of the high steward, or nomarchate of the Middle Kingdom.

Race, Gender, and the Role of Propaganda as Imperial Violence in Reshaping Memory

Danielle Candelora (College of the Holy Cross)

The history of the Hyksos, and the war fought to 'expel' them from Egypt, has largely been reconstructed from a small corpus of fragmentary texts – all composed either by the Egyptian 'victors' in this conflict or several centuries later. Indeed, the most foundational understanding of the Hyksos as despotic barbarians is founded upon almost two centuries of scholarly interpretation of these same texts. Only in recent decades has the archaeological record begun to contradict this depiction, requiring a closer and more analytical look at these texts not as historical, but as works of imperial violence through the strategic manipulation of the historical narrative. This paper will explore how race and gender played critical roles in both the initial vilification of the Hyksos as the archetypal enemy, and therefore justification for the imperial violence of the New Kingdom empire, as well as the cooption of their defeat in later texts as another form of imperial violence, reshaping political memory and the identities it helped to construct.

Truth, Justice, and the Egyptian Afterlife: Development of Maat in the New Kingdom Spell 125

Danielle Matthews (University of Denver)

In the Hall of Two Truths, the deceased stands before the scales. Their heart, embodiment of their consciousness and memory, is weighed against the feather of maat, principle of cosmic truth, balance, and justice. This iconic scene from Spell 125 of the Spells of Coming Forth by Day is among the most recognizable images of Egyptian antiquity, yet the development of Maat's role in Spell 125 is sorely understudied. My paper looks at how Maat evolved during the New Kingdom from a cosmic principle into a more visibly personalized divine presence within the Egyptian afterlife. Using iconographic analysis of funerary papyri, including Maiherperi, Nebqed, Qenna, Ani, and the Chantress Anhay, alongside archaeological and historical contextualization, my thesis traces how representations of Maat changed in tandem with broader social transformations. Specifically, it argues that the increasing prominence of elite women in New Kingdom society and the standardization of the Spells of Coming Forth by Day

created a cultural environment in which Maat's association with Spell 125 prospered. Here, the Weighing of the Heart ritual becomes more than some static religious image. It reflects continuous negotiation between political authority, gender dynamics, and faith. As funerary texts became more standardized yet more widely accessible, individuals increasingly expressed personal relationships with the divinity that governed both the cosmos and one's moral life. In the process, Maat emerged not only as the truth of the scales but as a deity whose presence shaped the very possibility of eternal life for those who previously found it unobtainable.

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 19, 2026

10:40am – 12:45pm (CST)

2A. Jerusalem and the Archaeology of a Sacred City II (Continental A)

Chair(s): Yuval Gadot, Tel-Aviv University; Yiftah Shalev, Israel Antiquities Authority

Roads to the Holy City: An Integrated Archaeological and Spatial Analysis of Jerusalem's Access Routes (2nd Century BCE–7th Century CE)

Yosef Spiezer (Yeshiva University), Boaz Zissu (Bar Ilan University), Yehiel Zelinger (Israel Antiquities Authority)

This paper presents an integrated archaeological and spatial analysis of the road network leading to Jerusalem during the Hasmonaean, Roman, and Byzantine periods (2nd century BCE–7th century CE). Combining archaeological evidence from excavations and surveys with GIS-based spatial analysis and historical sources, the study reconstructs the principal access routes to Jerusalem within a radius of approximately 10 km from the city. It examines their relationship to the settlement and agricultural hinterland that sustained the urban center. The research employs Geographic Information Systems to integrate topographic data, archaeological remains, and historical cartography to map the structure and development of the regional road system. Archaeological evidence—including road segments, milestones, settlements, tombs, water installations, and agricultural features—was georeferenced using New Israel Grid coordinates and incorporated into a spatial database. This digital approach enables systematic reconstruction of the transportation landscape and analysis of how routes interacted with topography, settlement patterns, and economic activity. The analysis identifies three principal phases in the development of Jerusalem's approaches. During the Hasmonaean and Early Roman periods, the roads primarily served Jewish pilgrimage to the city. Following the Jewish revolts, the Roman authorities developed a more formal network emphasizing military movement and provincial administration. In the Byzantine period, the network was renewed and adapted to Christian pilgrimage. By integrating digital spatial analysis with archaeological evidence, the study offers a new perspective on Jerusalem's transportation landscape. It demonstrates how road infrastructure shaped movement, settlement organization, and the broader cultural landscape of the city's hinterland.

Holy Borders and Feminine Monuments: A Gendered Topography of Late Second Temple Period Jerusalem

Tehillah Lieberman (Tel-Aviv University)

This paper explores the sacred and civic landscape of Late Second Temple Jerusalem to examine how social ideals of gender shaped the city's physical environment. While historical texts often relegate ancient Jewish women to the private, domestic sphere, the archaeological record and urban topography reveal a more complex reality. Focusing on urban landmarks and social reality, the visible presence of women from the city's outskirts to its sacred epicenter will be examined. Like any city, Jerusalem functioned as a "cognitive map" in which social meanings, including concepts of gender, were continuously negotiated. Pilgrims entering the city encountered prominent monuments commemorating female figures located throughout the urban landscape. Because male presence constituted the unmarked norm in the ancient cityscape, the explicit naming of such structures after women signaled a notable deviation, yet one that reflected a visible and tangible reality within the Jewish city. This fluid integration within the civic sphere stood in contrast to the Temple Mount. Operating under the authority of the religious elite, the Temple complex materialized an idealized social hierarchy through strict spatial segregation. Women were largely restricted to the "Court of the Women," where architecture functioned as a "holy border", reinforcing a top-down hierarchy of holiness. Ultimately, this spatial dichotomy reveals a profound tension between the Temple's restrictive, idealized regulations and the dynamic reality of the surrounding urban landscape, where women maintained a visible and interactive presence.

Reframing Jerusalem's Revival: Internal Dynamics and Regional Change from Yehud to the Hasmonean Kingdom

Yiftah Shalev (Israel Antiquities Authority)

Scholarship on Jerusalem from the Babylonian destruction to the rise of the Herodian Roman city has often explained urban change mainly through external politics, measuring the city's fortunes by the attention and investment of successive empires. Within this framework, Jerusalem is commonly portrayed as collapsing after 586 BCE, persisting as a small and impoverished settlement throughout the Persian and early Hellenistic (Ptolemaic) periods, and then growing only in discrete bursts attributed to political intervention, including phases associated with Seleucid rule, the Akra under Antiochus IV, and the city's elevation to a royal capital in the Hasmonean period. This paper proposes a different model. The overall trajectory is driven largely by internal social and economic processes, while the pace and intensity of growth vary with external influences, some direct and others indirect. Jerusalem is treated as a palimpsest in material terms: inherited topography, routes, and spatial anchors persisted and structured later activity, while other zones were re-planned and newly built. Read through this lens, the archaeological record suggests recovery earlier than is often assumed. Expansion begins already in the sixth century BCE and is clear by the fifth century BCE, when Jerusalem re-emerges as an important urban, economic, and social center within the province of Yehud. Momentum intensifies through the Hellenistic period, particularly in the late Ptolemaic and early Seleucid phases, so that by the Hasmonean era Jerusalem appears as a substantial and well-established city, providing the platform for the construction of a royal capital.

Revisiting Late Iron Age Water Use in Jerusalem's Western Settlement

Chandler Collins (Bar Ilan University)

Most scholars agree that the first settlement on the Western Hill in Jerusalem was established and fortified sometime during the 8th century BCE. A longstanding view interprets the outlet of the Siloam Tunnel as a conscious effort to supply water to the new settlement and support its subsistence. This perspective has influenced discussions related to the archaeology of Jerusalem's late Iron Age western settlement, such as its beginning date, population density, the character of its inhabitants, and route of the fortification wall that surrounded it. Ongoing publication of Nahman Avigad's excavations in the modern Jewish Quarter has also invited debate about the viability of Iron Age cistern use on the Western Hill. This presentation aims to revisit the relationship between the perennial spring and inhabitants of Jerusalem's western settlement during the late Iron Age. We will explore relevant evidence and argue that, as the city grew westward, sole reliance on spring water gave way to a multiplicity of water sources which were utilized seasonally. This perspective has potential implications for discussions of the Western Hill's settlement history.

Neo-Assyrian Cuneiform Inscriptions from Jerusalem: Direct Evidence of Imperial Communication with Iron Age Judah/ Ayala Zilberstein and Peter Zilberg (In collaboration with Filip Vukosavović, Anat Cohen-Weinberger, and Yehudit Harlavan.

Ayala Zilberstein (Israel Antiquities Authority), Peter Zilberg (Bar-Ilan University)

Recent archaeological excavations conducted along the Western Wall of the Temple Mount in Jerusalem have uncovered two Neo-Assyrian cuneiform fragments, providing, for the first time, material evidence of its kind and shedding new light on Neo-Assyrian-Judahite relations during the

late 8th to 7th centuries BCE. In this lecture, we will discuss the possibilities for identifying these fragments, present the archaeological context, and analyze the dating of the texts according to the paleography of the signs, the shape of the fragments, and the wider Neo-Assyrian context. We will present arguments that led us to identify at least one fragment as part of a Neo-Assyrian bulla. Based on its curved form, the thin profile of the sherd, and the layout of the inscription, we suggest reconstructing the larger fragment as part of a Neo-Assyrian bulla that sealed an official document, though other possibilities, such as a clay envelope, cannot be ruled out. The inscription displays characteristic features of Assyrian seal texts, including what may be a reference to a chariot officer (mukīl appāte), a known imperial emissary. It mentions a specific target date (1st of Av) and might concern a delayed shipment or tax payment. Petrographic analysis cannot conclusively determine the bulla's clay source but indicates a non-local origin beyond the Jerusalem region. Its fabric characteristics support consideration of a Neo-Assyrian administrative provenance in the Tigris Basin. Non-destructive chemical analyses are currently in progress. We will examine the potential contribution of these finds to Jerusalem archaeology and to the study of Judah's relationship with the Neo-Assyrian Empire.

2B. Archaeology of Mesopotamia II (Continental B)

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

The Tell-Tale Hearth: Intramural Burials of Middle Bronze Age Mesopotamia

Victoria A. Wilson (Johns Hopkins University)

A family that is buried together, stays together; and the practice of intramural burial kept the deceased particularly close. During the Middle Bronze Age (ca. 2000 - 1595 BCE), under-floor burials, whether in elaborate tombs or simple interments, can be found in houses at sites from southern Iraq to western Syria. Two main arguments have been put forward for this burial practice during the Middle Bronze Age: 1) that this an identity marker of the Amorites, and 2) that this practice arose alongside a new class of independent merchant. This paper examines intramural burials both regionally and temporally: Did the practice of intramural burials only begin at these sites during the Middle Bronze Age? Are there regional patterns to the types of intramural interments (i.e. simple, jar, tomb)? I argue that although this widespread practice of in-house interments demonstrated a shared cultural attachment to place and kinship, the types of burials varied too widely to be part of the same Amorite koine.

Magnetometry Survey of Nippur's Southern Extension

Emily Hammer (University of Pennsylvania), Ian House (University of Pennsylvania)

In 2025 and 2026, we conducted a magnetometry survey at the Mesopotamian city of Nippur covering much of the site's southern extension within the city walls. While most of the site consists of deeply stratified and eroded tells that were inhabited for millennia, this low southern extension is considerably flatter with more limited occupation strata from the late third through the mid first millennia BCE, making it much more suitable for geophysical survey. We present the preliminary results of this magnetometry work (c. 7 ha) as well as the preliminary results of drone photogrammetry covering the whole site and its immediate surroundings (c. 200 ha). The results complement the ongoing work of the Nippur excavation team in area WC, showing the city wall, residential structures, streets, and a larger, spatially isolated building. The cuneiform tablet containing the so-called "Kassite map of Nippur" labels this zone of the site as "gardens in the city," perhaps suggesting a lower density of occupation. However, the magnetometry results demonstrate that much of this zone was densely settled urban space by the time of the Neo-Babylonian houses near the site's surface, currently under excavation in trenches WC-5 and WC-7. In addition to discussing the archaeological significance of the magnetometry and photogrammetry results, we also offer a methodological comparison of magnetometry results generated with two of the most popular instruments used in archaeological geophysics: a Bartington Grad 601-2 handheld fluxgate magnetic gradiometer (in 2025) and a SENSYS MAGNETO MXV4 large area magnetometer system on a cart with 5 fluxgate gradiometers (in 2026).

Between Oil and Civilization, The Untouchable Legacy

Ali Alyaqoobi (State Board of Antiquities and Heritage - Basrah Civilization Museum)

This project aims to protect the cultural heritage represented in the archaeological sites located within oil fields, namely the Rumaila Oil Field of Basra province, in southern Iraq. More specifically, our effort focuses on addressing the challenges these sites face as a result of industrial activities, as well as related risks of neglect or unintentional damage. Documentation and implementation of awareness and training programs were the main elements used to reach our goals. The initial results of this work include: first, preparing a simplified guideline that explains basic protection procedures; secondly, highlighting the importance of this model as an experience that can be applied to other oil fields, opening future opportunities for protecting cultural heritage in industrial environments. Future continuation of such effort should contribute to strengthening the coordination between the State Board of Antiquities and Heritage and the oil sector in Iraq. Further, it promotes a culture of shared responsibility toward heritage protection, supporting a sustainable balance between economic development and the preservation of cultural identity.

A Multi-Scalar and Iterative Approach to Studying Ancient Lagash City: Big Dig Results without the Big Dig Destruction

Paul C. Zimmerman (Penn Museum)

The massive scale of archaeological excavations in Mesopotamia during the discipline's first century characterizes this as the era of the "Big Dig." Drawing upon the lessons of the "New Archaeology," and countering that earlier exuberance, excavations in the latter half of the 20th Century became increasingly modest in spatial scope in exchange for increasingly rigorous documentation and sophisticated scientific approaches. What wxas lost in our ability to expose entire neighborhoods of ancient cities was gained in our fine-grained understanding of how people lived in those cities. Warfare and social disruptions in Iraq removed southern Mesopotamia from the mainstream of advances in archaeological practice in the early 21st Century, particularly (but not limited to) remote sensing, chemical analyses, chronometric dating, and computer applications such as databases and GIS. Thus, since 2019 the current excavations of the Lagash Archaeological Project (LAP) have taken these tools and applied them systematically. This paper will show how remote sensing, surface survey, geological prospection, scraping, and excavation are being used together to expose vast expanses of ancient Lagash, on a scale comparable to the Big Digs, but with the nuance afforded by modern methods—and that the iterative approach of identification, testing, and refinement at multiple scales can inform where, how, and why we dig, thereby minimizing site destruction without losing the big picture.

2C. How to Prepare for When Disaster Strikes (Workshop) (Continental C)

Chair(s): Alexandria Albano, Independent scholar; Tashia Dare, Independent scholar

Response Ready: Emergency Response Planning Tools for Cultural Institutions

Irene Karsten (Canadian Conservation Institute)

*Virtual

Being prepared means being ready to respond effectively to a wide range of emergencies, each presenting unique challenges. While it is impossible to anticipate every possible scenario, having a well-developed emergency plan in place can significantly reduce the impact of unexpected events and prevent a crisis from escalating into a disaster. To support cultural institutions in creating these vital plans, the Canadian Conservation Institute has developed Response Ready, a resource that includes a comprehensive manual, a customizable emergency plan template, helpful worksheets and materials related to collections salvage. Built on a foundation of ten emergency response objectives, the emergency planning materials include guidance for building an emergency response team, for analyzing risks associated with emergency hazards, for preparing immediate response and all-hazards procedures as well as emergency response

strategies for collections, for ensuring that the institution has adequate resources for response (funding, equipment and supplies), and for training responders. The emergency plan template facilitates the process of writing an emergency plan, providing draft text plus model forms for things like damage assessment and location tracking. Information on salvage is intended to complement in-person training on salvage methods. All of these tools were created to support flexible incident management as emergencies unfold and to be used in simple tabletop exercises that help teams practice decision making before emergencies occur. Although designed for cultural institutions, the materials can be adapted for heritage sites.

Rising Temperatures and the Deterioration of Historical and Archaeological Sites: Preparedness Strategies

Yaroub Al Obaidi (Duquesne University), Ahmed Khamas (State Board of Antiquities & Heritage- Iraq)

Archaeological sites in Iraq are facing an unprecedented wave of environmental and climatic threats, raising urgent concerns about the potential collapse of landmarks that embody the nation's cultural identity. Rising temperatures, recurring floods, intensifying dust storms, shrinking vegetation cover, and unsustainable industrial activities are accelerating cracking, erosion, and structural weakening, placing Iraq's heritage at serious risk. This situation represents more than environmental change; it is a large-scale transformation threatening the physical survival of humanity's collective memory. Field studies over the past decade indicate a sharp increase in sandstorm frequency across Iraq, compounding damage to exposed ruins and fragile structures. This research explores how climate-related changes affect archaeological remains, particularly palaces and temples excavated over the past century. These structures, often already vulnerable due to age and prior exposure, are now deteriorating at an accelerated pace under harsher environmental conditions. Key preparedness measures include developing localized monitoring systems to track temperature fluctuations, sandstorms, and flood risks, enabling early warnings and timely intervention. Reinforcing fragile structures with climate-resistant materials, installing wind barriers, and improving drainage systems can reduce erosion and water damage. Additionally, digital preservation through 3D scanning and imaging technologies can safeguard detailed records in case of irreversible loss. Collaboration with international organizations is also essential to secure funding, expertise, and technological support. Without proactive measures, the combined pressures of climate change and human activity may lead to the loss of invaluable cultural heritage.

Acting in the Moment: Flood Resilience on a Budget Through Administrative Change, Compliance Alignment, and Behavioral Risk Management in University Collections

Lynn Swartz Dodd (University of Southern California)

This presentation is filled with lessons learned from firsthand curatorial experience, including instances of past flood-related damage that exposed vulnerabilities in legacy storage, fragmented responsibility, and insufficient behavioral risk planning. Flood damage, prevention, and remediation consumed significant curatorial energy and time over the course of two decades in a major university's collection. Such collections function simultaneously as research infrastructure, teaching resources, and entrusted cultural property. As compliance frameworks evolve—driven by updated environmental health & safety risk standards, insurance requirements, and heightened stewardship expectations—collection managers and curators gained new levers for disaster preparedness. At the presenter's university, disaster preparedness progress advanced because of three intersecting institutional realities: changing compliance norms, administrative transition as an opportunity for improvement, and recognition of institutional acceptance of human mischief. This progress aligns with the call made explicit in ASOR's Professional Conduct Policy that members and member institutions "support...the environment and security of future display and/or storage. "Taken together, these critical windows were opportunities for infrastructure retrofits, the development of clearer authority structures, and strengthened supervision protocols, allowing collection managers to advance beyond reactive response toward comprehensive, prevention-centered stewardship of cultural heritage collections.

Disaster Response and Mitigation in Libya in the Aftermath of Storm Daniel

Darren Ashby (ASOR)

Storms are a persistent threat in all climate zones due to their mobility, scalability, and potential for prolonged impacts that can affect areas far from the initial storm. This is particularly true in arid environments where flash flooding can turn a dry gully into a torrent with little warning. The impacts to cultural heritage can be wide-ranging and severe. Communities of practice can be disrupted. Collections, buildings, and archaeological sites can be flooded, buried, or swept away. Even subterranean heritage is not safe from the eroding force of flood waters, which can cut deep troughs into undocumented remains. The effects of Storm Daniel in eastern Libya in September 2023 demonstrate the catastrophic potential of storms. Storm Daniel caused significant loss of life and damage to property in Libya; most notably, in the city of Derna where the failure of the dams above the city likely led to the death of more than 10,000 residents. The storm also impacted heritage across eastern Libya. This paper discusses some of the effects of Storm Daniel on Libyan cultural heritage and provides an overview of the joint Libyan Department of Antiquities-ASOR disaster response and mitigation projects that responded to this damage.

Fortifying the Past: Safeguarding Cultural Heritage Against Human Threats

Catherine P. Foster (Argus Cultural Property Consultants)

The environment is rapidly changing, but natural events are not the only threats to cultural heritage. Human-made disasters—including the theft of priceless artworks, vandalism, and the looting of archaeological sites—are critical, yet often underprioritized, risks in disaster planning. For museums, complacency, outdated security protocols and intelligence gaps frequently leave institutions vulnerable. Inconsistent monitoring and lack of community engagement result in damage to archaeological and other heritage sites. This brief presentation provides an overview of practical strategies to secure museum collections and archaeological sites against deliberate human threats. These include enhanced access controls, threat assessments and monitoring, physical protections, and detailed Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs). Systematic site monitoring and community partnerships as essential tools to detect and deter unauthorized excavations and vandalism will also be discussed. By assessing specific institutional risks, strengthening emergency preparedness, and proactively mitigating threats, cultural heritage managers can more successfully thwart thefts, damage and looting while maintaining continuity of operations during an active incident. Ultimately, these measures ensure the resilience and preservation of invaluable collections and heritage sites for generations to come.

Strengthening Museum Resilience: Closing Gaps in Disaster Recovery Planning

Leah Chambers (Granite Insurance Agency)

Museums face increasing exposure to natural disasters, cyber incidents, and operational disruptions, yet many disaster recovery plans remain incomplete or outdated. This presentation explores common gaps in recovery preparedness across cultural institutions, with a focus on protecting collections (owned and loaned), maintaining operations, and ensuring financial stability. Drawing on industry insights and real-world claim scenarios, the session examines the critical role insurance plays within a comprehensive disaster recovery strategy. Many institutions assume their policies will respond broadly to natural disasters; however, standard coverage often includes exclusions, sublimits, or conditions that can leave museums unexpectedly exposed. If a disaster strikes tomorrow, would your institution truly have the protection it expects? This session provides a practical framework for evaluating coverage, identifying gaps, and aligning insurance with institutional risk exposures, shifting the approach from reactive assumptions to informed, proactive planning. While many museums have emergency response procedures in place, fewer have comprehensive recovery plans that address long-term restoration and financial continuity. Attendees will leave with actionable insights to strengthen disaster recovery strategies, reduce downtime, and better

position their institutions for a resilient recovery when the unexpected occurs.

How to Prepare for When Disaster Strikes: A Donor's Perspective
Martin Perschler (U.S. Department of State)

Disaster preparedness for cultural heritage is essential but often underfunded, overlooked, or disconnected from broader conservation efforts. This presentation offers a donor's perspective on risk reduction, preparedness, and response, drawing on cultural heritage preservation projects around the world supported by the U.S. Department of State. The presentation will highlight what makes disaster-related proposals competitive and how heritage professionals can better align project design with donor expectations. It will also examine common gaps in proposals, such as limited risk assessment, lack of sustainability planning, and insufficient integration with local stakeholders. The presentation will provide practical insights into designing fundable projects that incorporate both preparedness and strategies for leveraging partnerships and resources beyond the project period. By demystifying the donor perspective, this presentation aims to help heritage professionals more effectively access resources and implement impactful cultural heritage preservation initiatives.

2D. Publishing Scholarship of the Ancient World in the Mid 21st Century (Workshop) (Waldorf)

Chair(s): William Caraher, University of North Dakota

Foregrounding Data in the AI era
Andrea M. Berlin (Boston University)

Hard data is the bedrock of archaeological research. Today, with so much prose generated by AI, and all of us hard-pressed to pinpoint its use, let us champion three-dimensional material reality. Lithics, figurines, stone walls, painted plaster, surveyed landscapes, mud bricks, ceramics, clay tablets, seals: AI cannot invent these. It remains our business to find and identify them, and then locate the human meaning contained within. How can ASOR help? By requiring authors to submit the data that undergirds their research to accessible, open repositories in conjunction with publication. ASOR & COP can create a list of acceptable data repositories, including Open Context, The Cuneiform Digital Library Initiative, the LCP, etc., and also craft pathways to help authors with submission. To the argument that we should not compel authors to submit data, I ask why not? We have strictures for other aspects of scholarly publishing, e.g., full citations, formatted bibliographies. We require these because scholarship is a conversation, and responsible interlocuters acknowledge their conversation partners. For scholarship to remain a vibrant conversation, fellow researchers should have ready access to the data that drives it. Without that, articles and reports remain monologues. Archaeological data is more precious than ever – because its physical reality is interlaced with the integrity, credibility, and authority of the human real. Raw data has become something of an intellectual step-child in our discursive, theory-driven discipline. We should embrace its vivid, intractable, stubborn materiality, and welcome it back into the family fold of our shared fields.

ASOR-ARS and the Future of the Archaeological Report
Jennie Ebeling (University of Evansville)

ASOR's Archaeological Report Series (ASOR-ARS), whose first published volume appeared in 1991, is devoted to the publication of final excavation reports, surveys, and ethnoarchaeological fieldwork; as of this writing, 35 ARS volumes have been published and a half-dozen more are scheduled to appear by the end of 2027. Most volumes are available as free, open access downloads or are available on JSTOR with a subscription, and it appears that more people are accessing the digital versions than the print volumes purchased by individuals and institutional libraries. While there has been a great deal of discussion in recent years about the future of the archaeological report, and various methods for connecting narratives to digital datasets and media have been proposed (and, in a few cases, piloted), one thing is certain: ASOR members should have a say in how we publish archaeological reports going forward. The aim of this presentation is to solicit member feedback on the Archaeological Report Series that will inform ongoing discussions in ASOR's Committee on Publications.

The Persistence of Memory: Data Citation, Data Curation and Durability
Eric C. Kansa (Open Context), Sarah Whitcher Kansa (Open Context)

Archaeologists routinely use digital technologies to create and interpret digital documentation of excavations, surveys, collections studies and laboratory based research. Archaeologists have clear ethical and professional responsibilities to preserve and share this digital information. However, meaningful data preservation is not merely a matter of uploading isolated data files to digital repositories. In order to be intelligible and usable, complex archaeological data often require richly expressive, "thick description" typical of narrative (book and article) publication. We argue that data curation needs to be more deeply integrated into archaeological publishing practices. Systems that support such integration between publications and digital datasets must be designed for long time horizons and accommodate changing technologies, platforms, and institutions. We highlight how certain data citation practices supported by persistent identifier technologies can help to express and maintain the long term contextual integrity of both digital data and synthetic, interpretive publication.

The Hybrid Digital/Narrative Archaeological Site Report: A Multi-tiered Approach to Publishing Excavation Results
Ann E. Killebrew (The Pennsylvania State University)

Over the past fifty years, advancements in archaeological excavation techniques, documentation practices, and scientific analyses have resulted in increasingly lengthy and complex publications. These reports are not only costly and unsustainable to produce but also often present the excavation results in a disjointed, fragmented format, forcing users to painstakingly piece together evidence to understand the archaeological contexts of the findings. Attempts to address some of these shortcomings through hybrid digital publications have largely focused on data preservation and on developing digital media, adhering to the FAIR (Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, Reusable) principles. Less attention has been paid to the potential of hybrid publications to integrate and contextualize excavation results in a user-friendly format. In this presentation, I will explore a multi-tiered, hybrid model for publishing archaeological site reports. This approach aims to combine an accessible, engaging narrative summarizing the project's key findings with links to searchable, web-based digital data archives, such as Open Context, to present the excavation results as contextualized, coherent material-culture assemblages.

Declared, Suspected, Undisclosed: AI in Archaeological Publishing
Christina Tsouparopoulou (UKSW, Warsaw & Durham University)

This submission presents two versions of the same abstract. One was written by the author, the other was written with the assistance of ChatGPT. The comparison reflects the subject of the proposed talk: the growing presence of AI-assisted writing in academic publishing.
Abstract A: As the relatively newly appointed editor of Near Eastern Archaeology, I have increasingly encountered both the use and misuse of AI in submitted manuscripts, sometimes declared, oftentimes suspected, and sometimes difficult to determine. This talk reflects on what the growing presence of AI-assisted writing means for transparency, authorship, and editorial responsibility in archaeological publishing, and on how editors, reviewers, and authors alike might navigate this new landscape.
Abstract B: As the relatively newly appointed editor of Near Eastern Archaeology, I have increasingly encountered a range of both explicit and implicit uses of AI in submitted manuscripts—instances that may be openly declared, tentatively suspected, or difficult to determine with confidence. The expanding presence of AI-assisted writing within scholarly communication raises a number of interrelated questions concerning transparency, authorship, editorial responsibility, and the maintenance of disciplinary voice within archaeological publishing. Drawing on recent editorial experience, this talk examines emerging patterns in the integration of generative AI tools into manuscript preparation and considers their implications for editorial practice, peer review processes, and the evolving norms of scholarly communication in archaeology. Taken together, these developments invite broader reflection on how generative AI may reshape expectations surrounding authorship, accountability, and the articulation of disciplinary standards and practices.

Green Open Access in ASOR Journals

Jason A. Ur (Harvard University)

ASOR's mission is to "initiate, encourage, and support research into, and public understanding of, the history and cultures of the Near East and wider Mediterranean, from the earliest times." The society enables "public understanding" in many ways, the most academic of which is the publication of our journals. As we have increasingly targeted the publics of the countries whose heritage we study, a conflict has emerged: our publishing partners need to sell our scholarship to remain in business, but our overseas publics often cannot afford the cost of access. The internet enables free-to-read "Open Access" (OA) in several forms. For many, OA is synonymous with so-called Gold OA, in which a publisher charges a fee to the author(s) and then makes the scholarship freely available. Author charges are high and often non-feasible for scholars. Less well known is Green OA, in which a pre-publication form of the intellectual content can be made freely available with no charge to the authors. ASOR's journals are published by the University of Chicago Press, which has a Green OA policy. My brief contribution to this workshop will describe that policy, suggest some ways that our authors could use it to enhance their commitment to "public understanding," and propose some thoughts about strengthening OA at ASOR in the future.

2E. Archaeology of the Southern Levant II (Marquette)

Chair(s): Sarah Richardson, North Carolina State University

When is Ship-Graffito not Ex-voto?

Michal Artzy (Hatter Laboratory, School of Archaeoloogy, University of Haifa)

Many examples of boat graffiti, such as those discovered at Nahal Me'arot in the Carmel Ridge and in Temples 1 and 4 at Kition, Cyprus, are commonly interpreted as ex-voto offerings. These images represent acts where individuals sought divine intervention, often for the purpose of ensuring a safe sea voyage. Despite the prevalence of cultic interpretations, there are notable instances of ship graffiti that appear to have little connection to ritual or religious practices. Some ship graffiti, for example, found in Greece and the New World, are likely to have been created simply to pass the time. Greek shepherds, viewing boats from mountain slopes, may have etched ship images onto rocks to alleviate boredom. Similarly, sailors in the New World could have produced graffiti during periods of waiting, such as waiting for favorable winds to return home. There are cases where ship graffiti are acts of remembrance. Such as in the case of defeated sailors, kept as slaves, following naval battles, who may have carved images of ships to recall their more glorious past at sea. Or, captives awaiting their transfer to slavery, from freedom to enslavement, etching boat images as calls for help or as memories of their previous status as free individuals.

Identification and Archaeology of the Priestly Courses Towns

Faizan A. Khan (Lipscomb University; Lanier Center for Archaeology), Chris McKinny (Lipscomb University)

The First Temple in Jerusalem served as the religious, cultural, and political center of Judah from the establishment of the kingdom under the house of David. Both religious and non-religious administrations held a very important place in the Jewish religious, cultural, and political life. According to the Book of Chronicles, twenty-four priestly courses were established to administer the temple (1 Chr 24:7–19). While the historicity of this tradition remains debated, it persisted until the destruction of the Second Temple. After the destruction of the Second Temple and the subsequent displacement of the Judean population from Jerusalem, the families of these twenty-four priestly courses settled for centuries in distinct towns and villages around Galilee, anticipating the eventual rebuilding of the temple. This research paper presents an extensive analysis of the identification and archaeological evidence from these sites, along with a geographical assessment of their spatial relationships within the wider region.

Hidden Threads: Microhistory and Generative Endemic Polycentrism in Southern Levantine Archaeology

Oystein S. LaBianca (Andrews University)

This paper advances microhistory as a methodological and theoretical framework for Southern Levantine archaeology, drawing on case studies from Tall Hisban, Jordan, presented in the forthcoming volume Hidden Threads: The Microhistory of Tall Hisban. Building on the microhistorical tradition associated with Carlo Ginzburg and Giovanni Levi, the study adapts its core principles—attention to scale, anomaly, and lived experience—to archaeological datasets. Close analysis of households, installations, and activity areas reveals how everyday practices in food systems, water management, and craft production materialize forms of local agency often obscured in macrohistorical narratives. Situated within the Southern Levantine Cultural Paradigm, these findings support a model of Generative Endemic Polycentrism, in which multiple, interacting centers of decision-making shape long-term historical trajectories. Microhistory thus provides a bridge between fine-grained archaeological evidence and broader regional interpretations, offering a polycentric account of resilience, continuity, and transformation across the highland landscapes of Jordan.

Aramean Versus Israelite Settlement Patterns

Rami Arav (University of Nebraska at Omaha)

Biblical tradition repeatedly associates the ancestral origins of Israel with Aram. Yet the archaeological and historical evidence from Aramean sites in the southern Levant demonstrates that Aramean material culture differed fundamentally from those of the Israelites. Aramean sites indicate peaceful Aramean occupation without destruction layers, in contrast to Israelite settlement patterns. This presentation highlights the differences between Arameans and Israelites in terms of population, language, religion, and settlement patterns. Aramean settlement in the southern Levant was preceded by Hurrian migration to the region and appears to have integrated with it rather than replaced it. The two groups differed in language (Aramaic versus Hebrew/Canaanite), religion (the Aramean moon-god versus the Canaanite traditions of El and YHWH), as well as in art and architectural traditions. Taken together, these data suggest that Aramean settlement patterns were fundamentally different from those of the Israelites and therefore do not support the biblical claims that the Israelites originated in Aram, experienced enslavement in Egypt, or emerged from bondage through the Exodus. Rather, these narratives are best understood as collective memory constructs designed to reinforce ethnic identity. A more plausible reconstruction suggests that in the north the Israelites emerged largely from dissident elements of Canaanite urban elites, incorporating local Canaanite populations as well as groups of Phoenicians and elements associated with the "Sea Peoples." In the south, dissident settlements incorporated Shasu groups associated with YHWH alongside Canaanite populations and perhaps some Philistines. In contrast, the Aramean settlements in the southern Levant exhibit a markedly different settlement pattern.

Plain White Wheelmade Ware from Tell Abu Hawam's Anchorage: Implications for Maritime Levantine-Cypriot Connections

Brian Janeway (Independent Researcher)

Plain White Wheelmade Ware (PWWM) is readily distinguished by its light tan 'self-slip' finish. This distinctive surface treatment serves as a primary identifier for the ceramic type and reflects its connection to Cypriot Bronze Age ceramic traditions. Clay analyses have demonstrated that many examples found in the Late Bronze Age Tell Abu Hawam anchorage were produced locally, in the Akko/Haifa Bay, as well as at other Syro-Lebanese coastal sites and Cyprus. The production of PWWM at Syro-Lebanese coastal sites underscores the influence of the Cypriot traditions and highlights the interplay between imported and locally manufactured ceramics during the Late Bronze Age, which prompts a reevaluation of the temporal/seasonal dynamics of trade routes along the coast.

2F. The Field Still Is Not Safe: Confronting Cultures of Harassment on Archaeological Field Projects (Workshop) (Williford A)

Chair(s): Karlene Shippelhoute, Johns Hopkins University; Avary Taylor, Yale University

Doing our Best? ASOR'S Role in Promoting Safety in the Field

Beth Alpert Nakhai (University of Arizona)

In response to the alarm raised in 2013 by bioanthropologists Clancy, Nelson, Rutherford, and Hinde, I committed to making it possible for all of us to engage in fieldwork without fear of intimidation, harassment, violence, and discrimination based on gender, sexual orientation, or gender identity. My Survey on Field Safety: Middle East, North Africa, and the Mediterranean Basin, which I circulated in 2014, 2015, 2019, and 2024, provides a decade of data from more than 750 individuals. Respondents report an increasing number of codes of conduct, which define and prohibit sexual violations, assign responsibility for reporting violations, and mandate repercussions. Nonetheless, they still report sexual violations, drug and alcohol abuse, violence, racial and religious harassment, theft, vandalism, harassment, intimidation, and discrimination based on gender, sexual orientation, and/or gender identity in fieldwork and post-fieldwork opportunities and assignments, and expropriation of professional contributions. They note that perpetrators commonly include individuals in positions of authority. ASOR is well positioned both to combat these risks to us and to our profession, and to penalize perpetrators. Its 2019 Code of Conduct for Fieldwork Projects delineates risk factors and best practices, and supplies links to external resources. However, it neither provides any means for adjudication and remediation, nor mandates consequences for violations of protocols and laws. How can ASOR move forward to better protect its members, and to ensure the integrity of ASOR-affiliated field projects? I offer suggestions about actions that ASOR can take to better protect its membership and, by extension, to strengthen ASOR itself.

Digging Under Duress: Harassment and Accountability on ASOR-Affiliated Archaeological Projects

Karlene Shippelhoute (Johns Hopkins University)

Over 100 fieldwork projects currently maintain ASOR affiliated status. These projects and their participants agree to adhere to ASOR's Non-Discrimination Policy, the Policy on Professional Conduct, and the ASOR Code of Conduct for the ASOR Annual Meeting and Other ASOR Sponsored Events. These codes of conduct are a necessary first step to protect individuals in the field. However, these policies lack concrete enforcement mechanisms for when a violation occurs. The lack of consequences for misconduct leaves volunteers, undergraduate and graduate students (including ASOR scholarship recipients), and local participants on ASOR-affiliated projects vulnerable. Graduate students are particularly susceptible to repercussions from reporting harassment they have experienced during fieldwork. ASOR relies on graduate students' contributions to ASOR field projects, participation at the annual meeting, and membership (often lifelong). A lack of meaningful response from ASOR when harassment occurs signals to student members that their safety is valued less than their labor and intellectual contributions to ASOR. Furthermore, it perpetuates an ongoing culture of harassment within the organization. In this workshop, I discuss survey data gathered from recent ASOR fieldwork projects and informal reports of harassment shared by graduate students and scholarship recipients on ASOR-affiliated projects. I argue that there is a need for policy enforcement on ASOR projects and that this problem will not go away without structural changes to how fieldwork projects respond to violations.

Changing the Culture of Fieldwork: ASOR's Cultural Competency Video Project

Marta E. Ostovich (ASOR)

Cultural harassment and lack of cultural understanding are still significant barriers to archaeological fieldwork participation for people of color and other underserved groups. Recognizing that there is an urgent need for training to promote inclusive engagement with the past and safety in the field, ASOR and ASOR's Carolyn Midkiff Strange Committee on Growth, Innovation, and Visibility partnered with the Archaeological Institute of America (AIA) and Archaeology in the Community (AITC) to produce two cultural competency videos. There are two videos: one for archaeological project directors and one for fieldwork participants. Both provide interactive training modules to promote inclusive engagement with the past. Topics covered include background on preparing to engage in archaeological fieldwork, respecting the communities in which we work, sexual harassment, microaggressions, and giving voice to underrepresented voices. By addressing these issues, the videos emphasize that fieldwork is not just about data but also about people, power, and responsibility, thus changing the culture of fieldwork. The videos are now required viewing for all who apply for ASOR and AIA fieldwork funding, and they will serve as a publicly-available resource for all those who undertake archaeological fieldwork. This presentation introduces the cultural competency video project and invites discussion on next steps to make fieldwork more accessible and safer for all.

"Everyone has a Story": Combatting Pervasive Cultures of Harm on Archaeology Field Schools

Katherine E. Rose (Institute for Field Research)

Field schools are upheld as transformative, intellectually stimulating, and often required components of one's academic journey. The immense potential for contributions to both disciplinary knowledge and a student's growth is why they are so heavily encouraged by academic mentors. However, it is well documented that sites of research can also be loci of harm that have lasting negative impacts on a burgeoning scientist's trajectory. How many of us have a horror story from the field that not only resides in our memories, but is imprinted in our very identity as a scholar? What can be done to protect future generations from this fate? The Institute for Field Research aims to help tackle these shared challenges. As an organization running field schools with international project directors for the past 15 years, we constantly reflect on the power dynamics and social interactions that perpetuate unsafe environments. This paper presents an overview of quantitative and anecdotal data regarding the conditions, patterns in behavior, and practices that create "safe" field schools. It also outlines how we implement specific procedures around reporting, acting, and following through with support in response to misconduct. We discuss lessons learned around the limitations and complexities in existing reporting structures. We argue that pre-field education and training rooted in non-violent frameworks from psychology and sociology is key to effective implementation of policies. As a community, we must ask ourselves: how do we ensure field schools do not become something in one's academic journey that they have to recover from?

Beyond Access: Power, Precarity, and the Limits of "Safe" Fieldwork in Archaeology

Jenail Marshall (William Leo Hansberry Society), Debora Heard (University of Chicago)

This paper examines how conditions of safety in archaeological fieldwork are shaped not only by interpersonal dynamics, but by structural inequalities embedded within field practices themselves. Drawing on experiences of accessibility, precarity, and participation in archaeological projects, I consider how "safety" is unevenly distributed, particularly for researchers and collaborators who do not conform to assumed norms of mobility, health, institutional power, or racial and national belonging. While recent efforts within archaeology have emphasized codes of conduct, reporting mechanisms, and professional accountability, these frameworks often remain reactive and limited in scope. They tend to address moments of harassment after they occur, rather than the underlying conditions that render certain individuals more vulnerable within field environments. In African field contexts, these dynamics are further shaped by entrenched hierarchies, including anti-Blackness, anti-Africanness, and forms of xenophobia that structure interactions among international teams, local collaborators, and host communities. This paper argues that accessibility must be understood as central to field safety, rather than as an auxiliary concern. Expectations around field participation such as physical endurance, isolation, and informal hierarchies often produce exclusionary conditions that are not always recognized as issues of safety, but function as such. These conditions intersect with racialized and nationalized forms of exclusion, shaping who is able to enter, remain, and thrive in fieldwork.

Rather than offering a checklist of solutions, this paper calls for a broader rethinking of fieldwork culture, one that attends to power, precarity, and the lived conditions of participation, and that situates safety as an ongoing, collective responsibility rather than a policy alone.

2G. Digital Archaeology and History II (Williford B)

Chair(s): Leigh Anne Lieberman, Princeton University

Co-Creating Virtual Heritage: Community-Based Digital Archaeology at Sardis, Turkiye

Ece Erlat (University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill)

Recent developments on digital community archaeology have increasingly focused on ethical collaboration and data governance regarding Indigenous data sovereignty. However, current scholarship lacks case studies that examine digital engagement with non-Indigenous communities in the Near East and projects that incorporate diverse digital archaeology methods beyond data governance frameworks. My paper addresses this gap by discussing a photogrammetry, Virtual reality (VR), and Metaspace design project conducted with a local STEM facility near the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Sardis, Turkiye between 2025 and 2026. Through participant observation and ethnographic interviews collected during the project's development and execution, I examine how such collaborations adapt and extend Indigenous collaborative principles, such as relationality and the braiding of diverse knowledge systems, alongside Sonya Atalay's community-based participatory research (CBPR) approaches including capacity-building and power-sharing in a Near Eastern context. I argue that collaborative digital design projects with local partners challenge assumptions that technologically intensive archaeological practices cannot be meaningfully co-produced with non-specialist communities. Archaeologists and community partners can collaborate to create digital heritage outputs that directly respond to local needs and interests. By centering the collaborative VR and Metaverse project at Sardis, this project sheds new light on how ethically grounded partnerships can reshape technologically driven archaeological initiatives and expand the traditional repertoire of community engagement strategies in the Near East.

Digital Storytelling through Subtle Contextualisation

Dominik Lengyel (BTU University of Technology), Catherine Toulouse (Independent Researcher)

This paper aims to demonstrate the digital storytelling of archaeological artefacts using an architectural visual context. The case study is the Meroitic royal city of Naga in present-day Sudan, where several standing religious structures—some of which are fairly well preserved—still exist, although evidence of its vernacular architecture is limited to strips of gravel foundations that need to be uncovered from the sands. The importance of this for an adequate interpretation of the urban landscape—and thus for the adequate interpretation of the various artefacts—is demonstrated by combining the objects with a visualisation of their architectural context based on scientific hypotheses, using 3D modelling. This follows the method of the visualisation of uncertainty, meaning it implements the archaeological hypotheses as faithfully as possible without adding more than is absolutely necessary for a spatial vision. In the museum presentation, these visualisations are able to create a veritable backdrop for the artefacts, generating an immersive experience through the visual presence of large-scale representations alone—without technical aids—that introduces the artefacts into the genius loci within the visitor's imagination. Despite the static nature of the images, a form of digital storytelling emerges solely through the visitor's movement within the space. The importance of 3D modelling is particularly evident when contrasted with 3D scanning, which shows the existing remains of the building in a state of advanced decay, making the architecture appear primarily as a ruin, whilst the visualisation of the hypothetical design concept presents the same architecture as an intellectual design intention, thereby directing the focus towards the humanities dimension of creativity.

Making the Cards Count: Digitizing Archaeological Documentation from Antioch-on-the-Orontes

Emily Smith-Sangster (Princeton University), Julia Gearhart (Princeton University), Leigh Anne Lieberman (Princeton University)

The Excavation of Antioch-on-the-Orontes Collection comprises documentation from the excavation of the site from 1932 to 1939. While the collection is managed by the Visual Resources unit within Princeton University's Department of Art and Archaeology, the excavation itself was undertaken by a consortium of institutions. As a result, finds from Antioch have been distributed around the globe, often quite distant from their original contexts. Moreover, research into their history has largely been accessible only to those able to visit the physical archive in Princeton. While there have been important efforts to digitize and publish this material over the last decade, the Visual Resources team has focused its more recent efforts on making it more accessible and discoverable to broad scholarly audiences. Visual Resources' recent project to digitize the collection's excavation cards illustrates both the significance of this larger collection and the importance of this ongoing work. Many scholars will turn first to the excavation diaries to find progress and field notes, object and excavation photos, individual find cards and object lists, stratigraphic records, illustration notes, and sealed deposit records. However, our examination of these often overlooked excavation cards reveals a large corpus of contextual data not reduplicated in the diaries. Here, we look more closely at the excavation cards to better understand their purpose as a means of archaeological documentation in the early twentieth century. We demonstrate that, when reintegrated within the wider network of expedition records, data from the excavation cards can supplement our understanding of archaeological efforts at Antioch and allow for a more nuanced study of the site's material record.

Report on the Digitization Projects at the Princeton Theological Seminary Cuneiform Collection

Andrew Peecher (Princeton Theological Seminary)

Since 1915, Princeton Theological Seminary (PTS) has held roughly 2,928 cuneiform artifacts, one of the largest collections of its kind in North America. Its importance stems not only from its size but also from its place within the social and intellectual history of American academia and its interactions with Southwest Asia. However, the public beyond PTS's walls found access to the collection limited until nearly a century after its acquisition, when CDLI finished its online catalogue, complete with photographs, in 2014. Even less has been made available concerning the collection's history, with the most substantial publications consisting of Charles T. Fritsch's two-page account in 1945 and a few sentences in a short post on CDLI in 2015. My work with the collection began in 2023 and builds upon the catalogues of CDLI and Marcel Sigrist in aiming to make high-quality information about the PTS cuneiform collection publicly accessible. With the support of PTS Special Collections and Archives, I began two digitization projects, one for the archival material relating to the collection and the other for the capture of all cuneiform artifacts using Reflectance Transformation Imaging (RTI). This presentation offers a brief history of the collection, based on the archival materials, before discussing the preparation, workflows, and challenges for the digitization projects based on my own experiences. The report concludes with the current state of the projects and next steps.

The Digital Corpus of Stamp-Seals from the Southern Levant (CSSL): From Foundational Infrastructure to New Research Horizons

Ido Koch (Tel Aviv University), Stefan Münger (University of Bern)

The Digital Corpus of Stamp-Seals from the Southern Levant (CSSL; cssl.levantineseals.org) has developed into a central open-access research infrastructure for the study of glyptic material from the second and first millennia BCE. It integrates archaeological, iconographic, and contextual data and analyses within a flexible digital environment that supports collaborative data curation and advanced data exploration, while providing structured, contextualised, and interlinked data as a research resource. Recent developments include enhanced data retrieval, improved user interfaces, and the implementation of AI-assisted tools that facilitate the exploration of this extensive corpus. Building on the digital infrastructure established through an SNSF Sinergia project (2020–2024), the paper introduces a new Swiss–Israeli SNSF/ISF project (2026–2030), Stamp Seals from the Southern Levant: Expanding Horizons Through Interdisciplinary and Scientific Approaches. The project combines glyptic studies with archaeology, history, and scientific analysis, revisiting key questions of

production, distribution, and use across the second and first millennia BCE, as well as the development of glyptic practices from the Persian into the Hellenistic period. Advanced archaeometric methods, integrated with AI-assisted approaches, will be used to investigate materiality, production techniques, and workshop traditions. By systematically linking these methods with the digital corpus, the project aims to establish new methodological standards and to open up fresh perspectives on the long-term trajectories of glyptic traditions in the southern Levant.

2H. Archaeology of Anatolia II (Williford C)

Chair(s): Nancy Amelia Highcock, Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford; Oya Topçuoğlu, Northwestern University

Ritual in Place: Spatializing Hittite Ritual Practice

N. İlgi İ. Gerçek (Bilkent University)

The study of Hittite religion has long been mediated and interpreted primarily through texts, which provide detailed accounts of rituals, festivals, and cult administration. Recent work incorporating archaeological data has demonstrated that material culture can illuminate specific dimensions of ritual practice not fully captured in textual sources, for instance in relation to sacrificial deposition and the spatial organization of religious structures. Within this growing dialogue, space and setting have become increasingly central. Scholarship has emphasized the diversity of ritual environments (urban and extra-urban, built and natural) and has recognized that such settings are not merely backdrops but constitutive elements of ritual practice, shaping experience, visibility, and interaction. Building on this emphasis on space, this paper approaches Hittite ritual as a spatially distributed sequence of actions rather than as a phenomenon confined to single locations. It proposes a reading of ritual space that integrates the textual record with available archaeological contexts by tracing how different settings may have been linked within individual ritual performances. Methodologically, this involves treating sites as nodes within a ritual sequence, correlating textual references to place and movement with archaeological features such as sanctuaries, installations, and landscape markers, and differentiating the functional roles of spaces, including preparation, transition, performance, and deposition. Particular attention is given to identifying material signatures of these stages, including patterns of deposition, installations associated with specific actions, and the spatial clustering of finds.

The Cult of the Stag God: An Offering to Runtiya from Türkmen-Karahöyük?

Nathan C. Lovejoy (Università Ca' Foscari Venezia), Christine Mikeska (University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill)

Recent excavations at the multi-period site of Türkmen-Karahöyük in the Konya province of Türkiye uncovered a small pit containing a large red deer antler beside a painted krater upturned over a sheep's mandible. Upon initial discovery, the context immediately suggested some sort of ritual activity, most likely connected to the cult of the Stag God. With the Iron Age date of the activity now confirmed and refined to the 11th to 10th centuries BCE based on radiocarbon analysis, we suggest that the pit represents an offering to the Luwian god Runtiya. The following paper will present this new discovery for the first time, aiming to position it within its historical, cultural, and cultic contexts through an analysis of archaeological, textual, and iconographic comparanda.

Examining Inscribed Central Anatolian Step Monuments as an Assemblage of Practice

Ryan H. Schnell (New York University - ISAW)

Although often understood as a Phrygian phenomenon, examples of step monuments have been found throughout Central Anatolia. Likely the most synthetic examination of this form to date from a Phrygian perspective is Susanne Berndt-Ersöz's work on Phrygian rock-cut shrines and sacred spaces. While the majority of inscribed step monuments have been found near Midas City and West Phrygia, a significant number of inscribed step monuments have been found further east. Notably, several of these step monuments are either inscribed with Anatolian Hieroglyphs or imagery that is common to the Syro-Anatolian Cultural Complex, thus problematizing the equation of this monumental form as a strictly Phrygian phenomenon. These step monuments have also been commented on both by Lorenzo d'Alfonso as well as Michele Massa and James Osborne in recent work. Therefore, in this paper, I will examine the context of inscribed step monuments from the Iron Age to place the practice of their creation and use in a cultural continuum that transgressed firm boundaries. Rather, the assembly of a carved monumental stone form with iconographic carving represents the active agential construction of practice within the dynamic political and cultural melting pot that was Iron Age Central Anatolia.

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 (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.

A Hellenistic Mudbrick Building with Painted Plaster and Stucco Ornament at Türkmen-Karahöyük

Cory Crawford (Ohio University), Dominik Lukas (University of Chicago)

The 2025 season of excavations at Türkmen-Karahöyük, Türkiye, revealed remains of a building unique in its decorative scheme. One of the rooms at the center of the trench was decorated with plaster multichrome panels, pilasters, and flowers modeled out of the plaster, all of which were applied directly to its mudbrick walls. Both radiocarbon dating and find typology place the main occupation of the building in the 3rd to 1st centuries BCE. In this paper we present the building as known so far, including its phasing and major finds and its contemporary correlates on the höyük. We also make art-historical connections to hellenistic architectural ornamental practices in the broader Mediterranean. We will also incorporate the results of the second season of its excavation (2026), which expand the trench in order better to understand the function and layout of the building in its context.

2I. Violence in the Ancient Near East and Hebrew Bible II (Astoria)

Chair(s): Anthony SooHoo, Pontifical Biblical Institute (Rome); Megan Cifarelli, Manhattanville College

Icon and Embodiment: Violence, Real and Imagined, in Egyptian Imperial Pageantry at the End of the 18th Dynasty

Carla G. Mesa Guzzo (Independent Researcher)

*Virtual

By the late 18th Dynasty, Egypt was maintaining a sizeable empire, encompassing Nubian and Near Eastern territories. Egyptian kings used elaborate pageantry and spectacle to both justify and assert their notional right to "universal" rule. Violent images and violence enacted on real, living bodies were part and parcel of these performances of state power. While

examples abound and the mere fact of violent state ideology has been widely discussed in the Egyptological literature, a systematic examination of the dynamics and impacts of such practices is needed. This presentation seeks to understand the effect of violence and violent images on both onlookers and victims as well as the precise role of depictional/theatricalized violence in the maintenance of empire and the reification of imperial ideologies. It draws on textual, material, and art historical evidence to create as nuanced a picture as possible. Sources include human remains, royal records, state architecture, elite tombs, and more. By centering the body and the senses, the real and intended effects of violence in state pageantry will be examined though an experiential lens, asking: To what extent can performance be violence and violence be performance? I show that, in royal pageantry, real acts of violence are juxtaposed and interwoven with images of violence as part of multilayered and highly emotional performances of power. Through state pageantry, icons are actualized, framing real, historical deeds against the backdrop of an eternal, mythical notion of kingly action.

"Between Her Legs He Knelt, He Fell, He Lay": Metaphoric Sexual Violence Against Men in Judges

Jennifer Lehmann (Independent Scholar)

Scholars have pointed out the tendency of Biblical authors to depict military conquest through sexually violent metaphors, where the defeated city is portrayed as a sexually violated woman. The Book of Judges follows this pattern, but also includes narratives of military conquest where defeat is portrayed through the metaphorical sexual violation of a male body rather than a female one. This interdisciplinary paper utilizes rhetorical criticism, metaphor theory, and masculinity studies to investigate the prevalence of sexually violent imagery in the narratives concerning Sisera (Judg. 4-5), Eglon (Judg. 3), and Samson (Judg. 13-16). Each of these characters are defeated in violent assaults that are sexually charged: Sisera is killed by a woman who invites him into her tent, Eglon is murdered by the left-handed Ehud, and Samson is defeated with the help of Delilah, who cuts his hair while he sleeps in her lap. In each of these accounts, the defeat occurs not on the battlefield but in a private and intimate environment where the victim is alone with his attacker. This theme betrays an anxiety about sexual violence in the minds of the biblical authors. It also contributes to broader claims that the literary culture of the bible reflects dynamics of rape culture and can help us recontextualize the other examples of metaphorical and non-metaphorical sexual violence in the Hebrew Bible and other Ancient Near Eastern texts.

Desire, Agency, and Latent Violence in the Sex Omens of Shumma Alu: Flipping the Cultural Script

Ann K. Guinan (Babylonian Section, Penn Museum)

In Tablet 104 of Shumma Alu, sexuality provides a proving ground for male power and public persona. Issues of sexual desire and behavior are issues of masculine personhood and social identity. In this presentation I reverse the manifest masculine perspective of my previous interpretations and ask who is the male agent constructed within the text reacting to? I will not look at autoerotic acts, male sexual partners, or female partners defined by social position, but only those omens in which the sexual partner is simply a woman. I argue that the hegemonic drive to claim a masculine social space comes face to face with the possibility that a woman's sexual desire and sexual agency can deny it. The struggle to deny a woman's sexual agency inverts into the denial of a man's own desire and into a deep reservoir for potential violence.

The Devil Made Me Do It!: Demonic Possession and Suicide in Ancient Mesopotamia

Holden Marshall (University of Pennsylvania)

Textual attestations of suicide in Mesopotamia are scattered and scant. One notable exception, however, appears in a first-millennium BCE Neo-Assyrian hemerological tablet excavated from the library of Ashurbanipal, which states that if the demoness Lamaštu seizes a man during the month of Ṭebētu, he will kill himself. While Lamaštu is commonly associated with the death of infants and complications in childbirth, this passage attests her as a causal agent in an adult man's self-death. This paper situates this hemerological evidence within both the broader hemerological corpus and the wider Lamaštu tradition. I argue that Lamaštu functioned not only as a bringer of stillbirth and infant mortality but also as a supernatural figure implicated in self-destructive behavior. Furthermore, I propose that the ritual and medical treatments directed against Lamaštu may be interpreted not solely as demonological prophylaxis, but also as responses to conditions we might describe as suicidal ideation and its associated comorbidities, including psychological distress and bodily illness. Through a comparative analysis of hemerological, exorcistic, and medical texts, this study seeks to refine our understanding of how suicide and self-harm were conceptualized, ritualized, and therapeutically addressed in ancient Mesopotamia.

2J. Archaeology of Egypt II (Private Dining 2)

Chair(s): Danielle Candelora, College of the Holy Cross; Jeffrey Newman, University of California, Los Angeles

Wine and Empire: Identifying Wine via Tartaric Acid Biomarkers along the Ancient Middle Nile

Emily K. Smith (University of California, Santa Barbara), Muqadas Bashir (University of California, Santa Barbara), Stuart Tyson Smith (University of California, Santa Barbara), Mattanjah de Vries (University of California, Santa Barbara)

Wine has long been considered one of the most highly desired, dynamic consumable substances available in the ancient world. Consumption of wine is deeply embedded within the maintenance of elite identities, and Egyptian historical sources indicate that it was a key element in various interpersonal, sociopolitical, and socioreligious practices. While methods targeting tartaric acid, the key chemical biomarker of red wine, in archaeological material have long been a reliable way to study wines in antiquity, few studies examine the presence and distribution of wines south of Upper Egypt. Little is currently known about Nubian demands for wine. Previous research has attempted to define alcohols in Nubian contexts via presence/absence identification of amphorae historically linked to regional wine trade, but the use of those vessels for the transport of other materials complicates this as a pathway to identification. Chemical tests of these vessels provide a more definitive line of evidence of the movement of wine between Upper and Lower Egypt and Nubia. To address questions connected to wine distribution and consumption at the Middle Nile, we present preliminary data from a large-scale, first-of-its kind study in the region of tartaric acid profiles at two key Middle Nile sites in Sudan: Askut and Tombos, Egyptian fortresses that both shifted between Egyptian and Kushite control, illustrating the complex, entangled, embodied material relationships that prevailed along the Egyptian imperial frontier.

Molding Baal Hammon: The Divine Potter of Carthage

Joseph Brennan (Southern Methodist University)

Tophets are open air sanctuaries dotting the outskirts of Carthaginian settlements across the central Mediterranean. Carthaginians dedicated infants to the gods Baal Hammon and Tanit inside these sanctuaries, carving intricate stelae to mark the children's urns. On these stelae, one of the most important motifs is the "Bottle Idol." Based on a comparative visual analysis of Egyptian, Greek, and Punic art, this paper is the first to identify the "Bottle Idol" as a pot on a potter's wheel. This pot and wheel motif identifies Baal Hammon in Carthaginian art, linking this Punic god to the Egyptian potter god Khnum and refashioning our understanding of the global Mediterranean and the relationship between Egypt and Carthage. For the first time, we see what this prevalent motif symbolizes - the creation of human life, its transformation, regeneration, and Baal Hammon's role in that process. After 2,000 years, this paper shines light on who Baal Hammon was before he became Saturn and uncovers the dual role he played in the Carthaginian pantheon: the creator of human life and psychopomp of infants. This paper also posits an intractive relationship between Baal Hammon and Tanit based on these findings. Carthaginian artisans entangled the iconographies of Baal Hammon and Tanit to convey their inseparable relationship with one another and their central role in the creation and protection of infants. Identifying Baal Hammon radically remolds the Tophets, the Carthaginian pantheon, and the Carthaginians, reshaping the narratives surrounding this tragic city, its inhabitants, and their gods.

Ancient Reuse, Modern Usurpation: History of Interactions with the Tomb of Bakenrenef

Thomas M. Pflanz (Field Museum of Natural History/CUNY - Hunter College)

The 26th Dynasty tomb of the vizier Bakenrenef at Saqqara (L. 24), prior to its excavation in the late 20th century, had seen two distinct periods of post-completion interaction: reuse for burials from the 30th Dynasty to Roman period and 19th century European intrusion involving the removal and sale of the limestone decor. While the Dynastic appropriation demonstrates a reuse in line with Egyptian thanatologies and Late Period archaism, the 19th century appropriation, from graffiti to the sale and collection of contextless pieces, serves as an archetypical example of colonial contact with Egyptian antiquities. This paper will explore the concept of appropriation and usurpation, paralleling and differentiating the meanings behind the "intrusions" into, or "reuse" of, the tomb, taking into account original provenance research undertaken with the Field Museum of Natural History in Chicago on the Bakenrenef tomb materials in the museum's anthropological collections. The aim of this paper is to contribute to ongoing discussions that question scholarly assumptions about the meanings of appropriation and usurpation in the ancient past. The concepts of appropriation and usurpation, although contentious and variable in the context of ancient Egypt, are apt metaphors for the treatment of Egyptian antiquities by Western individuals and institutions in the collection and maintenance of these objects.

The Golden Tongues from the Quesna Necropolis

Ahmed H. ElBadwy (Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities)

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 in 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 which date back to Greek roman periods, 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.

Pious Priests or Businessmen? Ptolemaic Egyptian Religion from an Economic Perspective

Lauren Dogaer (University College Oxford)

The Demotic and Greek documentary record from Ptolemaic Thebes offers a rare window into the economic dimensions of (profit-making) priestly offices. Rather than functioning solely as ritual specialists, priests operated within a competitive market in which liturgical days, funerary rights, and temple offices could be bought, accumulated, and monetized. The choachytai (water-pourers), for example, acquired, inherited and leased funerary service rights in the Theban necropolis, securing income through the performance of libations that sustained private mortuary cults. Priests attached to smaller sanctuaries on the west bank similarly accumulated liturgical days across multiple cult sites, including the ibis and falcon sanctuaries in TT 11 and 12, the sanctuary of Amenhotep and Imhotep at Deir el-Bahari, the temple of Deir el-Medina, and the chapels of Isis and Arensnuphis near Medinet Habu. At a higher institutional level, members of the Amun clergy at Karnak could purchase several offices, such as scribe of the divine book or lesonis. In all cases, acquisition required substantial capital investment, implying that the anticipated returns from performing the service exceeded the purchase price. This paper compares the prices recorded in the papyrus archives of the Theban priests (e.g. TM Arch 8 and 248) and the Royal Bank Archive (TM Arch 205) to assess the purchasing power of different categories of male and female priests. By comparing with contemporary house prices in the Theban region, this paper contextualizes priestly wealth within the broader urban economy and evaluates how mortuary priests and temple clergy ranked economically within Ptolemaic Theban society.

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 19, 2026

2:00pm – 4:05pm (CST)

3A. Urbanism and Polities in the Bronze and Iron Age Levant I (Continental A)

Chair(s): Omer Sergi, Tel Aviv University; Daniel Master, Wheaton College; Karen Covello-Paran, Israel Antiquities Authority

Tel Hadid in the Iron Age: New Findings from 2018–2026 Excavations

Ido Koch (Tel Aviv University), Jim Parker (New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary)

Excavations at Tel Hadid (2018–2026) have renewed archaeological investigation of this prominent site overlooking the Lydda Valley and the routes that traverse the coastal plain and link it with the central highlands. Eight seasons of fieldwork have exposed remains from several periods and produced a substantial body of archaeological findings that illuminate the long-term development of the site and its regional setting. This paper presents an overview of the principal findings of the project, with particular attention to the Iron Age remains. Architectural features, ceramic assemblages, and small finds recovered during the recent excavations provide new evidence for settlement organization and regional connectivity in the central part of the southern Levant. These findings also enable a reassessment of the results of the excavations conducted at the site in the 1990s, based on new excavation areas and stratigraphic exposures. The Iron Age remains from Tel Hadid clarify how the incorporation of the region into the Kingdom of Israel is reflected in the archaeological record and illuminate the role of the site within networks linking the highlands and the coastal plain. They also shed light on the regional reorganization that followed the Assyrian campaigns of the late eighth century BCE and on the subsequent transformation of settlement and connectivity in this strategically located landscape.

Beyond the Rural–Urban Divide: Multi-Phase Occupation and Sociopolitical Change at Iron Age Tel Shaddud

Karen Covello-Paran (Israel Antiquities Authority), Omer Sergi (Tel Aviv University)

Tel Shaddud, situated at a strategic crossroads on the northern periphery of the Jezreel Valley, offers a compelling case study for examining the evolving character of urbanism in the Iron Age southern Levant. This paper explores the site's multi-phase occupational trajectory — from a small-scale Iron I village, to a fortified center during the late Iron IIA, to its reemergence as a stronghold in the Iron IIC — situating these transformations within broader regional patterns of centralization, territorial consolidation, and urban redefinition. Drawing on recent fieldwork and comparative regional data, each occupational phase is shown to reflect discrete shifts in sociopolitical function, as local communities negotiated changing frameworks of authority, defense, and inter-regional connectivity within expanding political networks. Rather than conforming to conventional rural–urban binaries, Tel Shaddud exemplifies the fluid and transitional nature of Iron Age urbanism, occupying an intermediate position between village and city, periphery and administrative center. Its successive transformations illuminate the dynamic interplay between strategic geography, sociopolitical organization, and the growing complexity of the

Iron Age urban landscape — positioning the site not as an outlier, but as a productive lens through which to investigate prevailing models of settlement hierarchy in the Iron Age southern Levant.

Tel Shimron in the Iron Age

Daniel M. Master (Wheaton College)

Recent excavations at the site of Tel Shimron have uncovered remains from the Iron I, Iron IIA, and Iron IIB. This paper will seek to describe the previously unpublished Iron Age discoveries and place them into a broader context. In contrast to the Bronze Age, when Tel Shimron was one of the largest urban centers in the region, the Iron Age was epoch during which Tel Shimron was part of a network of smaller sites connecting the Levantine Coast with the Jordan Valley. This paper will discuss the extent to which the changes at Tel Shimron are typical of the changes in the settlement from the Bronze to the Iron Ages in the southern Levant.

Monumental Architecture at Dor in the Early Iron Age

Sveta Matskevich (The Hebrew University of Jerusalem), Ayelet Gilboa (University of Haifa), Pnina Torn Broers (The Hebrew University of Jerusalem), Harel Shochat (University of Haifa)

Tel Dor on the southern Levantine coast is well-known in scholarship as one of the most important maritime trade centers in the eastern Mediterranean during the early Iron Age. Yet, the origins of this flourishing city of this period were never emphasized in previous publications. Based on discoveries from the last three decades, not yet fully published, this paper will focus on the architecture of early Iron Age Dor. First, we will present the architectural complexes uncovered in the four most relevant excavation areas, the ceramic assemblages that support their dating, and discuss the questions of planning and building techniques. Secondly, we will provide a broader geographical overview of the period's architecture. Settled by groups of people who took over the Mediterranean trade after the turmoil at the end of the Bronze Age, the coastal sites exhibit different chronological patterns in investment in building activities. In the landscape of the southern, central, and northern Levantine coast, Dor stands out for the monumentality of its architecture, beginning in the second half of the early Iron Age and the early use of ashlars. This phenomenon is synchronized with certain trade patterns attested in the ceramic assemblages of this period. We will analyze possible sources of the building patterns and suggest interpretations of the uniqueness of Dor architecture in its cultural sphere.

3B. The Archaeology of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq I (Continental B)

Chair(s): Petra M. Creamer, Emory University; Elise J. Laugier, Utah State University

Urban Settlements and Landscapes on the Erbil Plain: New Insights from Regional and Geophysical Survey

Elise Laugier (Utah State University), Mohammed Lashkri (General Directorate of Antiquities, Kurdistan Region of Iraq), Madeline M. Ouimet (University of Chicago), Andrew Creekmore (University of Northern Colorado), Jason Ur (Harvard University)

Across more than a dozen field seasons, the Harvard-led Erbil Plain Archaeological Survey (EPAS) has systematically documented settlement and landscape features across the 3200 sq. km plain surrounding the modern city of Erbil. In this paper, we present an updated synthesis of the settlement history on the Erbil Plain that incorporates site, ceramic, and geospatial data from the 2021–2025 seasons. With more than 1,000 sites now documented, the long-term settlement pattern has stabilized, allowing for a regional synthesis. We also introduce a new phase of the EPAS project that investigates urban sites and their surrounding landscapes using large-scale magnetic gradiometry. These geophysical surveys aim to map subsurface architectural and landscape features at the margins of key sites, providing new insights into the organization of urban settlements and the structuring of agricultural landscapes in northern Mesopotamia.

Termination Rituals and Rural Religion at Surezha (Iraqi Kurdistan) in the 5th Millennium BCE

Gil J. Stein (University of Chicago), Michael Fisher (Max Planck Institute - Jena), Rasha Elendari (Independent Archaeologist), Samuel Harris (University of Chicago)

Excavations at the 5th millennium BCE Chalcolithic village site of Surezha on the Erbil Plain in Iraqi Kurdistan have recovered evidence for two distinct examples of non-domestic ritual architecture and associated internal features: a) an earlier large mudbrick enclosure with affiliated rooms in Operation 9, dating to the LC1 period (with its earliest phase in the Ubaid), and b) a later ritual room in Operation 13, dating to the LC1/early LC2 period. Rooms in both installations show clear evidence for the practice of "termination rituals", which formally marked the closure of the space and the end of its use for religious ceremonies. In each case, the ritual room was largely emptied out and burned at extremely high temperatures, leading to the vitrification of the interior surfaces of the walls. This was followed by deliberate infilling of the ritual space with either collapsed burnt bricks or soil with specially selected items of ritually-related material culture. The general characteristics and significance of termination rituals are first discussed. We then present the evidence for ritual use followed by termination rituals in the two installations at Surezha. We compare the Surezha examples with termination rituals documented at other sites in Anatolia, northern Mesopotamia, and the Americas, showing that such practices occurred on a much wider scale than archaeologists might expect while demonstrating their broader social significance for rural village communities.

Modelling Settlement Dynamics from the Halaf to the Late Chalcolithic 3 at Helawa (Erbil Plain, Kurdistan Region of Iraq)

Michael Campeggi (University of Milan), Agnese Vacca (University of Milan), Luca Peyronel (University of Milan)

*Virtual

Recent research on the Late Chalcolithic in the Eastern Tigris region shows that settlements in Northeastern Mesopotamia followed dynamic, locally contingent spatial trajectories during the fifth and fourth millennia BCE, challenging established models of proto-urbanism and calling for a long-term perspective on settlement development. This paper addresses these issues through a case study of Helawa in the southwestern Erbil Plain, tracing changes in the site's layout from the sixth to the early fourth millennium BCE. Based on over a decade of survey, excavation, and geoarchaeological work by the MAIPE project, this paper applies a multiscalar framework to reconstruct settlement dynamics from the Halaf to the early LC 3 period, focusing on shifts in size, spatial organization, landscape interaction, and patterns of abandonment and reoccupation in the different occupational phases. The results highlight both continuity and innovation in the settlement's configuration during a period of increasing social complexity and are compared with surrounding sites in the region and beyond. Helawa thus provides a key case study for the Erbil Plain, but at the same time contributes to broader regional syntheses of pre-urban settlement systems in Northern Mesopotamia.

Inscribing Legitimacy: New Evidence from the Bilingual Monument of Paikuli (KRG, Iraq)

Carlo G. Cereti (University of California, Irvine), Gianfilippo Terribili (Sapienza - University of Rome)

The commemorative monument at Paikuli, erected by the Sasanian king Narseh (r. 293–302 CE) in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, bore an extensive bilingual inscription in Middle Persian and Parthian. This inscription is a key source for the early history of the Sasanian Empire and for the ideological foundations of Narseh's reign. The monument articulated a carefully constructed dynastic message in which architecture, spatial organization, and inscriptional discourse worked together to legitimize royal authority. The Paikuli inscription is a sophisticated product of late antique scribal culture, characterized by complex compositional strategies, narrative devices, and rhetorical formulas. A synoptic reading of the Middle Persian and Parthian versions allows for a partial reconstruction of the text, which recounts Narseh's contested accession to the throne and illuminates the political alliances forged between the new king and the aristocratic groups that supported his claim. Together with Gianfilippo Terribili, the speaker is

currently preparing a new critical edition of the bilingual inscription. Recent developments in the field advance this work. During the winter of 2025–26, severe flooding at the site led to the identification of three unknown inscribed blocks. These will be transferred to the Slemani Museum for study during the forthcoming campaign, which also includes a renewed surface survey. This paper presents the new finds, discusses their integration into the known inscriptional sequence, and evaluates the historical and textual data they contribute. It also offers an update on the progress of the epigraphic edition and research on the monument's structure and communicative design.

"No Friends But The Mountains": The Embattled Heritage of the Ancient Highlands of Kurdistan

Sandra A. Scham (Catholic University of America)

The well-known Kurdish proverb that the mountains are their only friends signifies the constant struggles of a people who have been attacked and betrayed for centuries. Kurdish culture was forged over many centuries in the Zagros Mountains of Kurdistan, Iraq, Turkey, Iran and Syria. They are, nevertheless, the world's largest stateless ethnic group and their relatively new autonomy in Iraq is fragile. As evidenced by Kurdish websites, they have a strong interest in their ancient past and have laid claim to the Medes, Gutians, Lulubi, Hurrians, Mitani, and recently, due to the discovery of an impressive ancient site in Erbil, the people of Adiabene. Though we, as archaeologists, use many cultural factors in identifying sites, language is the most essential one and, because the Kurdish language is Indo-Iranian, many sites within their regions have been declared to be unrelated to Modern Kurds. Today, there is a challenge to these conclusions presented by archaeological genetic studies. These studies have been of significant interest internationally and, in Kurdish regions, they have revealed that the ancestors of today's Kurds can be traced back to the most ancient people of Southwest Asia. This suggests that Kurdish traditions that have maintained that they are descended from the most ancient mountain tribes of the Zagros may have some basis in fact. This paper discusses the potential and pitfalls of using ancient language and genetics to establish the indigeneity and antiquity of Kurds.

3C. Tell en-Naṣbeh at 100 Years: Past, Present, and Future I (Continental C)

Chair(s): Jeffrey R. Zorn; Aaron Brody, Pacific School of Religion

A Tell en-Naṣbeh Potpourri

Jeffrey R. Zorn

What do an early Persian period seal impression, a Mamluk sherd, and a grave of an Ottoman soldier from World War I have in common? They are all materials uncovered during the excavations conducted by William F. Badè at Tell en-Naṣbeh between 1926 and 1935 and which were either under-reported in the 1947 site publication (the seal impression) or not discussed at all (the sherd and the grave). These are only a few examples of the vast quantity of material housed at the Badè Museum in Berkeley, California, that is just waiting for scholars to study and publish. The seal impression of ʾĀḥîāb the Governor is a relatively rare type that coincides with the period just after Mizpah (Tell en-Naṣbeh) went from functioning as an administrative center under the Babylonian empire to filling the same role under the Persian state (end of 6th/beginning of 5th centuries BCE). The Mamluk sherd attests to at least an ephemeral visit to the site in that period. The "Tomb of a Turkish Soldier" documents the site's role in the fighting north of Jerusalem at the very end of December 1917. While not an "antiquity" according to Mandate era or Israeli laws, the grave foregrounds the importance of dealing respectfully with human remains of any period.

Indigenous Knowledge and Archaeological Interpretation at Tell en-Nasbeh

Jennie Ebeling (University of Evansville)

Early foreign excavators of archaeological sites in Palestine had plenty of opportunities to observe the "manners and customs" of paid laborers and others in the communities in which they lived during their field seasons and relied on their own ethnographic observations of traditional lifeways to interpret archaeological remains. Frederick J. Bliss, the American excavator of Tell el-Hesi who was raised in Beirut and spoke fluent Arabic, even credited by name the Egyptian foreman who interpreted an installation as a furnace in A Mound of Many Cities (Bliss 1894), the first publication that we would recognize as a final excavation report. Most archaeologists working in the region prior to 1948 were less familiar with and respectful of the local culture and language, however, and their acceptance of the interpretations suggested by local laborers and Egyptian supervisors varied considerably. In this presentation, I will discuss some of the instances in which the foreign excavators of Tell en-Nasbeh apparently relied on information from uncredited Egyptians and Palestinians in addition to their own ethnographic observations to interpret the functions of artifacts and installations of daily life (e.g., saddle quern, muller, "foot rubbers," rollers, "cooking plates," "foot bath," ovens) (McCown 1947; Wampler 1947). Comparisons with several other reports of excavations from the Mandate period will show that William Badè and other Tell en-Nasbeh staff members were typical of the time in privileging their own ad hoc ethnographic observations over indigenous knowledge.

The Collective Effort in Archaeology: Processing, Conserving, and Documenting Tell en-Nasbeh Finds Exported to the US

Caitlin O'Grady (University of California Los Angeles)

Archaeological fieldwork has always been a collective effort – one which requires recognition of and explicit trust in the knowledge, keen observations, and hand skills of all participants in recovering, documenting, preserving, interpreting, and publishing finds. This paper will examine the contributions of Tell en-Nasbeh directors, team members, and other actors in support roles working with artifacts following their exportation to the US with particular focus on transport, conservation, academic/public presentation, and philanthropy. The Badè Museum of Biblical Archaeology, Pacific School of Religion archives reveal the extensive academic, personal, political, and commercial networks required to support the construction of archaeological products for academic and public audiences in the US, which built on the integral roles of skilled native workforces in Palestine. Expertise, authority, and project organization directed the process by which exported artifacts were transformed into evidence used to construct and support narratives about the past. Case studies will examine how these played a role in the personal and institutional relationships required to produce meaningful archaeological data through artifact conservation, interpretation, documentation, and publication, whilst sustaining success in the academic, public, and philanthropic spheres during a period of shifting economic and political stability.

Tell en-Naṣbeh Archives at 100: New Readings of Burial Practice from Old Excavation Records

Melissa S. Cradic (Bade Museum of Archaeology at Pacific School of Religion; University at Albany, SUNY; Alexandria Archive Institute/Open Context)

The Badè Museum of Archaeology at Pacific School of Religion (Berkeley, CA) stewards a legacy collection of artifacts and archives from five seasons of excavation (1926-1935) at the ancient settlement of Tell en-Naṣbeh. The archaeological archives contain ca. 12,000 documents and ca. 4,000 image sources in the form of letters, field diaries, elevation logs, sketches, plans, and field photographs. Many of these records document the site's extramural cemeteries of rock-cut and natural cave tombs that were used extensively during the Iron Age II period. Drawing on previous successful methodologies developed by the author to study legacy archives from the University of Chicago's excavations at Tel Megiddo (1925-1936), this paper presents how disparate and even fragmentary sources of legacy data can address new questions about the site's burial record, with a special focus on context, inhumation, and burial taphonomy using. Leveraging these old sources, study applies new methods of archival taphonomy analysis, including standardized close reading techniques for observation, measurement, and cross-referencing across source materials. These techniques yield new results that enrich understanding about Judean funerary practice. More broadly, the study argues that legacy visual resources in particular can be utilized to significantly improve data quantity, quality, and granularity. It highlights the wider 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 evidence that is typically available in final publications of excavations from this period.

3D. Interconnectivity and Exchange with Northeast Africa I (Waldorf)

Chair(s): Iman Nagy, University of California, Los Angeles; Annissa Malvoisin, The Brooklyn Museum

The Plurality of the "Royal Baths" of Meroë

Shiro Burnette (New York University, The Institute of Fine Arts)

During his excavations of the Royal Enclosure in Meroë City, John Garstang uncovered structure M 194 -195, which he classified as the “Royal Baths.” For Garstang, the architectural form reflected Hellenistic and Roman bathhouses. The accompanying sculptures, including the so-called “Venus of Meroë,” strengthened this idea as they also recalled artistic traditions from Greece and Rome. The notion of a classicizing structure carried through scholarship on Meroë City, as Peter Shinnie noted that the “baths” must have been a “provincial variant of the well-known feature of Mediterranean life.” László Török, however, noted that the structure is more readily analogous to Egyptian sacred lakes, thus supporting a separate classification as a “water sanctuary.” The debate surrounding the classification of M 194 -195 highlights the structure’s ability to resist a singular architectural typology or known function. The initial application of “baths” or “sanctuary” limits the space to what were recognizable features from cultures outside of Meroë. This paper thus diverges from the discussion on taxonomy in exchange for a plural reading of the “Royal Baths” at Meroë. Accepting the plural character of this complex in the Royal Enclosure allows a deeper understanding of how the Meroitic court exercised its local understanding of the diverse associations between water and royal legitimacy. Furthermore, this heuristic application of pluralism aids in dismantling our understanding of Meroitic culture via the vantage points of its North African and Mediterranean neighbors.

The Lebanese Cedar Forest and the Egyptian Desert: On Pre- and Early Dynastic Animals, Ships and Mummies

Fanni Faegersten (Lund University, Sweden)

During the past decades there have been exciting discoveries casting new light on the Pre- and Early Dynastic periods of Upper Egypt. These have come not only in the form of archaeological finds from sites such as Nekhen/Hierakonpolis and the early harbor sites on the Red Sea coast, but also from chemical and molecular analyses carried out on existing finds and materials. It seems that Predynastic Egyptian elites, already involved in long-distance trade and exchange, turned to timber and byproducts (resins, tar and oils) from far-away coniferous forests in order to communicate with their gods and to seek eternal life. Two case studies are highlighted in this paper: the earliest indications of wooden ocean-going ships, and the first known intentional application of embalming substances to a dead body. Both point towards close contacts between Egypt and the Levantine coast. Only there did local settlements have access to the cedar forests in the high Lebanese mountains, possessing the necessary know-how to fell timber and extract resins, knowing their qualities and antibacterial properties, being able to handle the large carnivores inhabiting these wild and deep forests – and exhibiting the ability to export these numinous raw materials by means of ocean transport. Accepting an early and dynamic exploitation of the Lebanese cedar forest, we can perhaps view archaeological and iconographical material from Pre- and Early Dynastic Egypt – and contemporary Mesopotamia – in a new light.

Where's the Beef? Or, Meal Jars & Funerary Rites In a Wider African Context

LaMarrison Forte (Independent Researcher)

Throughout Africa, prepared meals are a staple in proceedings involving ancestral ascension and veneration. These meals involve special jars that contain food portions, and in varying degrees, are stand-ins for the body of the soon-to be ancestors. Among these traditions are also a dichotomy of taking on the attributes of and avoiding varying animal species, specifically snakes. There are apotropaic recitations found in the corpus of the Pyramid Texts that have long been thought of as being untranslatable, but this section may act as a homing beacon, signaling into the interior of the continent.

The Colonial Imprint: A Compositional Analysis of Egyptian and Nubian Ceramics

Reese Gover (University of California Santa Barbara)

The Nubian sites of Askut, Tombos, and Hannek present different levels of Egyptian colonial control over the region. Askut was colonized twice, Tombos once, and Hannek never at all. The comparison of these sites allows us to see how colonial power impacts material culture over time. A statistical analysis of count data and Instrumental Neutron Activation Analysis (INAA) data aids in the analysis of this impact. Since the chemical composition of Nile silt is relatively uniform, any visible differences in the composition are likely due to manufacturing traditions. The count data shows a statistically significant correlation between colonial periods and predominant style. Chi square tests show a greater significance between predominant style and site than between predominant style and colonial status. Principle Component Analysis (PCA) was performed on INAA data obtained from Carrano, Ferguson, Girty, and Smith (2008) to identify how the composition of ceramics varies across sites and periods. The results show that some samples from Askut, Hannek, and Tombos have a shared ceramic tradition, with select samples from Askut and Hannek showing a significant difference. The differences in the INAA data, reinforced by the statistical analysis of the count data, suggest a clear and lasting impact of colonial power on ceramics traditions.

3E. The Archaeology of the Kingdom of Judah (Marquette)

Chair(s): Michael G. Hasel, Institute of Archaeology, Southern Adventist University

The Assyrian Century in Judah in Light of New Archaeological Evidence

Filip Vukosavovic (Israel Antiquities Authority)

Recent excavations in Israel, and particularly in Jerusalem, have yielded a number of significant discoveries which, together with recent scholarship, shed new light on the “Assyrian Century” in Judah, spanning the late eighth to the late seventh centuries BCE. These finds include ivories, stamp seals, and textual evidence attesting to direct influence and correspondence between the Neo-Assyrian Empire and the Kingdom of Judah. The lecture will present an overview of this material evidence and assess the broader impact of Assyrian presence in the Levant on the economic, political, administrative, and cultural development of Judah.

Rethinking Cultic Practice in Iron Age Judah: New Insights from Iron Age IIA Lachish

Itamar Weissbein (The Hebrew University of Jerusalem), Yosef Garfinkel (The Hebrew University of Jerusalem)

In the Iron Age, Lachish emerged as one of the principal urban centers of the Kingdom of Judah. Recent excavations at the site have provided significant new data on the early stages of the Judahite city during Iron Age IIA. This paper presents a small sanctuary from this formative phase, uncovered in recent years in Area BBE at the north-eastern edge of the tell. The architectural layout of the structure, its associated installations, and the assemblage of cultic vessels recovered within it are examined, offering valuable insights into the character and spatial organization of ritual practices conducted at the site. By situating this Iron Age IIA sanctuary within a broader diachronic framework, the paper explores how shifts in the spatial settings of ritual may reflect transformations in cultic organization and changing relationships between kin-based groups, households, and emerging state institutions in the southern Levant, with particular reference to Iron Age Judah.

Simeonites in the Shephelah?

Chris McKinny (Lipscomb University)

There has been little consensus on the dating of the Simeonite list, preserved in three versions (Josh 15:26–32 [within the Negev district]; 19:2–8; 1 Chr 4:28–33). Simeonite towns are almost exclusively located in the Negeb; however, Ether and Ashan (cf. Josh 15:42; 19:2) appear in the

Libnah district of the Shephelah (Josh 15:42–44) and do not occur in the Negeb district (Josh 15:21–32). Thus, a re-examination of Ether — a Simeonite town in the Judean Shephelah (Rainey 1983: 11) beside the Levitical town of Libnah (Josh 21:13; 1 Chr 6:57) — should also provide insight into the dating of these texts, as well as providing possible clues for the rationale behind the affiliation of towns with multiple tribes. Recent studies in the region (e.g., Garfinkel 2025) demonstrate the necessity of reanalyzing previous interpretations of the relationship between archaeological remains and topographic texts of the Hebrew Bible.

Culture and Conflict: A Preliminary Faunal Analysis of the Zooarchaeological Remains from the 4th Expedition to Lachish

Edward F. Maher (North Central College)

The animal remains recovered during the 4th Expedition to Lachish hold the potential to identify ancient cultural practices and address contemporary historical circumstances. Routine operations included rearing domesticated barnyard stock, limiting pork consumption as a possible ethnic marker, use of bones as a source of raw material and perhaps gaming pieces, and the acquisition of fish from coastal Mediterranean and Egyptian ports. The Assyrian siege of Lachish in 701 BCE may also be evident in select details of the faunal assemblage. Vertebral bones from hump-backed cattle match the imagery of such bovines being taken away after the fall of Lachish as celebrated on Sennacherib's royal wall reliefs at Nineveh. Data on butchery marks that allow one to estimate which parts of the animal were targeted suggest skinning procedures that harvested animal hides. Leather products could be weaponized (e. g. slings, arrow quivers, personal bodily protection) to oppose Assyrian attackers. Relatively low occurrences of hunted wild game may be the result of Assyrian containment that occupied the neighboring landscape surrounding Lachish, effectively limiting access to such resources. The faunal data associated with this crisis period in Lachish's history during the late 8th century BCE may better define besieged urban economies and their associated animal assets.

Daily life in the Kingdom of Judah: A View from Tell Halif

Oded Borowski (Emory University)

Tell Halif is located in the southwestern corner of the Kingdom of Judah not far from the border with Philistia. During the Iron IIB it was a fortified town, which was established in the 9th century B.C.E. (Str. VIC), destroyed by a military action at the end of the 8th century (Str. VIB), and reoccupied by squatters for a short period in the 7th century (Str. VIA). The site contains 23 strata, but most exposed stratum at the tell is Stratum VIB, which provides extensive remains pertaining to daily life in that period. These include architectural remains of defense and domestic structures, remains pertaining to the economic activities as well as the diet and the cultic life at the site identified as biblical Rimmon. All of these, and more, will be presented in this paper.

3F. Gender in the Ancient Near East I (Williford A)

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

Orientalism, Gender, and Egyptology: The Use of the Word "Harem"

Jacquelyn Williamson (George Mason University)

Is it both outdated and Orientalist when we translate some terms for domestic arrangements within the royal household as indicating the locales of a "harem?" The misleading term persists in academic discourse despite ample evidence to against it. This paper discusses specific case studies in which scholars have inaccurately used the word "harem" to describe ancient evidence. In so doing, they have obscured understandings, often in unconscious attempts to make the evidence suit the term, such as in certain scenes from TT49, the Tomb of Neferhotep. These misrepresentations distort our understandings of the roles played by women in the royal sphere and confound our perceptions regarding the function of royal architecture in politics and daily royal life. Using TT49 as a test case, this paper demonstrates that scholars can more accurately interpret the lived experiences of people in the royal sphere simply by abandoning the erroneous term "harem." Examples of historic Turkish harems and the writings of Turkish feminists support an urgent call for Egyptological scholarship to more precisely depict household relationships in ancient Egypt.

Performing Queenship: Puduhepa and the Gendered Construction of Royal Authority in Hatti

Michael Moore (Brevard College)

Recent studies of queenship have increasingly emphasized the collaborative and distributed nature of rulership, challenging older models that equate monarchy with singular and (typically) male authority. Building on this trend, this paper examines the performative dimensions of this "corporate" structure of royal power, which relied on gendered roles to produce and sustain authority. Focusing on the figure of Puduhepa, the wife of Hattusili III, I argue that queenship in Hatti functioned as a set of gendered performances through which political power was enacted. Drawing on royal correspondence, treaties, and rituals and festival texts, I analyze how Puduhepa utilized her identities as priestess, wife, and queen to intervene in diplomacy, religious administration, and legal affairs. These roles, often framed in explicitly gendered terms, did not constrain her authority but rather provided the framework through which it was expressed. By focusing on gender and performance, this paper reframes Puduhepa not as an exceptional woman exercising an unusual amount of influence, but as a key participant in a system in which royal power was constituted through multiple, interdependent actors. In doing so, it argues that queenship was integral to the operation of Hittite monarchy and offers a model for rethinking the relationship between gender and political authority in the ancient Near East.

From Kin to King: Reconfiguring Legitimacy in Eighteenth Dynasty Egypt

Shanshan Han (University of Auckland)

Ideally, hereditary monarchy in Egypt was maintained by the pure royal bloodline. In the early Eighteenth Dynasty, succession was anchored in a kinship-based model characterized by royal motherhood and consanguineous marriage. Hatshepsut represented the zenith of this system, mobilizing her dual status as a king's daughter and wife to ascend the throne and exert unprecedented influence as a female pharaoh. However, her political agency exposed tensions within this system, particularly regarding gendered expectations of kingship. In response, constructed legitimacy began to supersede exclusive reliance on bloodline, initially articulated during Hatshepsut's reign through intensified association with deities (especially Amun), claims of divine parentage, and monumental display, and further developed by her male successors from Thutmose III to Amenhotep III. As this shift unfolded, kinship ties became less determinative, while divine affiliation emerged as a primary basis for legitimizing kingship. Women remained essential but were repositioned: as royal wives—often of non-royal origin (e.g., Tiye)—they served as structural resources within legitimacy construction rather than primary carriers of royal blood. This pattern reached an extreme expression in the Amarna period, where royal family representations—centered on the king and including Nefertiti and the royal daughters—became central to Aten ideology, marking an intensification of the model. It was later reconfigured through renewed emphasis on Amun and selective marital strategies. This paper argues that this shift reflects a transformation from biological descent to constructed legitimacy, in which women's agency was increasingly channeled to serve male-defined frameworks of kingship.

Redefining 'Dynasty': The Power of Sargonid Royal Women in the Iconographic Record

Clare Parry (Independent Academic)

Iconography provides insight into the role of family in the communication of legitimacy or 'dynasty'. This paper investigates iconographic displays of royal women to discuss their role, power and emerging visibility during the Sargonid period (c. 722-609 BCE). With reference to the Naqi'a bronze, stela of Libbali-šarrat and the banquet scene of Ashurbanipal, this paper offers insights into the role of women in the construction of dynasty through an iconographic lens. The representation of women formed an important part of the new presentation of the royal family under the Sargonids, a rupture from earlier

Assyrian practice. This reflects how mothers and wives stepped into the fore during times of political crisis or tension to establish lines of inheritance and providing touch-points to the dynastic past. This was most embodied by Naqi'a as a guarantor of the succession with the Zakutu treaty, however the iconographic record also reflects this new level of public power. The representation of royal women included the crenulated crown and the use of scorpions in glyptic art as part of the visual language of women's power. Royal women were pillars of legitimacy and their encoded iconographic bodies emphasised this role. The iconographic image of women's power is supported by the textual record including Naqi'a's building inscription and several dedications and letters from/to Naqi'a and Libbali-šarrat. This paper offers a new definition of dynasty for the Sargonid era that considers the foundational role of women based upon the iconographic and textual evidence, putting women back into the narrative.

Inventing the Heiress: Neferure and Succession in the Reigns of Hatshepsut and Thutmose III

Celeste Curran (University of Pennsylvania)

At the heart of most scholarly debates surrounding princess Neferure is the question of her political identity and what her depictions, and their erasure, reveal about her role at court. Despite a context of scholarship that assumes that Hatshepsut, as a female king, would wish to establish a succession of female rulers, there is no evidence to unequivocally support the interpretation of Neferure as her mother's heir. Instead, the evidence indicates that Neferure's position in Hatshepsut's court was one of unparalleled and secure female power, without the anticipation of kingship. This position should be understood within the broader context of succession across the reigns of Hatshepsut and Thutmose III. In this paper, I argue that we should interpret Neferure as depicted in proleptic representation typical of other powerful royal women and renew our understanding of Neferure's exceptionalism as aligning her with the legacies of forerunners such as Ahmose Nefertari and Hatshepsut prior to her kingship. I also argue that, rather than viewing Neferure as a "would-be" second consecutive female king, it is more likely that Hatshepsut had no designated successor.

3G. New Approaches to Ancient Animals II (Williford B)

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

Isotopic Evidence for Cattle Management from the Ancient Urban Center of Gordion, Türkiye

Nicole Hultquist (Boston University), David C. Meiggs (Rochester Institute of Technology), Diksha Basta (Boston College), Petra Vaiglova (The Australian National University), Ethan F. Baxter (Boston College), John M. Marston (Boston University)

Livestock management at the ancient urban center of Gordion, in central Anatolia (modern Türkiye), has been studied since the late 1980s, resulting in considerable advances in understanding the histories of farming and herding, as well as the local impact of environmental change. Less well understood, however, is how distinct political regimes influenced cattle management and mobility. By focusing on several 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 interpret changes in cattle diet, mobility, and management practices, frequently at an intra-annual scale. This presentation reports stable carbon, nitrogen, oxygen, and radiogenic strontium isotopic results from cattle deposited at Gordion. Comparing these results with previously hypothesized caprine management strategies, this study evaluates differences in livestock use, mobility, and provisioning networks. These results additionally provide a detailed investigation of how cattle management shifted across periods of changing political authority, while also discussing the next steps for research and future integration with other isotopic research across Anatolia.

A Lion at the Center: Rethinking the Hunt Scene of the Alexander Sarcophagus

Jessica L. Nitschke (Stellenbosch University)

The lion hunt relief on the Alexander Sarcophagus from Sidon has long been read through the lens of royal biography, with scholarly analysis focused on identifying the human protagonist. This paper argues that the search for a human center misreads the relief's compositional logic. The lion occupies the compositional center of the relief, fully engaged, its head rendered frontally, with its teeth sunk in the horse of a Persian rider. This composition is a departure from conventional hunt iconography in Greco-Macedonian and Near Eastern traditions, which tend toward showing the lion in profile view as subordinated prey, a foil for the heroism of a human protagonist. Re-centering the lion opens new interpretive possibilities of the scene. The lion's unique compositional prominence in the Alexander Sarcophagus is not an artistic anomaly but a meaningful choice; the artist centered it because the lion's action carried funerary significance for its Sidonian patron. Drawing on recent work on Phoenician eschatological iconography, this paper argues that the lion functions not as a foil for human heroism but as a cosmological agent, whose engagement is a necessary condition for passage to eternal life. This reading is reinforced by the visual dialogue with the Alexander figure on the sarcophagus's opposite face, whose lion helmet invokes the Melqart-Herakles-Alexander apotheosis tradition central to the monument's funerary program. Approaching the lion as a participant with genuine cosmological agency, rather than as prey or symbol of human triumph, clarifies our understanding one of antiquity's most enigmatic funerary monuments.

Ancient Near East Animal Iconography: Gods and Their Totems

Ilona Rashkow (Stony Brook University)

The iconography of the Ancient Near East includes some of the most vivid images of animals to be found anywhere. These images took many forms and appeared frequently in works that dealt with deities. Many gods (including Ancient Israel's) were associated with real animals such as lions, bulls, and wild oxen, as well as imaginary creatures such as fire-spitting dragons, cherubim and seraphim. There are many Ancient Near Eastern artifacts depicting deities with their animal totems. Fierce animals, such as bulls and lions, as well as hawks, stags, and other powerful beasts, were linked with certain gods whose qualities they shared. The most prevalent representations of these totems seems to have been bulls and lions. Not surprisingly, Israel's deity shared the same totems and characteristics as his neighbors –strong as a lion and stubborn as a bull. Although animal iconography is one of the most prevalent forms of Ancient Near East artifacts, I am focusing on lions and bulls, two of the most prevalent which represent deities and their totems. As I discuss, since deities and their representations as bulls and lions were ubiquitous throughout the Ancient Near East, it is not surprising that Israel's deity shared the same totems as its neighbors.

Call and Response: Animal Voices in Dialogue

Seth F. Richardson (University of Chicago)

That sense that animals in Sumerian literature had "voices" (gu3) and "made speech" (inim dug4) seems poorly matched by the "yelps" (>šasû), "cries" (>bakû), and "bellows" (nagāgu), apparently appropriate to their species, that describe their vocality in Akkadian works. This seems to mark a divided conception of the capability and agency of animal communication. A subtle but consistent theme may to some extent bridge that divide, however, through the many, diverse, and shared allusions and invocations of animal vocalization as responsive—to gods, to men, to other animals, even to selves. That vocal presentations of animals implied acts of audition, cognition, and response is broadly baked into descriptions of even the most "animalistic" of noises (e.g., as rigmu). This paper will investigate some of the unexpected (if sometimes ambivalent) assumptions about animal vocalization as not only speech but dialogue, assumptions which expose some expectations as well about human discourse as a social act carried out in speech communities and inseparable from listening, thinking, and responding.

Enigmatic Embodied Experiences: Interpreting Animal Agency at Bronze Age Anau Depe, Turkmenistan

Jackson Clark (University of North Carolina - Chapel Hill)

Collecting data on lived experience through archaeofaunal assemblages has been a goal of zooarchaeologists for decades and is emboldened today through methodologies such as isotope analyses. These methods have demonstrated the capacity to capture concrete information concerning an animal's diet and environment. Alongside these methodological developments has been a focus on reexamining animal agency within ancient societies. Zooarchaeology has increasingly adopted anthropological epistemologies centered on multispecies relationships that emphasize the interconnectedness of beings within an environment. This paper argues that these aims can be further explored through the insertion of anthropological embodiment theory, which explores the biological ramifications of culture, nature, and society on individual beings. To that end, this paper explores the potential avenues for examining animal agency through zooarchaeological methods and embodiment theory at Anau Depe, Turkmenistan. Anau Depe's South Mound was excavated from 1997-2003 as part of a joint project between the Turkmen Academy of Science and Harvard University. The associated archaeofaunal assemblage was exported but not analyzed until lab work beginning in the summer of 2025. This paper presents a preliminary report of the faunal profile at Anau Depe filtered through embodiment and multispecies epistemologies that foreground interconnected experiences that are intentionally multispecies in nature.

3H. Archaeology of Anatolia III (Williford C)

Chair(s): Nancy Amelia Highcock, Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford; Oya Topçuoğlu, Northwestern University

Kiln Technology, Production and Economic Impact in Cilician Port Cities: Elaiussa Sebaste and Antiochia ad Cragum

Asena Kizilarslanoglu (Kastamonu University)

*Virtual

The Cilician Region contains numerous port cities due to its strategic location. These cities were centers of active trade and, consequently, highly receptive to economic growth. Trade and economic development mutually reinforced each other, encouraging local production. One of the most significant outputs of this production consisted of terracota products shaped according to their intended function. This study examines kiln technology and production processes in two Cilician port cities, Elaiussa Sebaste and Antiochia ad Cragum, evaluating both the forms produced and their contributions to urban economies. Archaeological excavations in both cities have revealed kilns which produced not only amphorae and common ware, but also cooking pots, lamps, and other local forms, as well as architectural materials such as roof tiles, bricks, and pipes. Kilns operated at varying scales and were capable of meeting both local and regional demand. The clay, firing techniques, kiln typologies and location of production workshops within the urban landscape are analyzed in relation to the cities' commercial networks and regional production traditions. Through the examples of Elaiussa Sebaste and Antiochia ad Cragum, this presentation discusses the contribution of kiln technology to port city economies, the organization of production processes, and their role in urban life. By integrating technical analyses based on archaeological evidence with interpretations of the economic and social contexts of ancient cities, it aims to illuminate the relationship between production, technology, and urban development in Roman and Late Roman Cilicia.
Keywords: Cilicia, Elaiussa Sebaste, Antiochia ad Cragum, Kiln Technology, Ceramic Production.

The Ceramic Finds from Late Byzantine to Early Ottoman Pergamon: New Evidence from the Stadtgrabung Excavations

Sofia M. Kane (Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco)

At Pergamon, the 13th through 14th centuries AD were a time of rapid political transformation: control of the city changed hands from the Byzantine Empire to the Karesi Beylik, and then to the nascent Ottoman Empire. This period of transition brought about nearly immediate changes to the ceramic repertoire of western Anatolia. Beylik rule facilitated overland trade networks, resulting in the importation of new glaze techniques and new tastes and preferences in ceramic styles from Iran and eastern Anatolia. However, at the same time, previous Byzantine ceramic techniques continued into the 14th century and beyond in local production, thereby providing further insight into the experience of the local population under changing rule. By utilizing ceramic finds from the 1980s Stadtgrabung excavations at Pergamon, this paper investigates the impact of political change upon the material culture of the city in the 13th and 14th centuries.

From Wild to DOM2: Horses in Anatolia from the Neolithic to the Iron Age

Benjamin Arbuckle (University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill)

Horses (Equus ferus and E. caballus) have proven to be one of the most impactful co-creators of human history. In the past decade, discoveries in paleogenomics have revolutionized our understanding of horse histories, particularly relating to the emergence and spread of the DOM2 lineage of domestic horses. However, the history of horses in Anatolia still remains poorly resolved. In this paper I explore the history of caballine equids in Anatolia through a critical assessment of archaeological and paleogenomic evidence. In particular, I focus on the taxonomic identity of Anatolia's wild equids, the nature of human-equid connectivity, and the context of the origins of DOM2 lineages. In the process, I critically evaluate narratives of horse domestication and explore evidence for spatial and temporal structure in the technologies of horse equipment in the Anatolian Bronze and Iron Ages.

Down to Brass Tacks: Exploring the Innovation of High-Zinc Bronze Alloying on the Central Anatolian Plateau in the 1st Millennium BCE

Braden W. Cordivari (Institute for the Study of the Ancient World, New York University)

One of the hallmarks of material culture in Iron Age Anatolia is the production and exchange of high-quality copper alloy metalwork, to which the later Greek tradition of the 'golden touch' of the Phrygian king Midas has long been associated. In fact, many of the metal objects from 8th and 7th century BCE Gordion, the capital of Phrygia in West Central Anatolia, are alloys of copper, tin, and zinc. The use of zinc-rich alloys is highly particular to Anatolia, and indeed the technology is not found outside Anatolia until the Roman period. It is remarkable that zinc-rich alloy metallurgy appears isolated within Anatolia during a period of increased interconnectivity across western Asia and the Mediterranean. This paper presents results from a multimethod analytical approach to the study of metal objects from central Anatolian sites, including Gordion, in order to examine the provenance, alloying, and working practices of zinc-rich alloys, and the relationship of craft production to social and political networks on the plateau. It finds that the use of zinc-rich alloys in central Anatolia was closely related to political centralization at Gordion and to the creation of status items associated with personal display, principally fibulae.

3I. Violence in the Ancient Near East and Hebrew Bible III (Astoria)

Chair(s): Anthony SooHoo, Pontifical Biblical Institute (Rome); Megan Cifarelli, Manhattanville College

The Threat of Violence in Biblical Law and the Neo-Babylonian Temple Archives

Bruce Wells (University of Texas at Austin)

Physical punishments, often very violent ones, were certainly part of ancient Near Eastern law and legal practice. But judicial authorities seem to have implemented violent punishments much less often than what the so-called law codes might lead one to believe. What mattered was the threat of violence that confronted the individuals deemed to have committed a serious wrong. Faced with that threat, these individuals often had to accept exorbitant fines or enslavement in lieu of the prescribed physical punishment. This paper considers what happens when religious authorities make similar threats of violence. Does that change the dynamic? It examines, first, priestly and Deuteronomic rules that contain the threat of

violence and that come with the apparent imprimatur of cultic officials. Second, it looks at records from the sixth-century archive of the Eanna temple in Uruk. These texts reveal temple officials threatening their own workforce and even priestly class with violence in order to manipulate them into complying with their directives. I argue that religious officials resorted to threats of violence especially at moments when the justifications for their power were being called into question. They pursued this course of action to assert—and often reassert—their authority and to coerce subordinates and equals alike. It is far from clear, though, that they followed through on these threats any more than their judicial counterparts would have.

Historicizing Experiences and Intergenerational Aftermath of Violence in ancient Judah

Leslie Virnelson (United Lutheran Seminary)

Feminist historiography offers an impetus to embrace the necessity of creating historical narratives from fragmentary evidence in archives that preserve details mostly about other people (e.g., Saidiya Hartman, Judith Bennett). Feminist discussions of sexual violence and children born of war also call for recognition that forms of sexual violence (Elisabeth Jean Wood, Karen Engle) and societal reactions to the children of combatants (Kimberly Theidon) are not universal. They are experienced and enacted in culturally and historically specific circumstances. This paper will emphasize the methodological need to historicize possibilities of sexual contact (via assault, sex work, and other possibilities) between foreign combatants and women in ancient Judah during the eight-sixth centuries BCE. Although war leaves distinct archaeological remains and biblical texts vividly memorialize some aspects of the experience of war, this paper will further consider methodological approaches to the silences in biblical texts and archaeological remains surrounding many experiences of war and violence. I argue that the image of an abandoned infant of mixed ethnic parentage in Ezekiel 16:1-5 may be informed by a social milieu in which children fathered by foreign combatants were vulnerable to infanticide. I consider slut-shaming language used against personified Jerusalem throughout the chapter to foreground intergenerational repercussions of war and demonstrate that Ezekiel 16 as a whole reflects attitudes that could contribute to the marginalization of children born of war and their mothers.

Impressive Tensions: Seals, Sealplay, and Sensations of Violence at Persepolis

Neville McFerrin (University of North Texas)

In reliefs across Persepolis, the violence that underpins the generation and maintenance of empire is elided. While weapons are visible across the site, their destructive capacities are blunted. Daggers are sheathed; bows are depicted absent from arrows. The royal hero's blade does not touch the skin of those he confronts. Such depictions craft violent potentials, intimating that these destructive capacities have been leashed by the control that defines the king and by the cooperative efforts of imperial agents and subjects alike. Yet, in impressions of seals from the Persepolis Fortification Archive, these compositions shift; here, violence is iterative and pervasive. This paper explores this disjunction, focusing upon PFS 0051, PFS 981, and PFS 1637 to argue that the scenes of combat and contest depicted upon these seals enable modes of sanctioned violence that are typically the purview of rulers to be deployed through the hands of subjects. As the hand manipulates the seal, the violence depicted upon it impresses clay that, while it is a double for skin, is distinct from the nociceptive capacities of the sealer, distancing them from both the violent encounter and its effects, even as they generate the visual encounter itself. In this act, the potential to activate aggression is displaced from the space of the king into the hands of his subjects, shifting the violent encounter from an act of subjugation to a strategy for unification, one that operates in parallel to depicted strategies of unification seen throughout the reliefs of the site.

From Çatalhöyük to the Narmer Palette: A Girardian Approach to Imagery of Twin Leopards

Mark Anspach (Imitatio)

*Virtual

In this paper I suggest that the bas-reliefs of twin leopards at Neolithic Çatalhöyük and the twin serpent-necked leopards on the Narmer Palette exemplify a cross-cultural pattern in which images of symmetrical doubles signify reciprocal violence. In pre-state societies such violence can tear a community apart. The oldest remedy for reciprocal violence may well be the non-reciprocal violence of sacrifice. René Girard (1977) proposes a purely etic definition of sacrifice as ritualized violence without risk of vengeance. Wall paintings at Çatalhöyük that show crowds of humans surrounding and baiting isolated wild animals evoke sacrificial rituals in Girard's sense. Next to these scenes are two parallel rows of men wearing leopard skins. In an earlier article (Anspach 2019), I connected these paired rows of leopard men to the paired leopards in the reliefs, arguing that both embody the dangerous violence that sacrifice must tame. The leashed leopards on the Narmer Palette, traditionally held to represent Upper and Lower Egypt, have been tamed by a new form of non-reciprocal violence: unilateral state power exercised by the ruler—who, while pacifying the country, sacrifices enemies in the place of animals. Anspach, M. R. 2019. Paired Leopards and Encircled Prey: Images of Rivalry and Sacrifice at Çatalhöyük. Pp. 129-50 in Violence and the Sacred in the Ancient Near East: Girardian Conversations at Çatalhöyük, ed. I. Hodder. Cambridge: Cambridge University. Girard, R. 1977. Violence and the Sacred. Trans. P. Gregory, from French. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins.

3J. Negotiating Elites: Strategies of Elite Practices and Consumption as Reactions to Political Dynamics I (Private Dining 2)

Chair(s): Reli Avisar, Tel Aviv University and Haifa University

Methodological Problems for Identifying Elites and Elite Material Culture in the Ancient Near East

Zachary Thomas (Australian Catholic University), Louise A. Hitchcock (Independent Researcher)

Our paper takes the position that "elite" status is not a cultural universal, it is dependent on the particular social structural, cultural, political, religious, technological, environmental, and economic context of any (pre)historical situation to which it is applied. Thus, the innate modern construct of the capitalist "elite" cannot be indiscriminately applied to the ANE. Furthermore, neither can the entire Near East and Mediterranean region be reductively viewed as timeless, uniform, or static. One must contextualize its application regionally and chronologically to understand how being an "elite" was contextually and socially constructed. By implication this problematizes the identification of "elite" material culture and its setting within modes of exchange, capital, and labor. As Eric Cline demonstrated in his research on "distance value," we cannot assume that what seems mundane to our eyes was necessarily so in the ANE, without careful analysis, attention to find context, and argumentation. We propose to understand how material culture may be created and socialized as "elite" using Bourdieu's concept of taste as socially conditioned, learned behaviors that reinforce social hierarchies. In addition we will draw on Anthony Giddens' Theory of Structuration whereby he proposes that agents can negotiate power relations through the reproduction or transformation of existing social structures. We will also take into account Judith Butler's interpretation of identity as something established through iteration (repetitive routines). We will illustrate these concepts through examples drawn from our research and fieldwork.

The Parasocial Relationship of Egyptian Elites with their King

Jessica Tomkins (Wofford College)

This paper questions the nature of the relationship between Egyptian elites and their king(s), particularly in the Old Kingdom and First Intermediate Period, assessing the elite-king relationship as a parasocial relationship. We know much about ancient Egyptian kings from texts written by elites. Tomb biographies, for example, heavily feature mentions of the king in various ways; elite titles often mention the king, letters received from the king were copied verbatim and inscribed on the public-facing tomb facade, stories were told about a one-time brief meeting with the king, and every tomb inscription begins the same way: "an offering which the king gives…" All this serves to convey elite status through a personal relationship to the king. But that relationship was one sided. While

the king is ever present in elite texts, elites are noticeably absent in royal texts. This paper argues that most elites had a parasocial relationship with their king(s), rooted in ideology and decorum, rather than reality. This paper argues that kings intentionally curated a one-sided relationship with their elites in order to promote loyalty through perceived closeness, which elites in turn were able to use as a means to curate, maintain, and negotiate their own power in the provinces by projecting the perceived relationship with the king to impress those of lower social status below them. Only though a perceived relationship with the king was real elite power created.

Divine Election, Ritual Mediation, and Cosmic Order: The Ideology of Kingship in the Neo-Assyrian Empire

Kateryna Baulina (Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv)

Assyrian royal ideology was grounded in the belief that the king ruled by divine will and functioned as the earthly representative of the gods. This paper examines how Assyrian royal titulature and ritual texts constructed the image of the ideal ruler as a sacred intermediary between the divine and human realms. Drawing on royal inscriptions and theological formulas, the study investigates how divine legitimacy was articulated and maintained within the political culture of the Neo-Assyrian Empire. Particular attention is given to titles such as šar kiššati ("king of the universe") and šangû ilāni ("high priest of the gods") and to their relationship with regional religious traditions and theological concepts in ancient Mesopotamia. Through a comparative analysis of titulature, ritual language, and royal building practices, the paper argues that Neo-Assyrian royal ideology articulated a threefold model of sacred authority: divine election, ritual mediation between gods and people, and the king's responsibility for maintaining cosmic and social order. The study demonstrates that the Assyrian ruler was conceptualized not merely as a political or military leader but as the guarantor of kittum u mīšarum, ensuring justice and stability in both the cosmos and human society. Royal activities such as temple construction, ritual renewal, and communication with the gods reinforced this ideological framework and established a sacred geography in which sovereignty and divine mandate were inseparably linked.

Negotiation & Identity at the Margins: Herod the Great as a Roman Client King

Anna Banowsky (University of California, Santa Barbara)

As a client king, Herod the Great was tasked with keeping the peace between his people and the Roman Empire; this role required negotiation between many facets of identity to maintain his position within existing systems of power. While previous scholarship has focused on Herod as a client king of Rome, I argue that more attention should be paid to the specific political implications of the role itself, as well as how legitimacy could be maintained throughout multiple networks. Through various building projects, such as the Temple Mount complex and the Temple to Augustus and Roma at Caesarea Maritima, Herod was able to use style as a way of signaling affiliation both to Rome and to Judaea. I draw on bodies of theory from political science, sociology, and anthropology to understand the ways in which archaeology can help us understand the complexities of politics on the margins of the Roman Empire.

Local Elites and the Egyptian Empire in Late Bronze Age Megiddo

Reli Avisar (Tel Aviv University & University of Haifa)

The Egyptian presence in the southern Levant during the Late Bronze Age has often been understood through models of elite emulation or direct Egyptian administration. Recent scholarship, however, emphasizes local agency and selective engagement with imperial culture. This paper examines these processes at Megiddo, a major Canaanite center incorporated into the Egyptian imperial system following the campaigns of Thutmose III. Focusing on material culture, it analyzes its chronological, spatial, and social distribution across the site. The evidence reveals distinct spheres of engagement: everyday practices remained rooted in local traditions, while Egyptian-style personal objects were incorporated into local symbolic systems. Egyptian and Egyptianized objects and architectural forms were more deliberately concentrated in palatial contexts, where they could signal elite status and political affiliation. Comparison with Lachish and Hazor demonstrates varied strategies of engagement with Egyptian influence. Megiddo thus emerges as a local polity selectively appropriating imperial forms while maintaining substantial cultural continuity.

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 19, 2026

4:25pm – 6:30pm (CST)

4A. Urbanism and Polities in the Bronze and Iron Age Levant II (Continental A)

Chair(s): Omer Sergi, Tel Aviv University; Daniel Master, Wheaton College; Karen Covello-Paran, Israel Antiquities Authority

The Development of Philistine Urbanization during the Iron Age

Ann E. Killebrew (The Pennsylvania State University)

In the aftermath of the Hittite Empire's collapse and the decline of New Kingdom Egypt at the close of the Late Bronze Age (ca. 1200 BCE), the southern Levant underwent significant cultural, societal, and economic fragmentation. While many Late Bronze urban centers experienced destruction, abandonment, or population decline across various regions of the southern Levant during the Iron I period, the southern coastal plain witnessed population growth alongside the expansion of several Philistine-associated sites. This paper examines the processes and underlying reasons for urbanization and de-urbanization at these sites, as well as their interactions with the surrounding hinterlands during the Iron I and II periods.

The Color of Iron Age Urbanism: Red-Slipped and Burnished Wares and the Creation of a New Visual Space in the Southern Levant

Assaf Kleiman (Ben-Gurion University of the Negev)

The gradual decline of painted vessels alongside the conspicuous increase in red-slipped and burnished wares is one of the most tangible markers of the Iron Age Levant. Although the use of these surface treatments is a well-known feature of archaeological assemblages dating to this period, surprisingly few studies have attempted to explore variability in their chronology, distribution, and meaning across urban societies, especially on a quantitative basis. In this lecture, I re-examine the previously proposed relationship between the appearance of red-slipped and burnished serving vessels in the southern Levant and the emergence of the Iron Age kingdoms. My analysis draws primarily on new datasets from Tel Megiddo, which provide both diachronic and synchronic snapshots of the use of these wares at the site, as well as on data from other sites. While the technology itself was already extensively used in Philistia during Iron Age I, the cross-regional crisis that befell south-Levantine societies during the Iron Age I/II transition created the conditions for its adoption by additional social groups, particularly in northern Israel. Against this background, I explore the possible meaning of red-slipped and burnished vessels in northern Israel. I argue that while these vessels were not the direct result of the emergence of the Iron Age kingdoms, they played an important role in their development. The widespread popularity of red-slipped and burnished vessels in nearly every household within the territories controlled by the Kingdom of Israel, sometimes constituting nearly 80% of the serving vessels, created a shared visual space that eased interactions between different elite groups throughout the southern Levant.

"The Sons of Ammon" as Royal Invention

Joel S. S. Burnett (Baylor University)

The colossal Amman Theater Statue provides decisive evidence for an Ammonite royal ancestor cult integrating monumental sculpture and urban architecture as attested among Syro-Anatolian city-state kingdoms during Iron Age II. As those more fully preserved parallels show, these urban "ritual theatres" and the associated public ceremonies served to foster solidarity between the monarchy and the broader population(s) falling under its hegemonic claims. That this need existed so acutely for the Ammonite kingdom establishes a new sociopolitical context for three

anomalies regarding the broader Ammonite evidence: 1) the exceptional nature of the Ammonite corpus of stone statuary within the southern Levant and the cultural continuity with the northern Levant that it substantiates; 2) the dearth of Ammonite personal names invoking the monarchic god Milkom and the overwhelming predominance of "El" as a theophoric element; and 3) the ostensibly contrived nature of the kingdom's identity as "the Sons of Ammon" (ʿAmmōn, meaning 'the Ancestor'). This presentation's significance lies in its providing a unified explanation accounting for these longstanding puzzles to scholarship. In this presentation, I argue from the relevant archaeological, artistic, and textual-philological evidence that these factors interrelate in showing that the formulation of Ammonite national identity in terms of shared kinship was likely devised and cultivated by an Iron Age dynasty of rulers otherwise drawing on models from northern Syria (likely via Damascus) in exerting hegemony over an already socially integrated population, one speaking a Canaanite language (as opposed to Aramaic) and worshiping the god El.

4B. The Archaeology of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq II (Continental B)

Chair(s): Petra M. Creamer, Emory University; Elise J. Laugier, Utah State University

Craft Production in the Age of Imperial Expansion: Neo-Assyrian Pottery in Cross-cultural Perspective

Britt E. Hartenberger (Western Michigan University), Timothy Matney (University of Akron)

The Sebittu Project investigates seven small sites in the western Erbil Plain of the Kurdish Region of Iraq. The project area includes Neo-Assyrian villages and hamlets found within a 15.5 km2 interfluvial region of the imperial heartland. Most of these sites are newly founded in this period in a previously unfarmed area. Their small size and dispersed nature is indicative of the Neo-Assyrian empire's strategy of agricultural intensification or extensification, tactics also employed by other world empires such as the Inca, Aztec, and China. Exactly who [was] moved into these villages is another question that we cannot answer yet, whether resettled farmers or deportees, or likely both. This year, we report on recent results of pottery analysis from two small village sites and examine how these results address questions of craft production for the larger economy. A selection of plain ware and fineware sherds from two Sebittu sites has been subjected to Neutron Activation Analysis (NAA). The resulting data on clay composition in the Erbil Plain is compared with contemporary pottery from Nineveh and Nimrud as well as sites in the upper Tigris River valley. This study explores clay composition variability, its implications for the organization and location of Neo-Assyrian pottery production, and craft consumption in the context of imperial 'infilling' of territories. The Sebittu Project is an ASOR-affiliated research project.

Current Work and New Analyses at Qach Rresh

Petra M. Creamer (Emory University), Kyra Kaercher (Montana State University-Northern), Glynnis Maynard (University of Cambridge), Elise Jakoby Laugier (Utah State University), Laurel Poolman (University of Maryland, Baltimore County)

The site of Qach Rresh on the Erbil Plain in Iraqi Kurdistan was founded in the Neo-Assyrian period (950-612 BCE) with strata showing "post-Assyrian" (612-539 BCE) refuse deposition and a later Achaemenid Persian period (539-323 BCE) resettlement of the site. Four seasons of work at Qach Rresh have shown that the site was primarily established for agropastoral management, including large features which have been identified as animal pens and numerous structures featuring storage rooms. This paper is a presentation of the results of the current excavation and remote sensing results as part of the Rural Landscapes of Iron Age Imperial Mesopotamia (RLIIM) project. This talk will primarily focus on the Achaemenid reoccupation of the site, along with new results from microremain and faunal analysis regarding Qach Rresh's Assyrian pastoral economy.

Clay, Craft, and Chronology: Ceramic Production and Change at Qach Rresh, Iraqi Kurdistan

Kyra Kaercher (Montana State University-Northern)

Ceramic assemblages from the site of Qach Rresh in Iraqi Kurdistan, excavated between 2023 and 2026 by the Rural Landscapes of Iron Age Imperial Mesopotamia, provide important insights into regional production practices, site chronology, and patterns of daily and specialized activity. This study presents the results of a combined macroscopic and microscopic analysis designed to establish typological, functional, and technological variability within the assemblage. Macroscopic examination focused on fabric, vessel form, surface treatment, temper, and clay characteristics in order to define ceramic types and reconstruct their likely uses. These attributes also contribute to the development of a preliminary chronological framework, allowing for the possible division between Neo-Assyrian (before 600 BCE) and Post-Assyrian (after 600 BCE) periods. To complement the macroscopic study, a targeted subsample of sherds was subjected to thin section petrographic analysis. Microscopic investigation enabled the identification of mineral inclusions, clay matrix composition, and features indicative of manufacturing techniques. Petrographic data also provides evidence for potential production locales by distinguishing locally derived raw materials from non-local fabrics, thereby contributing to discussions of exchange, mobility, and craft specialization. Together, these approaches demonstrate that the ceramics of Qach Rresh reflect both continuity in local technological traditions and selective adoption of broader regional styles. The integration of typological and petrographic datasets allows for a more nuanced interpretation of ceramic production and use at the site during this time of political upheaval.

From Provincial Farm to Palace Table: Imperial Ceramic Practice across the Neo-Assyrian Network

Alexandra Wrathall (University of Osnabrück)

In the decade since Alice Hunt's pioneering study (2015) of Assyrian-style wares recovered from across the empire, new excavations, publications, and analytical advances have significantly expanded scholarly understanding of imperial ceramic practice. This paper revisits the question of how imperial ceramic-forms circulated and were reproduced across the empire by examining them through the lens of communities and constellations of practice. Drawing on three case studies from the imperial centre, western provinces, and southwestern frontier, the study showcases how Assyrian vessel forms served the needs of imperial practice. This reconstruction is then contrasted with how these same vessels were adopted, reproduced, and transformed by the local/indigenous communities who were consumed by the empire. The analysis suggests that ceramic forms typical of the Assyrian heartland established morphological standards that were reproduced across imperial territories and peripheries. Because these vessels were largely produced (and consumed) locally, imperial forms became entangled with regional ceramic traditions as producers integrated imperial and local knowledge systems within single vessels. Reconstructing these networks of production and consumption highlights both the diffusion of imperial forms and the diversity of practices that characterized ceramic production across the Neo-Assyrian imperial sphere. The paper spotlights how "provincial" archaeological datasets can provide critical feedback for the reconstruction of heartland ceramic practice and imperial material economies. In doing so, the paper returns to longstanding debates around the "pots and people" paradigm, highlighting the entangled diversity of practice that complicates notions of a singular or monolithic "Assyrian" identity.

Empire in the Provincial Hinterland: The Neo-Assyrian and Hellenistic-Parthian Occupation at Kani Shaie

Steve Renette (University of Cambridge), Glynnis Maynard (University of Cambridge), Brady Hill

From 2023 to 2025, excavations in the Lower Town area at Kani Shaie in Sulaymaniyah have revealed a long occupational sequence from the Middle Bronze Age to the Ottoman period. In particular, the partial exposure of a large Neo-Assyrian courtyard building with stone foundations alongside associated cylinder seals and sealing materials demonstrates the site's administrative importance within the local landscape during this period. The imperial reach into the hinterland has not yet been archaeologically investigated, yet textual records reveal a landscape organized with many small outposts. These records, including the 'Zamua Itinerary', allow a potential identification of Kani Shaie with ancient Azri. Following three hundred years of abandonment, these Assyrian ruins were integrated

within another stone-foundation courtyard building during the Hellenistic-Parthian period, suggesting that Kani Shaie received renewed imperial attention due to its strategic location within the Zagros Piedmont. Close association with recent discoveries at Rabana-Merquly and Qalatga Darband suggests a southward expansion of the Adiabene Kingdom in an attempt to establish control over the resources provided by the plains and valleys in the Sulaymaniyah region. This paper will discuss the extended use of this building through successive empires and situate Kani Shaie within its Neo-Assyrian and Parthian regional contexts.

4C. Tell en-Naṣbeh at 100 Years: Past, Present, and Future II (Continental C)

Chair(s): Jeffrey R. Zorn; Aaron Brody, Pacific School of Religion

Tell en-Nasbeh in the Early Iron Age: New Insights

Kyle Keimer (Pillar Seminary)

The site of Tell en-Nasbeh is a major Iron Age tell just north of Jerusalem. Excavated from 1926 to 1935 by William Badè, the site was largely published by his colleagues in two reports in 1947. Subsequent studies, including Zorn's 1993 dissertation, dealt with various aspects of Nasbeh's remains, however, many important finds from the early Iron Age (the Iron Age I and early Iron Age IIA) have only ever been partially published, are completely unpublished, and/or are unrecognized in the final excavation reports due to the conventions used in the early 20th century. This paper will provide new insights into the history and occupation of Tell en-Nasbeh by considering the following materials from the site: 1) Philistine pottery, 2) Iron Age I Punctillated handles, and 3) finger-impressed jar handles.

A Century of Tell en-Naṣbeh: Imaging, Theory, and Presence in Judean Pillar Figurines

Lauren K. McCormick (Biblical Archaeology Society)

Excavations at Tell en-Naṣbeh produced one of the most significant corpora of Judean Pillar Figurines (JPFs) from Iron Age Judah, second only to those recovered in Jerusalem. My earlier presentations to this scholarly community have focused on imaging analyses of these figurines, employing techniques such as Reflectance Transformation Imaging, X-ray imaging, and pigment analysis to reveal previously unrecognized features of their manufacture, surface treatment, and finish work. These investigations have highlighted details such as dynamic eyes and stark paint schemes that shaped how the figurines were visually encountered. Beyond the imaging work, and building on research by Silvia Schroer and Erin Darby, I argue that the figurines' pillar-shaped lower bodies also warrant deeper investigation. By connecting the figurines to the anthropomorphic temple pillars described in 1 Kings 7, the paper proposes that JPFs invoked axis mundi symbolism, translating the monumental visual language of temple pillars into intimate household settings. Together, the imaging evidence and reconceptualization of the pillar raise broader questions about how these objects functioned as religious images. I bring JPFs into conversation with theoretical approaches to religious images developed by Birgit Meyer, Zainab Bahrani, and Hans Belting, asking how the JPFs may have functioned as media that both mediated divine presence and made it manifest. Presented at Tell en-Naṣbeh's centennial, this paper treats the site's figurine corpus as a testing ground for technological and theoretical approaches that open new ways of understanding the role of images in the religious experience of ordinary people in the ancient Israelite home—an area typically difficult to access.

Reevaluating Tel en-Nasbeh at the Persian Period

Aharon Tavger, Liora Freud (Tel Aviv University), Oded Lipschits (Tel Aviv University)

Since the excavations of the site by William Fredric Badè some hundred years ago, there has been a large consensus that Tel en-Nasbeh, one of the most important sites in the central hill country during the Iron Age and Persian period, is the city of Mizpah, which was fortified during the times of the Judahite monarchy and served as the district capital in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah. In Jeffery Zorn's reevaluation of the stratigraphy of Tel en-Nasbeh more than 30 years ago, based on an in-depth study of the plans and pictures survived in the excavations archives, he concluded that while some of the Iron Age structures were used during the Persian period, a new plan had been established and only a limited amount of structures were attributed to this period. This study was based on the assumption that "The town should still exist in the 5th century, and perhaps still be relatively well off (Nehemiah)" (Zorn 1993: 85). This paper presents a new study of the Persian-period pottery assemblage recovered during the excavations, most of which has never been published. A typological analysis of the pottery, combined with a reassessment of its archaeological contexts and precise find spots, allows us to reexamine Zorn's conclusions and refine the chronology, settlement pattern, and extent of occupation at Tel en-Nasbeh during the Persian period. The results contribute to a renewed discussion of the site's role and the broader settlement dynamics of the Judahite highlands under Persian rule.

Settlement in Decline: Excavation Insights from Tell en-Naṣbeh in the Hellenistic and Roman Periods

Dvir Raviv (Bar-Ilan University)

In this lecture I will examine the Hellenistic and Roman period finds uncovered in the excavations conducted by William F. Badè at Tell en-Naṣbeh and in the surrounding burial caves. The evidence indicates a decline in settlement at the beginning of the Hellenistic period, followed by the abandonment of the site in the early Hasmonean period, and continued but limited activity – probably agricultural, along with the use of burial caves – during the Hasmonean and Roman periods. The archaeological evidence from the site will be discussed in comparison with finds from other sites in the region and with the literary sources.

4D. Interconnectivity and Exchange with Northeast Africa II (Waldorf)

Chair(s): Iman Nagy, University of California, Los Angeles; Annissa Malvoisin, The Brooklyn Museum

The Papyrus of Ani and the Ten Commandments: What is the Real Deal?

Josef "Ben" Ben Levi (William Leo Hansberry Society)

This presentation is intended to further progress toward decolonization and deconstruction in assessing the challenges required in translating ancient texts that have been based on Western European linguistic models. Many of these texts have influenced the consciousness of diasporic and continental Africans for decades, and in some cases centuries in the West. The two texts evaluated in this presentation will be the so-called 125th Chapter of the Papyrus of Ani in the Book of the Coming Forth into the Light and its constant comparison to the Ten Commandments in the Old Testament books of Exodus and Deuteronomy. As a general rule in scholarship: Most people who know the Bible don't know ancient Egypt, and most people who know ancient Egypt don't know the Bible. It seems that competent knowledge of both genres of research needs to be considered. Without some knowledge of the Hebrew language, it would be difficult to understand what is meant by a "commandment" since the term is never used to identify the so-called Ten Commandments in the Books of Exodus or Deuteronomy. Without some knowledge of Ancient Egyptian there is no way of assessing how the negation form became equated with the Imperative form in Hebrew grammar. So, where did those ideas come from? How did we get the Ten Commandments extracted from the so-called "Negative Confessions"? Even further, where in the so-called 125th Chapter of the Papyrus of Ani is there something called the "Declarations of Innocence"?

Who Owns Deep Time? Coloniality and the Invention of the Ancient World

Iman Nagy (University of California, Los Angeles)

This paper examines the persistence of coloniality within archaeological knowledge production across the regions that have come to define the "ancient world," with particular attention to North African and Middle Eastern landscapes. It questions the continued dominance of Western epistemological frameworks in defining "Africa," the "Middle East," and antiquity itself. Although recent scholarship has increasingly sought to make

archaeology more inclusive, many of these interventions remain performative, focusing on representation and visibility without fundamentally engaging Indigenous and local worldviews or challenging the epistemological foundations through which knowledge is produced. The categories through which these regions are understood did not emerge organically from local understandings of landscape, identity, or history, but through imperial systems of classification that transformed fluid networks of relation into rigid geopolitical and civilizational monoliths. While contemporary scholars are not responsible for colonial histories themselves, many continue to benefit from institutions, archives, museums, and disciplinary structures built through colonial extraction. Coloniality therefore persists not only through representation, but through the very frameworks used to produce archaeological knowledge. The construction of civilizational monoliths—"Africa," "the Middle East," "the West," and even "the ancient world"—obscures histories of movement, exchange, and overlapping temporalities that have long connected Saharan, Nile Valley, Mediterranean, Red Sea, and Arabian landscapes. This paper argues for relationality as an alternative framework for understanding deep time. Rather than approaching regions and identities as isolated entities, relational approaches foreground mobility, interconnected landscapes, and layered temporalities across regions historically divided through colonial systems of knowledge production. In doing so, the paper asks: whose temporal framework is privileged within archaeological constructions of deep time?

The Art of Religious Entanglement in the Kharga Oasis: An Unpublished Domestic Wall Scene

Jasmine Smith (New York University)

During the Metropolitan Museum of Art's 1909 Kharga Oasis excavations, Herbert Winlock produced a tracing of a painted wall scene in a Roman period house at Ain et Turba. This unpublished scene exists in the expedition's archive in the form of Winlock's tracing, a photograph, and a handwritten description of the scene by Charles Wilkinson. The scene features three figures armed with lances and mounted on horseback as they attack a serpent. While no inscriptions were recorded in relation to the scene, Wilkinson suggests that the figures likely represent a Christian saint, Horus, and either Thoth or Seth. According to his identifications, the scene could provide a significant example of Christian and traditional Egyptian religious figures interacting in a domestic context. While Wilkinson's description and hypotheses are useful, the identity of the figures remains a mystery. The scene lends itself to additional inquiry, including: how did the scene function in a domestic context; where does its "extraordinarily crudeness", as Wilkinson put it, lie on the spectrum of painting vs graffiti; what other evidence exists to support or dispel Wilkinson's theories regarding the identity of the mounted figures; and finally, where does the scene fit within the visual evidence we have from Late Antique Ain et Turba and the Kharga Oasis? To explore these questions this paper will take a comparative approach that places the rendering of the figures (including the horses and serpent) in conversation with contemporary images on coffins and tomb walls at the nearby necropolis of Bagawat.

Gaming Networks in Ancient Nubia, North Africa, and Beyond

Carl R. Walsh (New York University)

How can board games reveal cross-cultural encounters in ancient Africa? Recent theoretical approaches to board games have highlighted how they can function as intercultural mediators, creating shared play experiences that foster conviviality between participants. Games themselves can often travel across cultural divides, becoming shared forms of cross-cultural communication between societies. With this approach in mind, I examine the material remains of gaming equipment at the site of Kerma, Sudan, and explore how these objects may have been used in negotiating intercultural relationships as well as themselves being exchanged through diplomacy and trade. The gaming equipment may also provide a glimpse into wider shared gaming practices, identities, and networks spanning across North Africa, the Mediterranean, and West Asia during the Bronze Age.

4E. Archaeology of the Southern Levant III: Papers in Honor of Yosef Garfinkel (Marquette)

Chair(s): Michael G. Hasel, Southern Adventist University; Sarah Richardson, North Carolina State University

The Economy of a Household at the Fringes of the Judean Kingdom in the 8th Century BCE

Michael Freikman (The Hebrew University of Jerusalem), Igor Kreimerman (The Hebrew University of Jerusalem)

Tell Beit Mirsim is located in the southern Shephelah, on the fringes of the Kingdom of Judah. The site's upper stratum (Stratum A2) represents a fortified Judean city destroyed during Sennacherib's campaign of 701 BCE. In recent years, the site has been excavated by the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. These excavations, combined with laboratory analyses of diverse categories of material evidence—including pottery, stone vessels, zooarchaeological remains, and botanical data—make it possible to reconstruct a wide range of activities within a fully excavated domestic unit. These include several stages of olive-oil production, large-scale household textile production, grinding and cooking, as well as storage and the management of production surplus. The resulting picture is that of an economically integrated household in which multiple functional components were coordinated to maximize output, economize labor and resources, and optimize the use of domestic space. This presentation will examine how these activities formed a unified household production system and will evaluate the role of Tell Beit Mirsim within the economic structure of the Kingdom of Judah during the Iron Age IIB.

The Kingdom of Judah in Light of the Seventh Expedition to Tel Lachish in 2022-2026

Hoo-Goo Kang (Seoul Jangsin University)

The Seventh Expedition to Tel Lachish (2022–2026) was directed by Prof. Y. Garfinkel, Dr. Itamar Weissbein, and the author on behalf of the Institute of Archaeology at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and the Institute of Archaeology at Seoul Jangsin University. This expedition yielded significant archaeological results, including: the revelation of the Level V city plan; new stratigraphy on the southern slope indicating a settlement history from the Middle Bronze Age to the Iron Age, transitioning from Canaanite to Judean periods and confirming their respective city sizes; the probable dating of the mid-slope city wall to the Middle Bronze Age; the discovery of a massive new Canaanite building with 3-meter-wide walls; evidence of the destruction of the final Canaanite city; and a new building dated to Level I (Persian-Hellenistic period). A key contribution of these excavations to our understanding of the Kingdom of Judah is the identification of the features and scale of the first Judean city (Level V), which was a 7.5-hectare fortified city. It appears that Lachish became the second most important city immediately following the division of the kingdom, suggesting it was likely fortified by King Rehoboam.

Tracing Literacy in Iron Age Judah

Michael G. Hasel (Institute of Archaeology, Southern Adventist University)

Until two decades ago very few ancient texts were known from the early Iron Age in Judah, causing some to date the arrival of literacy in the kingdom much later than earlier generations of scholars. This paper will outline the more recent contributions made by excavations throughout Judah on the development of the alphabetic script and the implications for literacy that come with them.

Response: The Three Phases of The Iron IIA in Judah

Yosef Garfinkel (The Hebrew University of Jerusalm)

Much debate exists in research regarding the 10th-9th centuries BC in Judah. Some scholars claim that in these centuries there was no kingdom at all. New stratigraphic finds, pottery assemblages and radiocarbon dates clearly indicate three phases in this time period: Early Iron IIA (c. 1000-930 BC), known for example in Khirbet Qeiyafa, Beth Shemesh IV, Khirbet el-Ra'i, Arad XIII, Beersheba VII. Middle Iron IIA (C. 930-860 BC) includes Lachish V. Late Iron IIA (C. 860-800 BC) includes Lachish IV, Arad IX, Beersheba IV-II. The Kingdom of Judah first expanded to the northern

Shephelah, to Khirbet Qeiyafa and Beth Shemesh. In the second stage, it expanded to Lachish, and in the third stage to the Beersheba Valley. This settlement process took place over a century before the destruction of the great Philistine center of Gath at Tell es-Safi.

4F. Gender in the Ancient Near East II (Williford A)

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

Mirrors and Movable Property as a "Lens" for Studying Mesopotamian Social History

Allison K. Thomason (Southern Illinois University Edwardsville)

In this presentation, I explore metal mirrors and related "household" implements as a lens through which to study gender and economy in Mesopotamia. Portable metal mirrors have been identified as "feminine" objects and linked to female beauty and physical appearance, even vanity. I will argue for an alternative approach to these and other household objects, including furniture, other bronze utensils, and textiles by studying them as part of the "movable" property of Mesopotamian families. Can the evidence suggest that for certain contexts in time and space, the movable property of a Mesopotamian family was often entrusted to the females of the families to acquire, protect, sell, or pass on to the next generation? Though not common in the evidence, when they do appear, mirrors seem to be the concern of families at important transitions in the life cycles of female members especially (e.g. marriage and death). Thus, I explore evidence from Assyria and Babylonia in the second and first millennia BCE (textual, archaeological, pictorial), in which mirrors can be found. An exploration of mirrors as movable property within Assyrian and Babylonian families offers an important opportunity to explore the relationship between gender and property in Mesopotamia. This "look" at mirrors can draw out the complexity of social and familial relationships, and the multi-faceted experiences of women, especially, in Mesopotamian social and economic history.

Body as a Sign: Embodied Masculine Authority in Anthropomorphic Vessels of Iron Age II–III, Iran

Bita Mesbah (Semnan University)

Anthropomorphic vessels are often interpreted as metaphors for the human body—vessels as bodies and bodies as vessels. In Iran, the earliest examples were discovered at Tepe Hissar from the late third millennium BCE. Following a gap during late Bronze and Iron Age I, 35 vessels from Iron Ages II–III were excavated in North of Iran by Ezzatollah Negahban (1961–1962) and others, along with 18 additional examples from later excavations in northwestern Iran. This research studies 16 examples in Iran and 32 preserved in collections in the United States in terms of their morphology and socio-symbolic significance. Two principal types can be identified in vessels: those displaying exaggerated sexual features, including erected penises or protruding vulvas, and second the vessels lacking sexual markers, representing only body and face. The emphasis on the erect phallus in the first group constitutes their most distinctive characteristic, a feature rarely encountered in Iranian material culture. From a phenomenological perspective, these vessels operate as "body-objects". This study investigates how the concept of the body emerges through interactions between humans and objects, focusing on the explicit representation of the phallus. The analysis draws on Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity and Lacan's concept of "Phallus and Lack". The tension between explicit and non-explicit representations of sexuality provides a phallocentric structure which suggests that Iron Age in Iran represents a pivotal moment in which the phallic centrality became structurally established, and power and authority were performatively produced through the male body. So, the erect phallus in the vessels constructs the body as a socio-political entity in which domination is legitimized through the performative sexuality of the vessels.

"They Have Taken Away My Potency Like Slackened Cords!" Impotence, Power, and Gendered Fear in Mesopotamian Texts

Wenqi Fang (University College London)

This paper investigates how Mesopotamian texts conceptualise male impotence as a gendered crisis and why this crisis is displaced onto female-coded forces. Focusing on the nīš libbi corpus, alongside selected diagnostic and literary texts, this paper argues that impotence was understood not only as a physical dysfunction but as a threat to ideal manhood and social order. This paper focuses specifically on witchcraft as a cause for impotence, as it reveals the gendered dynamics through which male vulnerability is externalised. Building on Geller's suggestion that impotence incantations operate through psychological displacement, this paper argues that such displacement forms part of a broader gendered strategy for managing masculine instability. Drawing on Butler's theory of gender performativity, this paper suggests that masculinity in Mesopotamia was not a stable attribute but a status that had to be continuously enacted, and was therefore constantly vulnerable to disruption. Within this framework, impotence emerges as a key site for both the construction and destabilisation of masculinity. By attributing sexual failure to witches, these texts externalise male vulnerability onto a feminised figure of threat, allowing this instability to be displaced, ritualised, and controlled. The witch thus functions not only as a cause of impotence, but as a culturally available mechanism for preserving masculine coherence in the face of its inherent fragility. By integrating close philological analysis with gender theory, this paper demonstrates that impotence is a crucial site for understanding how Mesopotamian societies negotiated the unstable foundations of masculinity and reinforced patriarchal order.

"Because my competence was great": Named Individuals in the Funerary Iconography of the Royal Women of Mentuhotep II

Tori Finlayson (Johns Hopkins University)

The funerary assemblages of the royal women associated with Mentuhotep II preserve a significant corpus of iconographic material, including relief scenes on tomb walls, sarcophagi, shrines, and coffins. Within these scenes appear the names and titles of several individuals accompanying the deceased. Although these figures are frequently represented, their identities and roles within the funerary programs of these royal women have received limited scholarly attention. This study explores who these individuals were and the reasons for their inclusion in the mortuary iconography. Scholarship on the political and social roles of royal women in ancient Egypt has debated the extent of their authority within the royal court. The presence of named officials and servants in the burial assemblages of these women suggests that such figures were not generic attendants but members of identifiable service networks associated with the queen's household. These individuals likely served within the domestic and administrative structures connected to the royal residence and may have belonged to estates or institutional domains over which the queen exercised authority. Textual comparanda indicates that service to royal women was an established element of some elite careers. Autobiographical inscriptions, such as the Stela of the steward Rediu-Khnum, and literary sources, such as The Story of Sinuhe, attest to officials serving under the authority of Egyptian queens. By analyzing the titles, placement, and iconography of these named figures, this paper argues that their inclusion visually commemorates the queen's household and administrative sphere, embedding her social authority within the funerary landscape.

The Gender of Venus in Mesopotamian Celestial Divination

Parker Zane (Yale University)

The planet Venus is occasionally described in the celestial-divinatory omen literature as male or female depending on her position in the sky. This description, along with the presence of a beard in additional Venus omens, are the primary sources for the claim that Ishtar could be male in some contexts. However, a study of these omens in their divinatory context suggests their relevance for the gender conceptualization of Venus, and therefore Ishtar, is limited. A male and female Venus in the omen series Enūma Anu Enlil can be explained by reference to a tradition pairing a deified representation of the planet Venus, the goddess Ninsianna, with the male deity Kabta. This tradition is attested from at least as early as the Old Babylonian period in evidence from cylinder seals, god lists, and celestial divinatory texts. First-millennium commentators to celestial-divinatory texts understand references to the gender of Venus in relation to the deified planet Dilibat and the god Kabta. A reappraisal of all assumed astronomical

and astrological references to the gender of the planet Venus demonstrates that they have little use for the reconstruction of first millennium BCE views on the gender of the goddess Ishtar.

4G. New Approaches to Ancient Animals II (Williford B)

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

Living with Dogs: Social Roles, Ritual Practice, and Human-Animal Relations in the Southern Levant (Iron Age to Hellenistic Period)

Lidar Sapir-Hen (Tel Aviv University), Deirdre N. Fulton (Baylor University)

The interaction of humans with their best friend, the dog, is extensively studied. In historical periods, evidence for human and dog interactions in the Levantine context is most evident in the Persian-Early Hellenistic periods (5th – 3rd century BCE) when the practice of multiple dog burials became a prominent phenomenon in several archaeological sites. These studies have focused largely on the post-mortem exploitation of dogs, namely their use in ritual or their possible consumption. Far less attention, however, has been given to the roles dogs played during their lifetimes or the broader social context in which humans and dogs interacted. At the same time, archaeological interpretation of dog burials often relies on readings of the Hebrew Bible, which has often been seen as highlighting the poor or ambivalent treatment of dogs in the texts. In this paper, we explore dogs' roles for both ritual and daily life from the Iron Age to the Hellenistic period in the southern Levant. Our exploration considers zooarchaeological data from published material and on new finds' analysis by the authors, and on the textual record. We rely on various types of evidence, including dog presence at the site, the concurrent presence of other animals and the intensity of their exploitation (herding livestock and hunting game), and textual references to dogs that may hint at their perception by humans. By examining the finds in their archaeological and cultural contexts – across periods, regions, and cultural affiliations – we reconstruct the roles of dogs not only in mortuary contexts but across the full spectrum of lived human-dog interaction.

Multispecies Domestic Life in a Roman Oasis: Faunal Evidence from House B10 at Amheida

Sarah Elaebrak (CUNY Graduate Center)

Zooarchaeological assemblages from domestic contexts offer an important perspective on the multispecies relationships that structured everyday life in Roman provincial settlements. Faunal remains recovered during the 2026 field season from House B10 in Area 8.1 at Amheida (ancient Trimithis) in Egypt's Dakhla Oasis provide evidence for the organization of animal use within a household environment. The assemblage includes ~800 vertebrate and invertebrate remains derived from deposits associated with routine domestic activity. Species representation, biomass distribution, and modification patterns indicate that medium and large mammals structured the primary circulation of animal resources within the household, while poultry contributed a regular but smaller component of domestic provisioning. Extensive fragmentation produced a large category of undiagnostic medium mammal remains likely representing caprines, reflecting intensive carcass processing during food preparation. Evidence of butchery, burning, and rodent gnawing indicates food preparation, cooking, and the accumulation of household refuse within domestic space. These patterns reveal a domestic environment shaped through ongoing interactions among humans, livestock, and commensal animals. Animal bodies moved through multiple stages of household life, from slaughter and food preparation to consumption and discard, creating a shared domestic landscape in which human practices and animal behaviors intersected. Approaching the assemblage from a multispecies perspective highlights how animal remains illuminate the rhythms of domestic activity and the more-than-human dynamics of everyday life in a Roman oasis settlement.

Paws and Remember: Pet Agency in Graeco-Roman Funerary Contexts

Amanda Porter (The Metropolitan Museum of Art)

Pet animals are central to modern multispecies relationships, and theoretical approaches to critical human-animal studies have highlighted this connection. Discourse has focused on the power dynamics associated with human 'owners' or 'masters,' with submissive companion animals, but it is also important to consider the agency of pet animals as loved ones and members of the human household. This paper will examine ancient human-pet animal relationships by examining Graeco-Roman pet burials and epitaphs from the 4th century BCE to 2nd century AD. Pet burials were not a common practice at this time, but extant examples provide insight into the emotional bonds between individual animals and humans. Companion animals were buried like humans, offered similar grave offerings, and marked with a tombstone or sarcophagus featuring an epitaph or a portrait. The lack of differentiation between pet animal and human burials and the presence of the pet's name or image suggest that companion animals had more agency as family members in the Graeco-Roman world than previously discussed. The goal of this study is to use the framework of critical human-animal studies about human-pet relationships to examine the agency of pet animals in Graeco-Roman funerary contexts.

Reprocessing Domestication: The Case for a Fresh Process-Oriented Approach

Liam Chan Hodges (University of Chicago)

This paper seeks to demonstrate the utility of leveraging an updated, process-oriented framework that emphasizes the ongoing, variable, and multispecies nature of the domestication process. When applied to existing research, this framework has the potential to draw out a more nuanced understanding of local interactions, animal behavior, and the various intermediate forms of human-animal relationships that took place during the Neolithic.

The Lives of Stock at Tel Abel Beth Maacah

Theo Kassebaum (University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill)

This paper examines the faunal remains of livestock—cattle, sheep, goats, and pigs—at the site of Tel Abel Beth Maacah, to better understand how living animals were entangled in a complex web of care within the archaeological site. Livestock are regularly engaged in practices of care—such as foddering, milking, and draught work—which vary by the age, sex, and species of the animal. This project connects the care of livestock to zooarchaeological evidence of pathologies and demographic profiles to reframe ancient animals through their role(s) as active participants within an ancient multispecies community. Changes to the care and treatment of animals between areas of the site, and across occupation phases, challenges a narrative of an unchanging and homogenous herd and positions livestock as a vital part of more-than-human worlds.

4H. The Medieval Village (Workshop) (Williford C)

Chair(s): Debra Foran, Wilfrid Laurier University

The Early Medieval Village at Khirbat al-Mukhayyat

Debra Foran (Wilfrid Laurier University)

From the 5th through the 8th centuries, the Nebo region became home to 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 using the site of Khirbat al-Mukhayyat as a case study, this paper aims to explore the role of the village within a socially complex landscape. The site of Khirbat al-Mukhayyat is located approximately 2.5 km southeast of Mount Nebo. The site is famous for the churches and mosaics uncovered by the Franciscan Archaeological Mission in the 1930s. 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. The Khirbat al-Mukhayyat Archaeological Project (KMAP) was established in order to investigate the site's sacred landscape and explore the economic impact of pilgrimage across multiple cultural and historical periods. One of the main objectives of this project is to explore

the Byzantine village at Mukhayyat. Through this investigation, we hope to examine the village's connection to pilgrimage in the region, its interaction with the monastic communities of Mount Nebo, and how it can be used as an example of the resilience of the early medieval village.

Ambiguities of "Village" Life at Tall Hisban, 12th-16th centuries

Bethany J. Walker (University of Bonn)

The boundaries between town and village were fluid in medieval Islam. From a textual perspective, there was a wide range of terms in Arabic used for the diversity of settlement forms between rural and urban, reflecting shifting indigenous values placed on function, connectivity, public services, and social cohesion. The archaeological concepts used to describe rural settlement fall short of capturing these nuances of the emic perspective. The site of Tall Hisban is a window on the many forms villages took over the course of the "long Middle Islamic period". The tell is located on the Madaba Plains, between Amman and Madaba. With peaks of occupation in the Roman, Byzantine, Abbasid, and Mamluk eras, the most extensive archaeological remains are Mamluk in date. The sudden textual visibility of the site name in 14th-century Arabic texts parallels an abrupt change in settlement typology documented in the archaeoloigcal record. The establishment of a garrison at the summit of the tell and the administrative promotion of the place to a district capital had the effect of urbanizing this village in function and local consumption, while its social fabric remained rural. Current fieldwork at Tall Hisban is investigating these changes through a combination of household and landscape archaeology. Market agriculture; industrial production; participation in regional economic and intellectual networks; and effective land and water management characterized a village society in transformation. How these functions changed over time, and how they impacted the site's physical and functional development, are discussed in this workshop presentation.

Khirbat al-Balu'a and the Economic Life of the Medieval Village

Ian W. Jones (New York University)

Investigation of the medieval village on central Jordan's Karak Plateau began nearly 40 years ago with the excavations at Khirbat Faris. Despite a wealth of Islamic period sites on the plateau, however, little work has been done since on Karak's agricultural hinterland. The Islamic Village Excavations of the Balu'a Regional Archaeology Project (BRAP) were initiated to fill this gap, and particularly to expand our understanding of the economic life of villages during the Middle (11th-14th century AD) and Late (15th-20th century AD) Islamic periods. Khirbat al-Balu'a is an ideal site for such investigations, as the Islamic period village in the southwestern part of the site is large (ca. 3.5 ha) and includes a large, square building (ca. 40 x 40 m) with a central courtyard, tentatively identified as a medieval khan/road inn, likely associated with the hajj and travel along the main north-south road through the plateau. Excavations of the Khan in the first season of the Islamic Village Excavations (2022) revealed early Ottoman period (ca. 16th-17th century AD) remodeling and reuse of the structure for storage. The second season of excavations (2026) will continue work in the Khan to reveal earlier phases of use and construction and expand excavations into nearby domestic structures. This paper will compare data from the BRAP excavations to other villages in the region, particularly Khirbat Faris, to explore the various economic activities documented archaeologically in these villages and the ways in which villagers adapted to socioeconomic shifts and changing political-economic circumstances.

Estates, Villages, and Towns: Defining Non-Urban Medieval Settlements in the Islamic Near East

Asa A. Eger (University of North Carolina at Greensboro)

* Virtual

The landscape of the Medieval Near East was interspersed with cities; urban hubs that are well known, largely from Islamic texts and as the focus of archaeological work. The association of Islam with cities, and as a religion largely expressed in urban environments, has fueled this work, though in a tautological manner. However, non-urban settlements, including rural estates, villages, and towns, dotted the countryside. In some cases, they appear in texts, while in others they are omitted. Further, they have only sporadically been the focus of archaeological work. As such, it remains unclear what defines the category of an estate, village or town, and, by contrast, what constitutes an urban settlement. This paper will examine both survey and textual evidence to complicate the question of categories of medieval settlements with a view to offering definitions. Evidence will be used from Amuq Survey of Antioch in Turkey, as well as coastal Palestine, and traced over a millenia from the Early to Late Islamic periods. By analyzing textual mentions, terminology, economic capacities, demographic estimates, and administrative responsibilities, the question of defining non-urban Islamic settlement can begin to be answered by posing a different question altogether: what is the nature of settlement patterns and how they change over time in relation to the nearest urban centers?

The Medieval Life and Times of Central Anatolian Villages

Marica Cassis (University of Calgary)

*Virtual

The nature of medieval archaeology in modern Türkiye generally focuses on either survey data from extensively covered regions or from singular excavated sites, often urban. In neither case is medieval usually the primary focus of research; rather, medieval evidence simply runs through all sites and surveys. While both data sets are important, it is only by looking at them in tandem, and considering the rural and the urban together, that we can begin to create a fuller picture of the networks of villages that certainly covered the Anatolian world. This paper will focus on the archaeological evidence located in the rough geographical triangle from Yozgat to Sivas (medieval Sebasteia), and down to Kayseri in Cappadocia, to consider how much more complicated the region was between the Late Roman (5th/6th centuries) and the 12th/13th centuries than we have traditionally understood. Looking at the scattered evidence with special attention paid to the excavations at Çadır Höyük, Kerkenes, and Alişar Höyük allows us to understand how complicated this world actually was during these centuries. While shifting populations had to contend with environmental change and adaptation, the region remained significant, and through a close analysis of the archeological evidence for a network of villages and towns, we can gain a better understanding of the social and economic viability of the region, as well as the way these communities adapted and changed over the course of this period.

4I. Petra and the Kingdom & Influences of the Nabataeans (Astoria)

Chair(s): Cynthia Finlayson, LAPIS: Archaeology & Cultural Heritage Foundation; Anna Accettola, Hamilton College

Developing a Preliminary Typology for Non-Monumental Funerary Features in Petra

Jennifer H. Ramsay (SUNY Brockport), Björn Anderson (University of Iowa)

While Petra is renowned for its monumental rock-cut façade tombs, the region also preserves numerous non-monumental funerary features, particularly shaft and pit tombs, which remain understudied and poorly integrated into broader discussions of Nabataean origins. These features may preserve crucial evidence for understanding the development of funerary traditions among non-elite populations and for tracing cultural transitions between Iron Age, Persian-period, and early Nabataean communities. This paper presents a preliminary framework to analyze this overlooked class of funerary architecture by proposing a preliminary typological framework for the analysis of shaft and pit tombs in Petra. Data for this framework was developed over the past two survey seasons in several areas of Petra, where we examined rock-cut features near the Snake Monument, near Mughar an-Nasara, near Conway's Tower, in the areas of the Bab-el-Siq and Wadi Farasa. By documenting tomb form, context, and spatial distribution, we aim to define a detailed preliminary typology of shaft and pit tombs and evaluate whether variation in architectural characteristics, such as plan, dimensions, orientation, associated installations, and material culture can support the development of a relative chronology in the future. The resulting preliminary typology will contribute to broader debates concerning continuity and transformation in southern Jordan, including the relationship between Edomite traditions, early Nabataean identity formation, and potential influences from Persian-period ritual practices.

Hellenistic Precedents & Influences on Nabataean Fine Wares & New Clay Source Theory

Cynthia S. Finlayson (LAPIS: Archaeology & Cultural Heritage Foundation)

In 1909, Gustaf Dalman first identified Nabataean Fine Wares with the subsequent comprehensive publication of these 'eggshell wares' first completed by George and Agnes Horsfield in 1929. Since that time, scholars have agreed that Nabataean Fine Wares exhibit substantial Hellenistic influences, however, what does that actually mean? Additionally, there is scholarly debate as to the reasons for the sudden genesis of Nabataean Fine Wares during the early first century BCE at Petra and Nabataea, the sources of inspiration for its vegetal and geometric designs on Fine Painted Wares, as well as the sources of the clays utilized to produce some of the thinnest but most plastic ceramic wares ever created in the Late Hellenistic and Roman Eras in the Mediterranean World. This paper will first look at the Hellenistic precedents for Nabataean Fine Wares by comparing pottery finds from the Ad-Deir Monument & Plateau Project with those of the Antikythera Shipwreck discovered northwest of Crete by sponge divers in 1900, and whose array of multi-sourced pottery is dated to c. 75-50 BCE. This ship's home port is considered by most scholars to be somewhere on the Levantine Coast, possibly from the region of Antioch. Recent discoveries from the excavations of Eastern Cliff Cisterns B and C.1 on the Ad-Deir Plateau in Petra also provide a new theory concerning the sourcing of clays by the Nabataeans for Fine Ware production.

Reassessing Nabataean Client Status

Anna Accettola (Hamilton College)

Kingdoms around the Mediterranean faced ever-growing pressure from the expansion of Rome during the late Republican period. In the simplest possible terms, their options seemed to be fight or submit - and forced submission often followed quickly after a fight. Roman authors also promoted this simplistic duality of outcomes by reporting diplomatic attempts as varied forms of submission. Recent scholarship, however, is uncovering the more subtle ways in which kingdoms resisted the pressure of Rome. This presentation focuses on the relationship between Rome and the Kingdom of Nabataea, particularly in the first century BCE. Nabataea has been relegated, in modern scholarship, to a client kingdom of Rome, based in part on information from Roman authors (see for example, Graf 2022). But reanalysis of the evidence shows instead that careful maneuvering by the Nabataean kings allowed the kingdom to remain politically autonomous for far longer than traditionally acknowledged. Rather than submit or cede to the external authority of Rome, Nabataeans balanced Roman expectations for peripheral kingdoms with their own needs. Their place in the interstate hierarchy depended on skilled diplomacy which optimized resistance, soft power, and the leveraging of the economic and geographical value of Nabataea. References: Graf, David F. "The 'Client Kings' of Judaea and Nabataea in the 1st Century BCE." STRATA 40 (2022): 39-100.

Teaching Nabataean and Classical Period Ceramics in Jordan

Sarah E. Wenner (Cincinnati Art Museum)

In an effort to reengage interest in the Nabataean and Classical period ceramic tradition in Jordan, the American Center of Research (ACOR) offered ceramics courses for the first time in years in 2026. Offered at both introductory and advanced levels, the courses were offered free to Jordanians (including students and Jordan DOA officials) and officials from Syria, with the intention of boosting understanding of how ceramic material recovered by excavations and surveys are processed, analyzed, quantified, and eventually published. The courses also presented additional methods to "publish" material, including to the Levantine Ceramics Project and the National Inventory, the latter of which is also run out of ACOR. This talk discusses how the courses came together, the pedagogical approaches, and the utilization of a Laser Aided Profiler (funded through a grant from the AIA) for digital publication, and it explores some stories of success and plans for improvement ahead of the 2027 courses.

4J. Negotiating Elites: Strategies of Elite Practices and Consumption as Reactions to Political Dynamics II (Private Dining 2)

Chair(s): Reli Avisar, Tel Aviv University and Haifa University

Reimagining the Lebanese Cedar Forest in Levantine Art

Carolina Lopez-Ruiz (University of Chicago), Fanni Faegersten (Lund University, Sweden)

This paper brings together strands of Levantine art associated with Phoenician craftsmanship and trade, as well as ritual materials and artifacts, to argue that this corpus contains visual and symbolic references to the sacred Lebanese Cedar Forest. Negotiating and synthesizing Egyptian symbolic repertoire and a Syrian-Lebanese sacred landscape, Phoenician art and products made from cedar trees became part of elite culture in Egypt and Mesopotamia and the Levant (a phenomenon going back to earlier millenniums relations with Canaanites). The importance of this Levantine production within the first millennium elite and royal networks is well known; the Phoenicians themselves capitalized on the high value of the previous Canaanite imagery and material culture (e.g., use of cedar resins and wood by royal and imperial centers) as they set themselves up as the Mediterranean entrepreneurs par excellence and negotiated power relations with larger political forces. The Cedar Forest and its wildlife, we argue, was essential part of the Phoenician symbolic repertoire tied to a contested geography that had appeal and was claimed by both Mesopotamian and Egyptian powers for centuries.

Proprietary Technology, Attached Specialization, and Elite Negotiation: Reframing Bath-Shaped Vessels as Fulling Installations

Laura Mazow (East Carolina University)

This paper argues that elite control over value-added production relied not only on labor management but on the maintenance of proprietary technologies—restricted, elite-managed techniques and installations that concentrated economic and symbolic power. Drawing on Costin's model of attached specialization, I propose that bath-shaped vessels found in domestic contexts across the eastern Mediterranean and ancient Near East are better understood as installations for fulling wool, rather than as household bathing equipment or evidence for early "bathrooms." Fulling represents a skilled, high-value stage in textile finishing that was often embedded within elite-directed production systems; Linear B records explicitly reference the "fuller of the wanax," attesting to fullers as palace-dependent specialists whose expertise functioned as restricted technological knowledge. Viewed through this framework, bath-shaped vessels can be reconceptualized as part of an elite-controlled technological suite—proprietary installations that enabled oversight of skilled labor and managing the distribution of prestige goods. Case studies demonstrate that these vessels cluster in contexts tied to administration and value production. Applying Costin's four parameters—context, concentration, scale, and intensity—shows that these vessels align with attached production units and with elite strategies for managing specialized knowledge and restricting high-value craft processes. By reframing bath-shaped vessels as proprietary technological installations, this paper highlights how elites mobilized both objects and techniques to assert legitimacy, maintain influence, and recalibrate their social position across shifting political landscapes.

Transmission and Transformation in the Adriatic Iron Age: A Study of Imported Drinking Wares from the Hillfort Site of Gradina Rat on Brač

Sarah A. James (University of Colorado Boulder)

After the Bronze Age, the earliest fragments of non-local pottery at Gradina Rat appear in the mid-9th century. At first, Italian matt-painted wares were imported from central or southeastern Italy comprised primarily of cups, pitchers, and large bowls/kraters that were used at the hillfort. These newly introduced wares had no parallels among local shapes. While it is possible that Italic imports took the place of metal vessels or ones made of perishable materials, I propose that these objects were adopted for their uniqueness and would have been understood as valuable

exotica. In this way, who possessed them may be the more important point. Those with access to these matt-painted wares perhaps displayed (or used) them in communal settings in order to enhance their own social status. Access to Greek-style products produced in Mainland Greece and Magna Graecia began at the site in the 6th c. BCE and presumably had to compete with well-established Italic wares. The imported shapes are again drinking vessels and large, open shapes (kraters/bowls) and these are followed within a century by Greek-style transport amphorae typically used for wine. This evidence for imported wine suggests on-site consumption probably using Greek-style and Italic table wares, although the frequency of such events is uncertain. Given that wine production started with the arrival of Greek settlers to the Adriatic islands in the 4th c. BCE, the previous adoption of and subsequent adaptions to this new product by local inhabitants may help explain the rapid spread of viticulture in the region.

The King's ks: Metal Bowls as Symbols of Royal Power in the Late Bronze Age Levant

Sarah E. Harrington (University of California, Los Angeles)

Local kings and elites of the Late Bronze Age (c. 1550-1200 B.C.E.) ancient Near East were subordinate to the so-called "great kings" of their time but also performed and legitimized their own ideological power in their respective polities. Metal drinking bowls functioned as one symbol through which local Levantine kings materialized divine favor, encoded elite hierarchy, and aligned themselves with the gods through visual representations. The bowls, made of bronze, silver and gold, show up in the elite tombs, temples and palaces of the Levant. Images of Middle Bronze kings holding vessels were retained in Late Bronze royal contexts, strengthening the ideological power of the king's bowl as a symbol of legitimate rule. At Ugarit, mythological texts, particularly those about human and divine kingship, evidence drinking vessels at key points in the king's elevation to power. The vessel found in these texts, the West Semitic ks, has typically been translated as "cup," but is likely a generic term for a drinking vessel, and in the Late Bronze Age was used to denote the hemispherical metal bowls found in elite archaeological contexts based on inscriptional and iconographic evidence. By analyzing the corpus of Late Bronze Age metal bowls and bringing in supporting evidence from royal and mythic texts and iconography, this paper will reconstruct one way in which Levantine kings performed and legitimized their power at the local level by linking kingship and elite authority to divine symbolism.

Edible Boundaries: Pig Consumption and Elite Negotiation in the Hittite World

Ebru G. Ayten (Independent Researcher), Evangelia Pişkīn (Middle East Technical University)

*Virtual

Hittite religious texts classify the pig as "unclean" and prescribe its exclusion from temple kitchens and sacred thresholds, yet zooarchaeological evidence demonstrates the continued presence of pig husbandry and pork consumption across Hittite settlements. Rather than interpreting this tension as evidence of a strict dietary taboo, this paper approaches pig management as a domain of elite negotiation shaped by political authority, ritual regulation, and regional dynamics. Drawing on zooarchaeological, biometric, and stable isotope data from three Late Bronze Age sites, which are Ortaköy/Šapinuwa, Tell Atchana/Alalakh, and Kinet Höyük, this study examines how pig frequencies, age-at-death profiles, butchery patterns, and feeding strategies varied across ritual, administrative, and domestic spaces. The results indicate neither systematic avoidance nor uniform consumption but selective regulation. In core cultic contexts, pigs appeared carefully controlled and symbolically framed, while in domestic and peripheral settings, they were integrated into everyday husbandry systems, often with flexible feeding regimes. Rather than viewing the discrepancy between textual prescriptions and zooarchaeological evidence as a simple dietary inconsistency, this paper argues that pigs functioned as socially charged animals through which Hittite elites articulated authority. Their designation as impure did not negate economic value; instead, impurity served as a regulatory tool structuring circulation and reinforcing social boundaries. This case study demonstrates that elite consumption need not center on luxury alone: the strategic control of a culturally ambivalent animal enabled elites to negotiate political realities and recalibrate authority within a multiethnic imperial landscape.

4K Archaeology of Religion in the Levant during the Second and First Millennia BCE I (Boulevard)

Chair(s): Alice Mandell, Johns Hopkins University; Jeremy Smoak, University of California, Los Angeles

Theme: Papers in this session are dedicated to Divinity in Ancient Israel and Beyond in honor of Theodore Lewis.

An Israelite Triad: the Davidic King, the Jerusalem Temple and Yahweh

Elizabeth Bloch-Smith (Princeton Theological Seminary)

In appreciation of and in dialogue with Ted Lewis' magnum opus, *The Origin and Character of God: Ancient Israelite Religion Through the Lens of Divinity*, this presentation explores an evolving presentation of Yahweh, in the Hebrew Bible and as manifest in archaeological remains, as a constituent element of the fluid and interdependent triad of the Davidic king, the Jerusalem Temple, and the patron deity.

God's History and the History of Religion

Karel van der Toorn (University of Amsterdam)

With the publication of his book on The Origin and Character of God, Ted Lewis has offered the scholarly community and the wider world a wonderful gift. Here is, gathered in one volume, about all the historical evidence discovered in the past century on the God of the Hebrew Bible. This masterful monograph will be a reference and a resource for many years to come. But the book is not just about history, it is also about God's character. The historian and the theologian meet. The subtitle of the book, "Israelite Religion Through the Lens of Divinity," reflects Lewis's conviction that knowledge of the profile of God is essential for the proper understanding of Israelite religion. This is a bold view and a challenge to the history of religion approach. It is also an invitation to dialogue. I intend my response to be a beginning of such a dialogue.

Portraits of Divinity: Ted Lewis and the Characterization of Gods in the Ancient Levant

John T. "TJ" Thames Jr. (Clemson University)

Ted Lewis's book, The Origin and Character of God, published in 2020, is the culmination of years of scholarship on biblical and ancient Israelite religion that brings his impressive learning on ancient Near Eastern religions to bear on the question of how ancient Israelites, including but not limited to those who are responsible for authoring parts of the Hebrew Bible, understood their god(s). Enriching the historical appreciation of how worshippers characterize, relate to, and represent their deities has been a consistent thread running through Lewis's professional oeuvre. From his early contributions on the identity of Baal Berit and the Israelite aniconism debate to his recent detailed work on the representations of Yahweh and El, Lewis's commitment to comprehensive and detail-oriented treatments of representations of deity has suffused his scholarly pursuits. In this discussion, I reflect on Lewis's contributions to defining and enlivening divinity in the ancient Levant in particular through his disciplined formulation of the comparative method and his focus on material sources—especially iconography—for glimpsing ancient perceptions about the gods. Using his methods as inspiration and paradigm, I include in my discussion a sketch of divine representations in my area of research—the religious practices of Late Bronze Age Emar—with attention to the ways Lewis's questions have shaped my own work.

"Who Among the Gods is an Expeller of Sickness?" The Divine Use of Healing Intermediaries in the Hezekiah and Kirta Narratives

Rosanne Liebermann (Aarhus University, Denmark)

Two sick kings are on the verge of death. Both cry out to creator gods for healing. Both receive it via a divine intermediary. This paper compares the roles of the prophet Isaiah in the biblical narratives about King Hezekiah's illness (2 Kgs 20; Isa 38) and of the healing figure Shaʿtiqatu in the Ugaritic Kirta text (KTU 1.16). This enquiry is conducted within the broader context of ancient west Asian and eastern Mediterranean perceptions of divine

healing, which sometimes requires human or other intermediaries and sometimes does not (e.g., Hezekiah's healing comes from Yhwh directly in 2 Chron 32). The paper touches on topics of central importance to the perceived relationship between divinity and illness, such as whether illness is (always) a divine punishment; what a king's illness means for the nature of a divinely ordained monarchy and the security of the nation; and the role of petitionary mourning in effecting divine healing. As part of a panel celebrating Ted Lewis's academic work and impact, this paper engages with Lewis's foundational work on the mysterious healing figure of Shaʿtiqatu in the Kirta narrative as well as (more generally) his vast contributions to understanding comparative concepts of divinity in the Hebrew Bible, Ugaritic texts, and beyond.

5A. The Age of Transitions: Imperial Successions and Local Transformations in the First Millennium BCE I (Continental A)

Chair(s): Roi Sabar, Hebrew University of Jerusalem; Avraham Mashiach, Hebrew University of Jerusalem

Labor, Exemption, and the Scribal Construction of Reciprocity: Ideological Categories in Neo-Assyrian Political Economy

Jonathan Schmidt-Swartz (New York University)

*Virtual

How did ancient regimes mobilize labor in sacred cities formally exempt from state-imposed obligations? This paper argues that the distinction between ilku and tupsikku in Esarhaddon's inscriptions and in SAA 18 124 (the letter of the scholar Bel-usezib) reflects a deliberate scribal response to this problem. Esarhaddon's scribes constructed a meaningful ideological distinction between these two labor categories, one unrecognized in prior scholarship. Both operated within reciprocal frameworks but in qualitatively different registers. Ilku was routine and cyclical, tied to land tenure and civic standing, its reciprocal content thin: basic rations for standing obligation. Tupsikku, deriving from the Sumerian dupsik, the basket used to carry earth and bricks, carried an elaborated reciprocal logic: voluntary in framing, cosmologically charged, marked by royal participation. Kidinnu exemptions targeted ilku's routine character; tupsikku's sacred register placed it beyond reach. Reframing temple reconstruction as tupsikku, his scribes exploited this difference. The variant recensions confirm: Babylon A-D (RINAP 4:104) embed Babylonian participation within kidinnu restoration, divine sanction, and royal basket-bearing performance, while Babylon E, attributing all labor to foreign captives, requires no such apparatus. Bel-usezib performs the same move independently, citing Advice to a Prince not to prohibit labor in Nippur but to authorize it reciprocally. The framework collapsed at the succession: when both sons performed the basket-bearing ritual, Babylonians recognized tupsikku as ongoing extraction rather than sacred restoration, ilku under another name, and Samas-sum-ukin's revolt followed. Labor categories are not neutral administrative descriptions but ideological constructs whose stability depends on the reciprocal register they claim.

Friend or Foe: The Shifting Posture of Jewish Imperial Ideology in Aramaic Court Narratives

Tyler Jarvis (UCLA)

This study explores the genre of Aramaic Court Tales from early Jewish literature to examine how Jewish communities in the Persian, Hellenistic, and Roman periods grappled with their own position in imperial settings. The analysis focuses on the reception of the Aramaic court tale genre at both Judeo-Elephantine and Qumran to show changing attitudes towards imperial participation. At Elephantine, the Wisdom of Ahiqar articulated a framework of pragmatic loyalty—a sort of “go along to get along” approach to empire. This posture is echoed in the Yedenayah Archive’s petitions to Persian officials that framed their legitimacy in imperial terms. At Qumran, however, Aramaic court tales such as 4Q550 and the Danielic court traditions were preserved, but they were subordinated to and reframed by apocalyptic literature and the community’s own Hebrew sectarian compositions. In texts like the War Scroll and Pesher Nahum, the accommodationist ideology was rejected as betrayal, replaced by a separatist and eschatological posture towards empire. By looking at these two communities together, this paper shows how a single literary tradition could be adapted to reflect changing attitudes: one finding a way to survive within the imperial system, and the other preparing for its eventual collapse.

Imperial Succession and the Judean-Samaritan Entanglement

Rotem Avneri Meir (Yale University)

This paper examines local conceptualizations of imperial transitions through the lens of inter-communal relations, focusing on Judean and Samaritan communities in the Levant. Famously, Judeans – among others – made sense of their history through an ordered narrative in which one empire gave way to the next. Alongside this pattern, a curious correlation emerges between moments of imperial change and heightened Judean-Samaritan tensions, traceable from Neo-Assyrian to Roman times. Drawing on the textual and material archive of the relationship between these two communities, the paper asks how it was mobilized to reflect on the nature of empire, construct local distinctions, and fashion new concepts of time and historical change. In doing so, it proposes that inter-communal relations functioned not merely as a byproduct of shifting hegemonies but as one of their primary local idioms – a medium through which communities negotiated their place within, and against, successive imperial orders.

What’s in a Name? Using Onomastics to Trace Changing Attitudes towards Slavery in the Ptolemaic–Roman Transition

Ella Karev (Tel Aviv University)

This paper examines the naming of enslaved individuals in Roman Egypt to track shifting attitudes toward slavery during the transition from the Ptolemaic to the Roman period. The assignment of new names to enslaved persons is a well-documented practice, serving as tools of subordination that reflect the slave-owner's or seller's socio-political dynamics and personal desires. Building on this methodological foundation, the paper compares a newly assembled corpus of slave names from Roman documentary sources with the Ptolemaic evidence. The overlap between the two corpora is limited (30%), suggesting a significant shift in naming conventions that may reflect broader cultural and administrative changes during the transition. While some repeated names reflect popularity in the Mediterranean, others continue unusually: Sphairos (‘sphere’), Moschiōn (‘calf’), and Kariōn (‘caraway’). The Roman-period evidence reveals several trends: an increase in overtly derogatory names like Drapetiōn (‘runaway’) or Koprēs (‘dung-heap’); greater specificity in toponyms, as seen in Asklas (‘from Ashkelon’) or Lesboula (‘from Lebos’); the persistence of names associated with Ptolemaic rulers (Arsinoē, Berenicē, Ptolemaios) into the second century CE; and rising popularity of the Hellenised Egyptian name Thermouthis (T³-rnn.t, ‘the wet-nurse’). In the context of imperial transition, the patterns in Roman-period naming practices demonstrate an increased emphasis on imperial geography and a more overtly dismissive, derogating, and dehumanising attitude toward enslaved persons. This paper argues that such attitudes were adopted from Roman slave-holding practices, as evidenced by the derogatory nature of the names and their geographical specificity.

5B. Cultural Heritage: Preservation, Presentation, and Management I (Continental B)

Chair(s): Jessica R. Robkin, University of Central Florida; Nancy Serwint, Arizona State University; Barbara Anglisz, Independent Researcher

The Israel National Treasures: Opening the National Archaeological Collection to the Public

Debora Ben-Ami (Israel Antiquities Authority)

This paper introduces the conceptual and working framework behind the new Israel Antiquities Authority (IAA) Visitor Center, a major cultural heritage initiative designed to present the National Treasures Collection of the Archaeology of Israel to the public for the first time. As the chief curator of the project, I will discuss the challenges involved in remodeling a national archaeological repository into an accessible, educational, and sustainable public experience. The visitor center will display more than 6,000 artifacts spanning from prehistory through the Ottoman period. The exhibition extends across approximately 2,500 square meters, organized over two floors and divided into twelve thematic galleries. The curatorial strategy combines chronological and thematic perspectives, integrating object-based narratives with advanced multimedia technologies to enhance visitor engagement while maintaining the primacy of material culture. With the planned opening of the center in January 2027, presenting the project within ASOR’s Cultural Heritage session is particularly timely. The project is a first-of-its-kind initiative in archaeology, in line with broader museum trends that aim to expose stored collections to the public—such as the Victoria and Albert Museum Storehouse—while also presenting the first national archaeological collection at this scale. The presentation addresses

issues of selection, conservation, interpretation, and public access, positioning the project as a case study in contemporary heritage management.

Tal Hisban: Transitions, Cultural Heritage, and Notions of the Longue Durée

Stacie Hatfield (Andrews University)

Tal Hisban is generally considered to be the longest continuously excavated archaeological site in Jordan. Research activities at the tell began more than fifty years with active excavations taking place intermittently from 1968 until the present. Tal Hisban is a multi-period site with over 3,000 years of habitation and significant remains from the Iron Age through the Islamic periods. Transitions in archaeological teams, generational changes in community members and site labor management, and transitions in heritage site management by the Kingdom of Jordan create ongoing shifts in how Tal Hisban is understood as a cultural heritage site. This paper draws from and adapts Fernand Braudel's theory of the longue durée to situate the excavation period at Tal Hisban within the overall history of the site and to reconceptualize notions of cultural heritage as related to Braudel's framework. Drawing from excavation and conservation research at the tell, and from ethnographic histories, and recent ethnographic findings with the surrounding community, I examine entanglements of cultural heritage and community archaeology in the case of the long durée of the site and of archaeological and community engagement at Tal Hisban. In doing so, I trace the social history of excavations, community engagement, and notions of cultural heritage at Tal Hisban, providing a rich context for broadening and nuancing understandings of community engagement and cultural heritage. This project is significant in that it offers meaningful contributions to studies of cultural heritage, community archaeology, and to archaeological thought and practice.

Climatic Erosion and Illegal Excavations and Their Impact on the Sustainability of Archaeological Sites: Shaoura as a Case Study

Karrar Al-Maidi (University of Glasgow)

Archaeological sites are important sources for understanding human history and the civilizations that developed over time. They provide physical evidence of past societies and reflect different aspects of their cultural and social life. Through these sites, researchers can learn about the ways people lived, built their settlements, and interacted with their environment. However, many archaeological sites today face several challenges that threaten their preservation. Some of these challenges are related to natural factors, while others are caused by human activities. Climatic conditions are among the main natural factors that affect the condition of archaeological remains, particularly in desert areas where wind erosion, temperature changes, and sand movement can gradually damage ancient structures. In addition to natural factors, random or illegal excavations also represent a serious threat to archaeological heritage. Such activities often lead to the destruction of archaeological layers and the loss of valuable historical information because artifacts are removed without proper documentation or scientific study. This research therefore examines the impact of climatic erosion and random excavations on the sustainability of archaeological sites, using the Shaoura site as a case study. The aim is to highlight the effects of these factors and to emphasize the importance of protecting archaeological heritage for future generations.

Lessons Learned from Community-Oriented Heritage Preservation Projects in Western Kenya

Edward M. M. Luby (San Francisco State University)

*Virtual

In this paper, the development, implementation, and outcomes of two interrelated projects in the Lake Victoria region of western Kenya are outlined to provide insight into how community participation and intangible cultural heritage can be used in the conservation, management, and interpretation of global heritage sites and in museum exhibits. The first project, at the 500-year-old archaeological site of Thimlich Ohinga, which is overseen by the National Museums of Kenya (NMK), involved extensive community consultation in order to conserve a massive dry-stone walled settlement associated with the occupation and migration of the Luo people, one of Kenya's major tribal groups. Through a series of stakeholder workshops and with funding from an AIA Site Preservation Grant, local community members became involved in conserving Thimlich Ohinga, which helped to shape its management and interpretation and resulted in its designation as a World Heritage site in 2018. Since then, Thimlich Ohinga's place as a place of living heritage for community cohesion, the transfer of traditional knowledge, and ritual has only deepened. In the second project, at the NMK's Kisumu Museum, which is located roughly 200 km north of Thimlich Ohinga, an innovative, permanent exhibit called Ber gi dala was developed to interpret the customs, traditional buildings, and intangible cultural heritage of the Luo by exhibiting a traditional homestead, echoes of which can be seen at Thimlich Ohinga. Both projects serve as models for how community-oriented heritage preservation projects that emphasize living communities and their concerns and traditions can work.

5C. Archaeology of Israel I (Continental C)

Chair(s): Zachary Thomas, Australian Catholic University; Charles Wilson, University of Chicago

Hieratic Pottery in Canaan as Evidence of Egyptian Taxation and the End of Egyptian Hegemony

Jared H. Chammat (University Of Toronto)

Over the past few decades a number of New Kingdom hieratic inscriptions on pottery have been found in modern-day Israel and Gaza. Despite the humble material upon which they are inscribed, these inscriptions are of great archaeological significance. An examination of these inscriptions has revealed that most of them record the collection of taxes in the form of grain from the local Canaanite population by Egypt. Furthermore, many of these inscriptions actually describe the means by which the Egyptian state collected and stored this grain. A very small number might also record how the Egyptian state redistributed some of this grain among the local population. Not only does this information offer a rare insight into how Egypt administered its interests in Canaan, but it also could potentially change the prevailing view of the end of the Late Bronze Age and the Beginning of the Early Iron Age in Canaan, because these inscriptions appear to show that Canaan was flourishing agriculturally and that Egyptian administration of the region was stable in a time when it is often thought that both of these conditions did not exist. Finally, these hieratic inscriptions do not stop once Egypt loses hegemonic control over Canaan. In fact, they continue to form part of royal Hebrew inscriptions well into the Iron Age, which could potentially shed light onto how and when Egypt eventually lost control of the region.

"Phoenician Bichrome Style": An Inland Perspective on Phoenician Bichrome Ware from Tel Abel Beth Maacah

Penina Myerson (The Hebrew University of Jerusalem)

Phoenician Bichrome ware, considered a marker of early Phoenician trade activities, offers a unique insight into the development of the Phoenician city-states in the Levant. However, provenance studies conducted in recent decades have identified the production of Phoenician Bichrome wares beyond the coast, at inland sites in the northern valleys of Israel. These locally produced ceramics were not traded but consumed locally, alongside imported counterparts. Such assemblages illuminate patterns of connectivity extending beyond the Phoenician coast and shed light on processes of cultural interaction and negotiation among developing Early Iron Age communities. This paper explores these themes through the study of an unpublished assemblage of imported and locally produced Phoenician Bichrome ware ceramics from Early Iron Age levels at Tel Abel Beth Maacah in the northern Hula Valley. Situated within both a modern and ancient border zone, the site offers valuable insight into cultural interaction at the intersection of the developing Israelite kingdom, the Phoenician city-states, and the Aramean world. By placing inland sites and their trajectories at the forefront of the discussion, this paper examines how local material culture shaped the adoption of Phoenician Bichrome wares beyond the coast, arguing for the development of a "Phoenician Bichrome Style" with a strongly local flavour that extends beyond "imitation."

The Gihon of Gath! – Excavating the Iron Age I-IIA Water Gate Plaza and City Fortification Walls of the Philistine Capital at Tell es-Safi/Gath

Jeffrey R. Chadwick (Brigham Young University Jerusalem Center)

In 2015 the Tell es-Safi/Gath Archaeological Project announced that an Iron Age city gate area had been identified in Philistine Gath's lower north city, along the south bank of the Elah stream bed. In six excavation seasons from 2015 to 2021, some sixty-five meters of the ancient city's fortification line was excavated and identified in Area D2 at Tell es-Safi, including two twenty-five meter-long city wall segments and a fifteen by twenty meter well plaza and city gate area, all dating from Iron Age I-IIA. Excavated evidence suggests that the copious water well at Gath, located on the north bank of the Elah stream bed, was in use from at least the Late Bronze Age forward, and certainly during Iron Age I-IIA, with renewed use in all occupation periods at Tell es-Safi down to the British Mandate. This well was a primary water source for Canaanite and Philistine Gath, and was a major feature enclosed within the fortified well plaza during Iron I-IIA. In connection with the preparation of the final report on these finds, this 2026 ASOR Annual Meeting presentation will present a complete picture of the excavated fortifications and water well plaza remains, a complex so extensive and impressive that it may be compared to the Gihon water system and fortifications of Iron Age Jerusalem. The project director of the Tell es-Safi/Gath Archaeological Project is Aren M. Maeir, and the managing field archaeologists supervising excavations of fortifications in Area D2 were Amit Dagan (2015-2017) and Jeff Chadwick (2018-2021).

Iron Age Fortresses in the Southern Levant: A Systematic Approach to Statecraft

Matthew T. Bronson (Lipscomb University)

Numerous sites throughout the Southern Levant have been described as fortresses, forts, or towers, but disagreement over the nature of these sites is frequent: military forts, administrative centers, royal estates, fortified villages, caravanserais—even altars—have all been suggested. Apart from issues of definition and purpose, this dissertation research analyzes the elements and features of these sites, including their geographic placement, architecture, and finds, to outline what defines a "fortress." A recommended typology is offered for sites considered to be fortresses (or forts, towers, etc.), based primarily on architectural floor plan. Some limited evidence, such as location or language and content of epigraphs, indicate which polity likely controlled a given fortress. Mapping out each structure geographically and chronologically in the framework of other, larger fortified sites further elucidates Iron Age geopolitics, which allows for comparison with texts and, in some cases, reliefs. This examination of sites in both their temporal and topographic context has bearing on discussions of statecraft. References to various kings of Israel and Judah and their biblical building projects are also common in the literature; while chronological specificity can be difficult at single-stratum sites, some nascent suggestions may be proffered: ancient fortress terms can be associated with specific fortress types, and the strategic goals of the kings of Israel, Judah, and of their neighboring polities may be inferred from the data.

"Straight as a bullet" : Projectiles and Legionary Siege Strategies of the Third Wall, Jerusalem

Kfir Vitorio Arbiv (Israel Antiquities Authority), Rina Avner (Hebrew University Jerusalem)

According to the descriptions of the Roman siege of Jerusalem in 70 AD by Flavius Josephus, various artillery machines such as ballistae, catapults, spears, arrows and slingstones were used by both Roman army and Jewish rebels. Furthermore, Josephus notes that the western legionary camps and artillery machines were located some 400 meters west of the city. In 20XX, a salvage excavation was conducted in the Russian compound and exposed a section of Jerusalem's Third Wall fortification. To the west of the wall, a collection of seventy-nine Ballista stones, catapult and spearheads was uncovered. The ammunition found at the foot of the wall was fired from the Legionary weaponry and fell after impact with the fortification and was never retrieved by either force. In this paper I will present the artifacts from the excavation and describe the types of armaments that were used. Using the ammunition classification, I will attempt to calculate the firing trajectories and locate the Roman artillery machines used in the siege. These calculations will also take into consideration and highlight tactical questions related to the method of firing, and utilize topographical considerations to pinpoint the location of the Roman army camps.

5D. Archaeology and Biblical Studies I (Waldorf)

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

"Horns of Light" and Veiled Males? Moses's Gleaming Face, (Exod 35:29–35), Hammurabi's Stele, and the Iconography of Sîn of Harran in Neo-Assyrian Judah

Alison A. Gruseke (Williams College)

Moses's final trip down Mt. Sinai after the Golden Calf affair ends with a description of Moses holding a new set of tablets and his face "qāran-ing" (Exod 34:29, 30, 35)—usually translated "shining" or "radiant." Subsequently Moses is described as donning a masweh/"veil." Both the description of Moses's face, which frightens the Israelites, and his solution have long puzzled interpreters. The verb qāran and noun masweh occur only here, while veiling was a practice associated with women and not men across the ancient Near East. Since qāran is widely regarded as a denominative verb from qeren/"horn," the paper looks both within and outside the Bible for the meanings of horns and veils. Taking up a theory advanced in 1968 by Jack Sasson, it proposes that Moses's appearance and subsequent veiling may be illuminated by two sets of archaeological evidence: first, Hammurabi's stele, with its iconographic and textual attention to light; and second, recent archaeological evidence indicating the influence of Sîn of Harran in 8th/7th-century Judah, to which Moses's veiling in our text may have served as a pointed rejection.

Judahite Agency, Assyrian Domination: South-of-Jerusalem in the Assyrian Century

Shawn Zelig Aster (Bar-Ilan University), Tzalel Karakukli (Bar-Ilan University)

Recent decades have seen significant archaeological excavations in the region south of Jerusalem's old city and north of Bethlehem. These include the extensive and highly-developed settlement at Ramat Rahel, the very interesting building at nearby Mordot Arnona, as well as the proto-Aeolic capitals found at Armon ha-Natziv and adjacent areas. All of these make it entirely clear that the region was developed and settled during the Iron 2c, beginning in the late eighth-century, when Assyria began to dominate Judah, and ending in the late seventh century, as Judahite rule began to collapse under Babylonian domination. Each of these sites should be considered on their own merits, to determine its function, but the overall system must also be considered. Although Assyrian involvement in the construction of these sites has been suggested, there is little hard evidence for Assyrian material culture in these sites. In this presentation, I explore the possibility of understanding these as sites built by the Judahite monarchy, under Assyrian domination. These sites were built while the Judahite elite was engaged in resource-extraction for the benefit of Assyria, and must be understood in the context of such resource-extraction.

The Archaeological Signature of Religious Reforms: A Case-Study from Tel 'Eton and Methodological Considerations

Avraham Faust (Bar-Ilan University)

The religious reforms that took place (or did not) in Iron Age Judah have received considerable scholarly attention, and the relevant biblical references have been scrutinized in light of archaeological evidence. But as only a few temples were exposed in Judah, the limited evidence leaves much for interpretation, and the debates continue. Following the excavations of Building 101 at Tel 'Eton, I would argue that domestic cult might be significant for studying the religious history of Judah. During the original phase of this elite residency, a large standing stone (ca. 750kg) was erected on massive foundations in the largest and one of the innermost rooms of the building, in a location that made it visible to anyone standing at the entrance to the structure and in large parts of the courtyard. The evidence suggests that the stone was the focus of (domestic) cult. At some point before the end of the 8th century, the standing stone was laid down, and "concealed" within a stone platform that was built around it, canceling the cult. The paper will analyze this concealment within the broader cultic landscape of Judah and will review its possible association with Hezekiah's

reform. The information from Tel ‘Eton, however, not only provides an additional example of cultic changes in the 8th century BCE, but also highlights the importance of domestic cult in reconstructing Judah’s religious history. Beyond greatly increasing the available evidence, the study of domestic contexts also provides insights into the agency of different social segments.

Locating the Lands of Bazu and Punt

Stephen C. Compton (University of South Africa)

The Assyrian emperor Esarhaddon wrote of continuing 220 km past the al-Hasa Oasis and crossing 1,320 kilometers of desert to reach the “forgotten” land of Bazu, the biblical Buz. This fits well the ancient caravan route south to the Yabrin Oasis and then west across the Rub' al Khali to Yemen. Of Esarhaddon’s ten conquests in Bazu, nine toponyms correspond to the leading polities of ancient Yemen, while the last is found across the Bab-el-Mandeb Strait in the Horn of Africa. His final conquest before this crossing, the power controlling the Yemeni coast, was Puda, Ptolemy’s Pudn. This kingdom’s location, on Wadi Zabid near the coast, coincides precisely with the archaeological remains of what had long been the wealthiest trading power on the Red Sea coast. This, it will be argued, was the land known to the Egyptians as Punt. Finally, the sea crossing at this strait, a vital conduit of trade between continents, provides the crucial starting point of the Sargon Geography, “the bridge of Baza [Bazu] at the border of the road to the Land of Meluḫḫa [Kush].” Its alleged back road to Kush (circumventing their vast northern defenses) may have helped motivate Esarhaddon’s Bazu campaign, undertaken only two years before the first of his three known attempts to invade Kush.

"The House of the God of Jacob" in Isaiah 2:1-5 in Light of Archaeological Evidence from the Benjamin Region

JinRi Kim (Perkins School of Theology, SMU)

Isaiah 2:1-5 envisions nations ascending to “the house of YHWH” and to “the house of the God of Jacob,” yet the text does not explicitly identify this “house” with the Jerusalem temple. While some commentators have situated the passage within a post-exilic redactional horizon, discussion has remained within literary and theological domains. This paper reexamines Isa 2:1-5 by placing its language in dialogue with archaeological evidence from the Benjamin region in the sixth¬–fifth centuries BCE. A close reading of Isa 2:2-3 highlights the juxtaposition of “the house of YHWH” and “the house of the God of Jacob,” a formulation that leaves the cultic referent open. The text presupposes ascent to a central sanctuary but does not specify Jerusalem by name. This indeterminacy invites consideration of the broader cultic landscape of Persian-period Yehud. Archaeological data, including settlement patterns and excavation reports synthesized by Oded Lipschits, indicate that Jerusalem experienced demographic contraction after 586 BCE, while Benjaminite sites such as Bethel and Mizpah demonstrate continuity and administrative vitality. These findings suggest that the religious geography of the period was not uniformly Jerusalem-centered. When read in light of this archaeological context, the phrase “house of the God of Jacob” may reflect engagement with enduring northern and Benjaminite traditions rather than a reference to a restored Jerusalem temple. Isa 2:1-5 can be understood as participating in the negotiation of sacred geography within a post-destruction landscape. By integrating textual analysis with archaeological evidence, this paper proposes a framework for reconsidering how prophetic discourse articulates claims to cultic centrality in Persian-period Yehud.

5E. Archaeology of the Near East: The Classical Periods (Marquette)

Chair(s): Simeon Ehrlich, Georgia State University

A Second Century BCE Cypro-Syllabic Inscription from Yavne Excavations

Barak Monnickendam-Givon (Israel Antiquities Authority), Elisheva Zwiebel (Israel Antiquities Authority), Baruch Yuzefovsky (Israel Antiquities Authority), Jon Seligman(Israel Antiquities Authority), Rivka Ben-Chelouche(Israel Antiquities Authority), Reut Bik(Israel Antiquities Authority), Carmel Shoham (Israel Antiquities Authority)

In recent years, extensive archaeological excavations have been carried out in the outskirts of Yavne (ancient Iamneia), a city strategically situated in the southern coastal plain of Israel. Located between Jaffa and Gaza along a primary inland trade route, the site’s southeast periphery yielded a rural settlement occupied during the Persian and Hellenistic periods. Like other contemporary coastal sites, it participated in extensive international maritime commerce, with its connectivity to the wider Eastern Mediterranean world maintained primarily through its coastal outlet and port at Yavne-Yam. A key trading partner for the Southern Levant was Cyprus, which exported transport amphorae, transporting wine and oil throughout the Eastern Mediterranean. These commercial exchanges are frequently evidenced by Cypro-Syllabic inscriptions, where short markings served as administrative initials for manufacturers or officials. One of the most interesting finds from Yavne excavations is a sherd bearing an incised fragment of a Cypro-Syllabic inscription. The discovery of this inscription in Hellenistic Yavne underscores the city's integration into the wider commercial frameworks of the Eastern Mediterranean. Furthermore, the recovery of such a late-dated inscription, from a period in which the Greek alphabet was the dominant script, sheds important light on the persistent use of the Cypro-Syllabic writing system well into the Hellenistic period.

Burning the Fields?: The Case for ‘Food Warfare’ in Hellenistic Galilee

Alexander T. Dorr (Boston University)

Recent scholarship has revealed a stark pattern across rural sites throughout Galilee in the middle of the 2nd c. BCE: many were abandoned in rapid haste and never reoccupied by their former inhabitants. The most common explanation for this phenomenon has been tied to an episode chronicled in 1st Maccabees, where the Hasmonean Jonathan engaged in battle against the forces of Demetrius II near the site of Kedesh in 144/3 BCE. This paper seeks to reimagine this moment of turmoil and depopulation in Galilee by considering other potential actors who could have contributed to mass site abandonment and their potential motivations for targeting the countryside. Through an examination of the existing archaeological, archaeobotanical, settlement, and literary data, I argue that mass site abandonment was largely the result of the conscious targeting of the Galilean countryside during the outbreak of civil war over the Seleucid throne. Systems of land tenure in Hellenistic Palestine would have motivated attacks on the countryside, and accounts from Classical authors indicate both the regular implementation of this type of violence and its normalization throughout the Mediterranean. This positive evidence is then contrasted against Vespasian’s 67 CE campaign and Josephus’s eye-witness account of the targeting of the Galilean countryside over two centuries later. By examining these two episodes, this paper seeks to elucidate when and why the countryside and its agricultural output became a target.

The Podium of Power: Landscape, Hegemony, and the Hasmonean Transformation of Tel Hadid

Amit Etya (Tel Aviv University)

This paper presents for the first time the massive Late Hellenistic remains at Tel Hadid in the Lydda Valley and examines their symbolic and social significance. The study centers on a large earthen platform ('the Podium') built atop of fortification foundations covering ca. 1.2 hectares. While historical accounts in 1 Maccabees attribute the fortification of the site to Simon the Hasmonean, a synthesis of stratigraphic data, ceramic analysis, and numismatic finds suggests this monumental project was built later, during the late second or the early first centuries BCE—the reigns of John Hyrcanus or Alexander Jannaeus. Following the presentation of the material remains, the paper moves beyond the strictly defensive interpretation of these structures and applies approaches from landscape archaeology and phenomenological theory to evaluate the site's visibility and monumental character. The archaeological evidence suggests these remains functioned not only as fortifications but also as markers of political authority. The transformation of the natural topography, including the possible covering of earlier non-Hasmonean structures, reflects a calculated effort to materialize the dynasty's power in the landscape. Furthermore, the platform's deliberate westward orientation toward Jaffa suggests an attempt to dominate the view of the coastal plain and the road network to Jerusalem. By reshaping the landscape and controlling long-distance visibility, the Hasmoneans created a monumental statement of authority

that projected their power across this strategic corridor between the coastal plain and the highland.

Roman Presence in Nabataean Petra: Implications of a Bronze Seal Box

Leigh-Ann Bedal (Penn State Erie, The Behrend College)

Following the decline of Petra's city center in the Late Roman period, portions of the Petra Garden and Pool Complex (PGPC) were used as a dumping ground for trash and debris removed from the "Great Temple" complex and adjacent areas. Composed primarily of stone rubble, architectural fragments, and pottery sherds of mixed dates, these refuse deposits form an important part of Petra's story of continued habitation and reuse of monumental spaces after its decline—a subject explored in depth by Dr. Sarah Wenner (Cincinnati Art Museum/ACOR). The discovery of a bronze seal box amid the refuse, however, provides new insight into activities in Petra while still under Nabataean rule. Seal boxes—small hinged bronze containers used by the Roman military to secure documents during transport across the empire—are rarely recovered archaeologically in the region. The example from Petra is the only artifact of its kind documented in Jordan and one of only a few known from the Near East (Syria and the Levant). Stylistically datable to the 1st century CE, the seal box provides tangible evidence of a Roman presence in the city and likely reflects the activities of foreign legions operating in the region. As such, it may represent a vestige of military correspondence associated with Roman operations in the area during the reign of Vespasian.

5F. Dwelling in Past: Scales of Settlement, Time, and Society in Anatolia I (Williford A)

Chair(s): N. İlgi Gerçek, Bilkent University; Müge Durusu-Tanrıöver, Temple University

We Built This City on Rock and Soil: The Range of Urbanism in Anatolia's Longue Durée

Muge Durusu-Tanriover (Temple University)

This paper explores the potential of modern urban studies to reframe how we conceptualize urbanism in Anatolian archaeology. From the modest beginnings of Neolithic permanent settlements to the bustling, cosmopolitan Ottoman metropoleis, Anatolia's long-term trajectory reveals recurrent waves of urbanization, ruralization, and re-urbanization that can hardly be subsumed under the evolutionary scheme of village–town–city, which inevitably runs into problems of terminology and classification. Imperial cities in Hittite, Roman, Byzantine, and Ottoman Anatolia, for instance, were not uniform either within themselves or across periods. They were instead constellations of different scales, connections, localities, building blocks, and communities. My paper proposes analyzing Anatolia's settlement record in the longue durée through the lenses of urban, urbanism, and urbanity as developed in twentieth- and twenty-first-century scholarship. Rather than treating each settlement as a bounded whole, this approach allows us to identify urban elements, spaces, and experiences across diverse spatial and social contexts, including sites not conventionally classified as "cities". Such a perspective foregrounds practices, networks, and forms of life that produce urbanity beyond formal urban centers.

From Çatalhöyük to Türkmen-Karahöyük: A Longue Durée Perspective on Subsistence, Place-making and Ritual in the Konya Plain, 7th-1st Millennia BCE

Michele Rüzgar Massa (Bilkent University), James Osborne (University of Chicago), Hüseyin Erpehlivan (Bilecik University)

The Konya Plain (Türkiye) lies within one of the best-investigated regions for understanding the inception of sedentism and agropastoral lifeways in Southwest Asia, thanks to the sites of Pınarbaşı, Boncuklu, and the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Çatalhöyük. Much less is known about the late prehistoric and historical periods, a gap now being filled by the newly launched Türkmen-Karahöyük Archaeological Project (TKAP), whose excavated levels span ca 1800-50 cal BCE. The similarity in excavation techniques, documentation, and analysis, as well as the close spatial proximity of these projects, allows us to directly address issues of human-nature interaction, socio-political complexity, and material networks across 7 millennia. In this paper, we explore persistence and changes in household management, ritual practices and economic taskscapes between Çatalhöyük and Türkmen-Karahöyük. This, in turn, will provide a platform to discuss the process from a Neolithic "agrotown" to a 2nd- and 1st-millennium BCE city, and the impact of urban communities on the fragile ecosystems of the Konya Plain.

Walls and Worlds: Inclusion and Exclusion at Çadır Höyük

Jennifer C. Ross (Hood College), Sharon Steadman (SUNY-Cortland)

Decades of excavation at Çadır Höyük, in central Türkiye, have revealed multiple phases of construction of enclosure walls around the site, stretching from the fourth millennium BCE through the tenth century CE. This presentation will focus on the walls built during the Chalcolithic Period and Middle to Late Bronze Ages, periods for which substantial evidence exists at Çadır. By breaking down processes of wall construction and maintenance, and reconstructing the interests and motivations of the people who made and lived near the wall, we may be able to draw conclusions about the negotiations made among the social groups living at the site, sometimes in reaction to internal events, and sometimes responding to external powers and threats. The enclosure of the site may be seen as a structured process of inclusion and exclusion, with residents actively solving different problems at different times.

Local and Regional Place-Making at Türkmen-Karahöyük in the 2nd millennium BCE

Nancy Highcock (Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford), Alvise Matessi (University of Verona)

This paper will present the Bronze Age buildings excavated as part of Fields 2 and 4 the Türkmen-Karahöyük Archaeological Project (TKAP), Konya from 2024-2026. Currently comprising four buildings dating to the late 17th -16th centuries BCE and a new area to be excavated in 2026 that will target the preceding phase, this slice of a neighbourhood provides an in-depth look into a community at the time of the MBA-LBA transition and a period of renewal in the Kızılırmak bend. In addition to evidence for economic activities and resource extraction such as textile production, there is significant evidence for feasting, ritual activities, and repair and rebuilding as the inhabitants of this community sustained themselves from the local landscape and forged connections with communities further afield. Located toward the south of the Konya Plain, and thus at the edge of the Old Assyrian trade routes, as currently reconstructed, the Bronze Age at TKAP provides a new perspective on how a city's inhabitants built their spaces, created places, and also continued to engage with wider networks during a period of wider socio-political change.

The Making of a Bronze Age City in Anatolia

Cigdem Maner (Koç Üniversitesi, Department of Archaeology and History of Art)

The rise of monumentalism and creation of administrative, urban, cult and trade centres culminates during the 2nd Millenium BC in ancient Türkiye. New technologies and art programs are initiated, which reflect identiy, power and the style of the elite. This new program is reflected in iconography, cuneiform texts and material culture. Similar developments can be witnessed also in settlements of the Levant and Aegean. This paper will discuss images and textual resources on architecture and built environment during the 2nd Millenium BC Anatolia and neighboring regions to understand the common life of the elite during this time period.

5G. Archaeology of Rural Communities: Landscape Approaches I (Williford B)

Chair(s): Helena Roth, Charles University, Prague

Creating Imperial Landscapes: Shifting Settlement Patterns and Agricultural Management Strategies in the Middle Assyrian Northern Mesopotamian Plain (1400 – 1000 BCE)

Daisy Brunt (University of Cambridge)

This paper develops a method for testing existing models of the Middle Assyrian (ca. 1300–1100 B.C.E.) hegemonic state impact on agricultural landscapes using a case study from the Northern Jazira in Northern Iraq. Aspects of this include the evaluation of settlement abandonment practices and the modelling of agricultural hinterlands and their relative production

capacities. The application of this new method to second millennium sites in the Northern Jazira reveals, contra to current understanding, a settlement system that does not indicate strategic reorganisation in the administratively intensified Middle Assyrian period.

Following the subsumption of the loosely confederated polities of the former Mitanni territory into the Land of Aššur, the Middle Assyrian State sought to organise itself into a system of provinces. This consolidation effort led to the development of proto-imperial strategies including the installation of centrally controlled provincial governors. Evaluation of textual sources, material culture, and elite archaeological contexts has contributed to models which suggest that provincial landscapes in this period were reorganised to maximise grain production. In the Northern Jazira, there was a decrease in the number of sites over the second millennium which resulted in a smaller reduction in hypothetical hinterland than might be expected. However, from a landscape archaeology perspective there is not evidence to suggest that settlement abandonment reflects strategic redevelopment to increase production. Settlement change in this period did not reflect an economic strategy that intensified the settlement-hinterland ratio and reduced competition between settlements in the Northern Jazira.

People, Peasants, and the Empires. Rural Landscape of Mesopotamia from Assyria to Rome

Rocco Palermo (Bryn Mawr College)

This paper examines the relationship between rural communities, landscape, environment, and imperial political structures in Mesopotamia from the Iron Age to the early first millennium CE. Across this long chronological trajectory, successive imperial formations—from the Neo-Assyrian and Achaemenid empires to the Hellenistic, Parthian, and Roman worlds—introduced infrastructures, administrative regimes, and new networks of connectivity that reshaped regional landscapes. Within this shifting political and environmental framework, rural settlements should not be understood as isolated units or passive reflections of imperial systems. Instead, they constituted socially produced landscapes formed through the interaction of everyday practices, ecological constraints, and large-scale political dynamics. Drawing on theoretical perspectives from landscape archaeology and social theory, this paper explores how rural communities engaged with and reconfigured their surroundings through settlement organization, local strategies of land use, mobility, resource exploitation, and forms of cultural negotiation. By focusing on recently collected landscape data from the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, the study foregrounds the countryside as a key arena in which imperial structures were experienced, negotiated, and transformed. Rural landscapes emerge not as peripheral spaces, but as dynamic environments shaped by the interplay between environmental conditions, local agency, and the broader political frameworks of empire.

The Role of Ritual during Societal Transformation: Investigating a Community's Relationship to an Evolving Settlement Landscape at Iron I Tel Abel Beth Maacah

Matthew N. Susnow (The Hebrew University of Jerusalem)

Iron I society in the southern Levant displays evidence of cultural continuity and discontinuity. This paper investigates the role of ritual in the process of the Late Bronze-Iron Age transition, utilizing evidence from Tel Abel Beth Maacah. A sequence of five Iron I strata have been revealed at the site, three of which display evidence of cult. At the onset of the Iron I, a small, rural community first expresses itself via processes of ritual placemaking in small-scale and unimposing ways, where cult is seamlessly integrated into the local landscape, taking known symbols and introducing cult into a new place. By the end of the Iron I at Abel Beth Maacah, when the site transforms into a much more complex settlement with monumental architecture, cult is again featured in the same part of the tell, this time well integrated into a large, multifunctional complex with restricted access and more permanent features and installations. Focusing on "ritual", its relationship to "place" and "placemaking" within settlement landscapes, and ritual's role in processes of identity formation, power solidification, political control, and social organization, I will explore how a small community navigates a period of social and cultural transformation, whether we can identify signs of continuity – or discontinuity – of the cultic traditions known from the Bronze Age, and in general terms, the relationship between humans, place and landscape when society encounters change.

Kh. Es-Suwweida: A Fortified Border Settlement in Ramat Menasseh

Meir Edrey (Tel Aviv University)

Kh. es-Suwweida is located some 9km south-east of Tel Dor, on a hillock 154m above sea level in the southern spurs of the Carmel ridge, overlooking the coast and the fertile Ramat Menasseh hills. The remains at the site indicate it was occupied from the Early Bronze Age to the Roman period, but the most substantial architectural remains seem to date to the Iron Age IIA (ca. 950-800 BCE) during which the site was fortified by a massive stone perimeter wall, a four-chamber gate complex, and perhaps also square towers. The fine ashlar masonry used for the piers of the gate may suggest the site originally served more than simple military/administrative center functions on the border of the Jezreel valley. While it is clear it was used to control and exploit the landscape, and perhaps also serve as a vantage point over viewing the via Maris, the architecture at the site is reminiscent of that used in Megiddo's 'Palace 6000', which was likewise surrounded by a perimeter wall and was accessed through a four-chamber gate. This paper will present the results of the joint Israeli, German, and American expedition to Kh. es-Suwweida and attempt to shed more light on the role of the site during the early Iron Age.

A Comparative Spatial Study of the Agricultural Hinterlands of Rehovot-in-the-Negev, Sa'adon, and 'Avdat in the Byzantine and Early Islamic Periods

Alexander Wiegmann (Israel Antiquities Authority)

The lecture will present a recent study which examines runoff agricultural systems in the Central Negev which originated in the Byzantine period, focusing on the hinterlands of Rehovot-in-the-Negev (Khirbet Ruheibe) - Sa'adon (Khirbet es-Sa'adi), and 'Avdat. Although contemporaneous, these regions display two distinct agricultural regimes. The Rehovot-Sa'adon hinterland (c. 49 km²) is characterized by a parcellated landscape with numerous dispersed farmsteads, whereas the larger 'Avdat hinterland (c. 110 km²) features extensive agricultural systems radiating from a primary settlement and very few secondary sites. Comprehensive spatial analysis was carried out based on combined data from surveys, excavations, aerial photogrammetry, LiDAR scanning, and GIS-based modelling. Typological comparison indicates that agricultural plots in both areas were broadly similar in design and distribution, including orchards and tuleilat el-'anab systems. Runoff modelling, Topographic Wetness Index, and flow-path analyses challenge prevailing assumptions regarding the planning of the agricultural systems and the function of the tuleilat el-'anab systems. In the 'Avdat hinterland, 210 field towers were strategically positioned for maximum visibility over orchards, indicating centrally organized supervision and protection. The findings suggest that environmental adaptation alone does not explain the divergent regimes. Instead, the differences likely reflect socio-economic organization and frontier dynamics, which are also evident in contemporary runoff agricultural systems in North Africa and Transjordan. The "extensive" regime at 'Avdat may have been controlled by wealthy landowners relying on tenant or seasonal labor within a semi-military frontier context, whereas the "intensive" regime at Rehovot-Sa'adon reflects smaller-scale, independent farming in a more secure inland setting.

5H. Re-imagining the Final Excavation Report: Exploring New Approaches to Publishing Archaeological Data (Workshop) (Williford C)

Chair(s): Ann E. Killebrew, Pennsylvania State University; Eric Kansa, Open Context; Sarah Kansa, Open Context

A Retrospective on Hybrid Publishing with Examples from Open Context

Sarah Whitcher Kansa (Open Context), Eric C. Kansa (Open Context)

Since 2006, Open Context, an online data publishing service for archaeology, has published over 2.4 million records from 200 projects, representing the work of more than 1,600 scholars. The current shape of Open Context's data dissemination and curation efforts reflect our attempts

to navigate a landscape filled with diverse and evolving challenges. Responses to professional, institutional, and sustainability issues, some of a global character and some of a United States specific character, have helped shape Open Context's technological and semantic choices. We will share examples from several data publications in Open Context to reflect on how the needs, challenges, and opportunities in data stewardship and hybrid publishing have changed over the past 20 years.

Re-imagining a Contextualized, Integrated, and Accessible Archaeological Survey Report: The Bay of Iskenderun Landscape Archaeology and Survey Project (Türkiye) as a Case Study
Eric C. Kansa (Open Context), Ann E. Killebrew (The Pennsylvania State University), Monica Genuardi (Society for Eastern Mediterranean Archaeology and Heritage Studies)

The Bay of Iskenderun Landscape Archaeology and Survey (BILAS) project, in collaboration with Open Context, is exploring an innovative hybrid publishing approach that combines a narrative summary with digitized open-access data to create a contextualized final report. This approach aims to produce a narrative publication that links information about the region, settlement patterns, and individual sites with digitized maps, satellite imagery, historical documents, and images of sites and artifacts, all of which will be accessible through Open Context and other digital repositories. Our goal is to establish a multi-layered, searchable, open-access database and publication designed to address a wide range of research questions and project findings. In this presentation, we will provide updates on this project, highlighting both our successes and the challenges we have faced in implementing this type of hybrid publication format.

Linked Open Archaeological Publication in the Age of AI: Reflections from the Eastern Korinthia Archaeological Survey
David K. Pettegrew (Messiah University)
*Virtual

My contribution to this workshop offers a practical case study in publishing data-centered archaeological reports in the digital age. I reflect on my recent experience publishing the datasets and analysis of the Eastern Korinthia Archaeological Survey (EKAS), a multidisciplinary project carried out in the eastern hinterland of Corinth, Greece, between 1997 and 2003. EKAS generated rich and complex datasets of more than 25,000 records—including documents, CSV tables, geospatial files, and images—documenting artifact distributions, features, and sites across the Corinthian countryside from prehistory to the twentieth century. The datasets were published through Open Context in 2021, followed by a linked digital monograph, *Corinthian Countrysides: Linked Open Data and Analysis from the Eastern Korinthia Archaeological Survey* (The Digital Press, 2024). Preparing the datasets and book involved extensive data refinement, standardization, and hyperlinking between narrative text and online digital records that would allow readers to move seamlessly between argument and evidence. This presentation reflects on the rationale for publishing in a hybrid format, the practical challenges of integrating linked open datasets with narrative analysis, and how emerging AI tools may reshape both the work of publication and the future reuse of archaeological data.

Using Wikibase for Sustainable Open-Access Publishing of Digital Archaeological Data: The Timna Valley Database as a Case Study
Sarah Richardson (North Carolina State University Libraries), Vered Silber Varod (Tel Aviv University), Erez Ben-Yosef (Tel Aviv University)

The growing volume and complexity of digital archaeological data challenge traditional models of publication and archiving, particularly in the context of final excavation reports. This paper presents the Timna Valley Database Wikibase Project as an experimental framework for the sustainable, open-access publication of archaeological data. Developed within the Central Timna Valley Project (Tel Aviv University), the database addresses the need to organize and disseminate thousands of heterogeneous digital records produced through surveys and excavations in one of the world's oldest copper-mining regions. These records include photographs, drone orthophotos, stratigraphic diagrams, radiocarbon results, GIS layers, and textual documentation that were previously distributed across disconnected folders and spreadsheets. Our approach employs Wikibase—the open-source software underlying Wikidata—to model archaeological entities such as sites, artifacts, and dating events as linked open data. In this system, each archaeological entity becomes a structured item connected through defined properties, allowing complex relationships among spatial, chronological, and contextual information to be expressed and queried. The Timna Valley database demonstrates how archaeological documentation can be transformed from static archives into a dynamic knowledge graph that supports interoperability, version tracking, and controlled collaborative enrichment while adhering to FAIR (Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, Reusable) data principles. Using the modeling of individual survey sites as a prototype, we discuss the conceptual and technical challenges of translating traditional archaeological documentation into semantic data structures. We argue that such infrastructures offer a sustainable model for integrating excavation and survey data into future digital final reports while enabling broader connections between archaeological fieldwork and the global Linked Open Data ecosystem.

Publishing Durable, Citable, Peer-Reviewed, and Professionally Edited Data on the Web via the University of Chicago Online Research and Publication Service (CORPUS)
David Schloen (University of Chicago)

CORPUS (https://corpus.uchicago.edu) was recently established at the University of Chicago to enable open-access Web publication of durable, citable, affordable, peer-reviewed, and professionally edited scholarly data of all kinds, including archaeological excavation reports. CORPUS is a collaborative endeavor of the University's Library, Press, Division of Arts & Humanities, and Institute for the Study of Ancient Cultures. Printed publications cannot cope with the volume and complexity of data produced by modern excavations, which generate large numbers of digital images, GIS maps, 3D models, and video clips that cannot be printed and can only be disseminated online. However, online websites have historically suffered from: (1) a lack of durability, with no institutional guarantee the website will remain accessible and functional as technology changes; (2) a lack of citability, with no guarantee that a URL link citing a specific piece of information will persist and not become broken; (3) a lack of affordability, with new software needing to be written and maintained for each publication; and (4) a lack of quality control, with no peer-review or editing by a respected institution to ensure scholarly quality and to allow the publication to count for academic promotion. CORPUS solves these problems with an institutional commitment from the University of Chicago to keep published websites accessible and citable with persistent URL links. An editorial board, editorial staff, and formal contracts imitate best practices for peer-reviewed printed works. Published data is preserved by the University Library within its permanent digital collections. This presentation will explain the editorial and technical processes involved and show how published data is presented on the Web.

5I. Archaeologies of Memory (Astoria)

Chair(s): Janling Fu, Harvard University; Tate Paulette, North Carolina State University

Generation after Generation: Re-Use and Mortuary Continuity Among EB IA and EB IB Tombs at Bab adh-Dhra', Jordan
Megan Nishida (University of Notre Dame)

During the Early Bronze Age I (c. 3500-3000 BCE), early agropastoral communities from around the Southern Ghor created an immense mortuary landscape at Bab adh-Dhra', Jordan. They buried their dead in secondary rituals, placing the commingled remains in communal tomb chambers, surrounded by grave goods. While generations of mourners helped build this site, the chaîne opératoire of a given tomb remain unknown. Did mourners bury their dead in a single episode, or did they reopen the same tomb during successive visits, embedding memory in its continued use? I investigate whether and how mourners in the Early, Middle, and Late EB IA and EB IB may have re-used tombs. I utilize statistical methods, including social network analysis, to investigate the similarities between tombs, focusing on the dimensions of variation tied to chronological changes in grave goods over time. These results reveal complicated dynamics at Bab adh-Dhra'. Many tombs show evidence of re-use across multiple phases of the EB I, spanning different portions of the Early, Middle, and Late EB IA and EB IB sequence, while a select few tombs

appear to have been reused throughout the entire period. These patterns of continuity suggest that the repeated reopening of tombs may have served as a practice of social memory, linking successive generations of mourners to specific places within the cemetery. In this way, the reuse of tombs provides insight into how memory was materially anchored in the mortuary landscape and was integral to the process of place-making at Bab adh-Dhra'.

Pax Sumerica: Outlines of Sumerian Peace in Šulgi's Royal Hymns
Aviya Fraenkel (Johns Hopkins University)

The royal hymns of Šulgi represent a unique sub-genre within the Sumerian praise hymns of the Ur III kings. They are characterized by complex syntactic structures, a distinctive vocabulary, and a wide range of themes. Above all, they are notable for the sophisticated royal ideology they present through poetic and literary methodologies that evidently evolved over the king's long (48-year) reign. While poetic descriptions of historical events or situations appear throughout the hymns, explicit references to their specific historical background are very rare. Uncovering the historical context of these situations requires a broad examination of their mentions across the entire known corpus of hymns. One recurring theme in the hymns is the depiction of periods of peace. According to the hymns, these periods were characterized by agricultural abundance, the establishment of justice, security, and the holding of various international gatherings. In my presentation, I intend to review the nature of SUMERIAN PEACE as described in the hymns of Šulgi, focusing on the civil, political, and security aspects depicted in the relevant poetic units. I furthermore plan to characterize the poetic methodologies that served as literary tools for reflecting the features of that ideal era and the role of the king who established it, an achievement for which he praises himself throughout his hymns.

Babylon as the "First City" and the Limits of Mesopotamian Collective Memory
Zachary Rubin (Fudan University)

Although the last attested cuneiform scholars in Babylon retained access to sources of their most remote history, from fantastic stories of early heroes to staid king lists and chronicles, it cannot be denied that the vast majority of these historical details disappeared with the decline of cuneiform literacy. The few details that remained of Babylonian history were either drawn from the imperial heyday of the first millennium BCE, or replaced by wholly folkloric narratives (e.g., of Belus, Semiramis, and Nimrod) that scarcely resemble their cuneiform-era inspirations. Likewise, post-cuneiform accounts of the early history of southern Mesopotamia were reduced to narratives of Babylon itself, completely ignoring earlier polities in the region like the city-states of Sumer and the Old Akkadian state. As such, this paper will use the framework of cultural memory to understand how so much historical knowledge disappeared from a region otherwise noted for its strong cultural and literary continuities. Since the practice of social forgetting is crucial to the construction of cultural memory, the disappearance of early Babylonian and non-Babylonian history from popular consciousness may be taken as an end-product of a new construction of regional cultural identity, which emphasized the hegemonic image of Babylon at the expense of its neighbors. Inspired by centuries of Babylonian political dominance and legitimized through the language of Babylon as the first city in existence, this new ideology absorbed all earlier regimes into the image of an eternal, divine city.

Using Memory to Construct the Future: Introducing "History-Making" and Its Application to Neo-Babylonian Temple Foundation Deposits
David Danzig (New York University, Institute for the Study of the Ancient World & Save Ancient Studies Alliance)

Many humanists, including historians, anthropologists, futurists, and scholars of literature, examine the relationships between past, present, and future. However, the activity of intentional messaging to future audiences to construct the future, what I call "history-making," has been largely absent from the discussion. This new futural approach to historiography bridges past, present, and future to create understandings of how people act in order to impact the future. As part of "futurity" or "futurality," human thinking about the future, people take active steps to direct, maintain, or change the future by creating objects or writing texts intended to impact future audiences. These actions are pervasive activities, as individuals, groups, subcultures, and societies aim to perpetuate and/or reimagine themselves. Oftentimes, historiographic writing is understood as drawing on memory to recreate notions of the past for the present. This view overlooks the futural nature of history writing and the physical emplacement of writings, in which memory serves as the basis for constructing the future. In this paper, I define five core concepts of history-making and outline my method for investigating these ideas in historical texts and their material realization. I apply this idea to the case of Neo-Babylonian royal building inscriptions found in temple foundation deposits, which include those of past Kassite kings that were excavated, copied, and reinterred during temple renovations. Scholars, such as Beaulieu, Weisberg, and Winter, have investigated this phenomenon in its connection to the past, as a type of antiquarianism. I show how Neo-Babylonian kings, and in particular Nadonidus, aimed to ensure cultural survival into the future by promoting trans-historical connectivity to make history.

Empty Vessels, Full Worlds: The Productive Forgetting of Sumer, Magan, and Gog in Ancient Near Eastern Tradition
Nathanael Shelley (Columbia University)

Where conventional scholarship frames the longevity of archaic toponyms like Sumer and Akkad, Magan and Meluhha, and Gog and Magog as evidence of memory—cultural, scribal, or ideological—this paper proposes an inversion: that what sustains these names across centuries is not remembering but a particular, productive mode of forgetting. Drawing on Harald Weinrich's theory of Lethe and Jacques Derrida's concept of the trace, I argue that the semantic emptying of these toponyms was not a failure of geographical knowledge but a deliberate or semi-deliberate act of mnemonic disinvestment. The paper reads stasis and change, not as poles of a spectrum, but as mutually constitutive acts and proposes a typology of productive forgetting as a necessary and important feature of Ancient Near Eastern historical consciousness.

5J. Archaeology of Jordan I (Private Dining 2)

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

Modeling Hunting Infrastructure with Miniature Desert Kites
Chad Hill (University of Pennsylvania), Yorke M. Rowan (University of Chicago)

Prehistoric hunting features known as "desert kites" were built across the Harrat al-Sham (the Black Desert) of Syria, Jordan and northern Arabia beginning in the Neolithic (c. 7000 BC), with similar features found in Armenia, Kazakhstan and beyond southwest Asia. Although recognized for decades, it was only the advent of satellite imagery that revealed the extent of the phenomenon: thousands of connected features, representing an unprecedented prehistoric infrastructure project. The function and import of kites is hard to recognize from the ground, leading many to wonder how the people who built and operated these structures conceptualized them. The new discovery of unique miniature models of these monumental hunting traps reveals how ancient people likely both planned and taught others to construct and operate these extraordinary prehistoric structures.

Zeighan Ancient Landscapes Project (ZAP): Early Bronze I-IV at Tall Abu ez-Zeighan
Hanna Erftenbeck (Grinnell College), Natalia M. Handziuk (University of Toronto)

The Early Bronze Age (EBA, 3800-2000 BCE) settlement extending across Tall Abu ez-Zeighan and Tall al-Handaquq South is one of the largest known EBA sites in Jordan, with roughly 15 ha still intact. We present the first comprehensive overview of the settlement, combining the results from our surveys on Tall al-Handaquq South (2025) and Tall Abu ez-Zeighan (2026). Our catch-and-release survey recorded surface finds, mapped new threats to and development on the site, and documented the visible architecture. Significantly, we have recovered EB I-EB IV material, indicating a comprehensive EBA sequence at the juncture of wadi Zarqa and the Jordan Valley. We discuss preliminary interpretations, initial evidence for site

organization, as well as our assessment of the site's geomorphology and possible risks to cultural heritage.

From Sherds to Households: Ceramic Use and Production from Building Ca at Jebel al-Mutawwaq (Area C-West)

Sara Ronchetti (University of Perugia)

*Virtual

This paper examines the ceramic assemblage from Building Ca in Area C-West at Jebel al-Mutawwaq, with the aim of defining patterns of use and production within a household context dated to Early Bronze Age (EB) IB. Excavated during the 2024-2025 campaigns of the Italian-Spanish expedition, Building Ca is located along the western side of an open courtyard (L.51) and features a curvilinear plan with a double apse. Its architectural connection with the adjacent Building Cb suggests an integrated domestic unit. The bedrock floor (L.1708) yielded several installations (circular and oval features, cup-marks), two stone mortars, and a dense concentration of pottery found crushed directly on the floor surface, particularly in the southern portion of the building. The ceramic repertoire includes bowls, jars, and lamps associated with domestic activities. The analysis focuses on diagnostic sherds through macroscopic examination of fabrics and manufacturing traces, combined with morphological seriation to classify forms, types, and decorative features. Quantitative data, including non-diagnostic fragments, are incorporated to reconstruct the overall composition of the assemblage. The results point to a coherent domestic assemblage with evidence for on-site processing activities: the integration of typological, technological, and quantitative data supports the interpretation of Building Ca as a multifunctional domestic and productive space, contributing to broader discussions of household organization and economic practices during EB I in Jordan.

The 2026 BRAP Excavation Season at Khirbat al-Baluʿa in Central Jordan

Monique D. Roddy (Walla Walla University), Kent Bramlett (La Sierra University), Friedbert Ninow (La Sierra University)

The Baluʿa Regional Archaeological Project (BRAP) returned to Khirbat al-Baluʿa for a fourth season in 2026. Baluʿa is a large, 16 ha basalt site located south of the Wadi Mujib with extensive occupational remains from the Iron Age, as well as from the Hellenistic, Roman, and Islamic periods. Long-term project goals include building a ceramic typology of the Baluʿa region and understanding the political, economic, and environmental history of this major site that controlled the northern access point to the Central Karak Plateau. The 2026 season continued our focus on the Iron II settlement and the Middle Islamic Village. Season goals for the Iron Age settlement included excavation of the earlier (Iron I) phase of the large Iron IIB domestic structure excavated since 2012, excavation of a possible Iron II administrative structure north of the Qasr, and excavation of domestic structures in the Iron IIC extension to the settlement. Excavation of the Middle Islamic khan continued investigating its phases of use and relation to the nearby village. Finally, we continued work on Pathways to Presentation, in partnership with Sela, for conservation and long-term presentation of Baluʿa.

From Pebble to Offering: Votive Pebble Stones at Khirbat Ataruz, Jordan

Chang-Ho Ji (La Sierra University), Jennifer Helbley (La Sierra University), Raul Zanatta (La Sierra University)

This paper examines an assemblage of fine pebbles and crafted stone objects from the Iron Age temple at Khirbat Ataruz in central Jordan, focusing on their role in ritual practice and the temple economy. The stones range from unmodified river pebbles to deliberately shaped forms and were recovered primarily from publicly accessible areas of the temple precinct. Stratigraphic evidence indicates that the assemblage is concentrated in Iron IIA contexts, with fewer and more restricted forms appearing in later Iron IIB phases. Portable X-ray fluorescence analysis indicates limited compositional variation within an otherwise calcite-based assemblage. The objects appear to have functioned mainly as votive offerings dedicated by ordinary worshippers and are interpreted as material expressions of religious meaning created through selection and dedication. Together, the Ataruz stones illustrate how modest natural materials could acquire religious value through controlled transformation and ritual use, reflecting broader patterns of scaled devotion and communal participation in Iron Age ritual life.

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 20, 2026

10:40am – 12:45pm (CST)

6A. The Age of Transitions: Imperial Successions and Local Transformations in the First Millennium BCE II (Continental A)

Chair(s): Roi Sabar, Hebrew University of Jerusalem; Avraham Mashiach, Hebrew University of Jerusalem

Integrating the Edge of the Empire: Continuity and Change in the Dead Sea Region during the Neo-Babylonian and Persian Periods

Avraham Mashiach (Hebrew University of Jerusalem)

The fall of the Kingdom of Judah and its subsequent transition to direct imperial rule in the early 6th century BCE marks a formative transition in the political and social history of the sotuhern Levant, that profoundly reshaped administrative frameworks, demographic movements, social boundaries, and religious perceptions. Archaeologically, these transformations are manifested through patterns of break and demographic decline, alongside processes of continuity and gradual cultural change. This paper aims to examine the nature of imperial control in the Southern Levant through the case study of the En-Gedi oasis in the Judean Desert. Established during the days of the Judean Monarchy under Neo-Assyrian hegemony, the site functioned as a royal administrative center dedicated to the exploitation of natural resources and the production of high-value commodities and cash crops. While the site suffered violent destruction during the Neo-Babylonian campaigns of the early 6th century BCE, it was rapidly resettled and its operation resumed. Shortly thereafter, during the Persian period, the site underwent significant spatial reorganization, marked by the construction of one of the most substantial structures in the region. In the Hellenistic period, the settlement patterns at En-Gedi changed once more, as the center of gravity moved to a diffferent part of the oasis. The frequent transformations at En-Gedi, partly mirroring shifts in imperial rule, raise intriguing questions regarding the nature of imperial governance, the status of imperial "crown lands" in the Southern Levant, and the scope of imperial economic investment in peripheral regions.

Hazor and the Hula Valley under Achaemenid Rule: Imperial Integration in Northern Galilee

Débora Sandhaus (Israel Antiquities Authority)

The Persian period in the southern Levant has long been regarded as archaeologically sparse and historically peripheral. At Hazor, one of the largest sites in the region, remains attributed to this period were traditionally interpreted as limited and insignificant. Recent excavations and renewed analysis of the site's stratigraphy and material culture, however, suggest that Hazor should instead be understood within the broader regional and imperial framework of the Achaemenid Empire. Excavations in Area M on the northern slope of the tell revealed two Persian-period strata. The earlier phase consists of a cemetery of pit tombs and associated refuse deposits containing pottery and small finds, including Phoenician juglets that reflect connections with the eastern Mediterranean. The later phase marks a transformation of the area into a domestic and productive zone, indicating a structured and sustained occupation. When integrated with architectural remains on the acropolis and western cliff, this evidence also calls for a reconsideration of Hazor's stratigraphy. Structures previously attributed to the Neo-Assyrian period may instead belong to the late fifth–early fourth century BCE, pointing to a more substantial Achaemenid presence at the site. Placed within the broader settlement landscape of the Hula Valley, Hazor emerges as part of a regional network connected to Phoenician economic spheres and integrated into the administrative framework of the Achaemenid satrapy of Eber-Nari along a corridor linking the Phoenician coast, Damascus, and inland routes of the southern Levant—reframing the Hula Valley as an active component of the Achaemenid imperial landscape.

Horses and Empires: Revisiting the Deve Hüyük Cemeteries

Emilie Nordhues (University of California, Los Angeles)

The cemeteries found at Deve Hüyük have been known since Wooley first excavated at Carchemish; these received only cursory publications until an article (1975) and then a monograph (1980) by P.R.S. Moorey. He argued that the 5th-4th century BCE burials (Cemetery II) represent the burials of Achaemenid soldiers. The existence of an earlier 8th-7th c., presumably local burial ground (Cemetery I) allows for comparisons of the mortuary practices. Taking this as a starting place, my paper will revisit the objects found alongside the inhumations. As a window into these contexts, special attention will be paid to items associated with horse riding, like the horse-and-rider figurines and various horse trappings. It has generally been established that the use of cavalry in the imperial military begins with the Neo-Assyrian empire, becoming a major strategic advantage under the Achaemenid empire. Furthermore, the increasing use and the visual impact of cavalry can be easily traced in the archaeological record. Thus, the Deve Hüyük cemeteries present the chance to materialize this story about horses, their use under empires across the first millennium, and the impact cavalry and its associated imagery and trappings had in this Northern Levantine space. This context will also allow for updated considerations about the nature of the cemeteries at Deve Hüyük.

The Archaeology of Treason: In Search of the Private Village of Ptolemy son of Thraseas

Roi Sabar (The Hebrew University of Jerusalem), Matthew J. Adams (The Center for the Mediterranean World)

Among the many imperial transitions that reshaped the ancient Near East during the first millennium BCE, the transfer of the southern Levant from Ptolemaic to Seleucid rule stands out as unusually well documented. A key source for this episode is the Hefzibah inscription, discovered in 1960 in the fields of Kibbutz Hefzibah in the Harod Valley. The inscription preserves a royal correspondence between Antiochos III and Ptolemy son of Thraseas, the Ptolemaic governor of the region who defected to the Seleucid side. The letters address violations committed by Seleucid troops against Ptolemy's private villages, and the findspot of the inscription strongly suggests that one such estate lay in the vicinity of Kibbutz Hefzibah. Despite the inscription's historical importance, its archaeological context has remained largely unexplored. This paper presents the newly initiated Hefzibah Project and the results of its first field seasons, which combine intensive archaeological and geophysical surveys with targeted excavations. By integrating epigraphic, historical, and material evidence, this project situates the inscription within its physical landscape and offers new insights into elite landholding, rural administration, and the transformation of the Jezreel and Harod Valley landscape during the Ptolemaic–Seleucid transition.

6B. Cultural Heritage: Preservation, Presentation, and Management II (Continental B)

Chair(s): Jessica R. Robkin, University of Central Florida; Nancy Serwint, Arizona State University; Barbara Anglisz, Independent Researcher

The Impact of Using Mesopotamian Sites as Cemeteries

Ahmed A. Khammas (State Board of Antiquities and Heritage, Iraq)

This paper addresses the damaging factor of establishing recent cemeteries on Mesopotamian sites. Dating back to millennia BCE, ancient Iraqi sites exceed 15,000 in number, and they range from small settlements to great capitals. The remains of these settlements have been observed and documented throughout Iraq, by the work of foreign and local archaeological missions. In this research, archaeological survey information mainly from the Diyala region, as well as from other regions, is used. Reasons for using archaeological sites as cemeteries were investigated. Further, the types of these cemeteries and their number were explored. The results of this effort include documentation of archaeological sites affected by this dilemma. In addition, evaluating the degree of the impact on each site, by percentage. Finaly, proposed solutions are presented to tackle this problem and to help in protecting Mesopotamian sites.

Gaza Cultural Heritage Report

Rannfrid I. Lasine Thelle (Wichita State University)

This paper presents an update on cultural heritage destruction in Gaza. Cataloging and reporting on damage to cultural heritage sites, archaeological excavations, museums and collections, and other infrastructure related to heritage management is an important activity of organizations such as ASOR. ASOR and other organizations have long prioritized publications and support of initiatives that center heritage protection and management, with projects such as the Cultural Heritage Initiatives, begun in 2014, in recognition of the ethical obligation to respond to destruction and threats to "our common world heritage and cultural diversity." The global outcry over deliberate heritage destruction often leads to action, and responsibilities of nations in the case of destruction caused by war are governed by multiple international conventions. In the case of Gaza, our engagement with the obliteration of this key area of our organization's interest is almost nonexistent, although one could argue that our responsibility—as a nation implicated in the destruction—should warrant this strongly. Lying smack in the middle of the MENA region, countless treasures of our common global heritage— both material and intangible—are at risk and need our attention and consideration. Developing priorities and possible plans for conservation and recovery begin with the documentation of facts and awareness of the actual situation. My presentation brings together currently available material and aims to present a snapshot of where we are now, based on reports from organizations such as UNESCO, the Jerusalem Fund and Palestine Center, and phone interviews with Palestinian archaeologists.

Building the Field: Heritage Conservation Capacity in Syria and the Region

Hiba Alkhalaf (Research Fellow at the Carena Institute of Sustainable Archaeologies (CISA), Birkbeck, University of London.), Will Raynolds (ASOR)

As cultural heritage conservation efforts expand across the Middle East and North Africa, there remains limited up-to-date evidence on the capacity available to design, implement, and manage conservation projects for sites, historic buildings, and collections. Heritage practice in the region depends on a diverse ecosystem of actors across government, academia, civil society, and private practice, making it difficult to assess the field through any single source of information. Over the past year, our team reviewed publicly available resources and conducted interviews with more than 125 heritage professionals working across Syria, Libya, Iraq, Jordan, and Turkey. While regional in scope, the research placed particular emphasis on Syria, where the scale of current and future recovery needs is especially urgent, while also drawing on neighbouring and comparable contexts to better understand the wider regional landscape of heritage practice. This paper presents the initial findings of that research, offering a preliminary assessment of the scale, distribution, and core competencies of heritage conservation practice across the region. It identifies key strengths, gaps, and structural challenges, and considers how these shape the prospects for long-term recovery and sustainable conservation. The paper concludes with recommendations for how international partners can more effectively support and strengthen heritage conservation capacity across the Middle East and North Africa.

Institutionalizing Heritage Management on the Local Level: How Municipalities Can Become Long-Term Custodians of Cultural Heritage at the Local Level

Ahmad H. AlAdamat (Umm El-Jimal Municipality)

The institutionalization of heritage management at the municipal level remains an underexplored topic in heritage studies and practice in the Middle East. This Abstract presents the development of a municipal heritage unit as a practical model for embedding heritage management within local governance structures. Using the experience of establishing the Heritage Unit in Umm el-Jimal Municipality - Jordan as a primary case study, the paper examines how local institutions can move from ad hoc heritage activities toward sustainable, structured management systems. The study also reflects on earlier attempts to integrate heritage within municipal administration, particularly the experience of creating a heritage-focused initiative in the city of Salt- Jordan. While that effort demonstrated the potential role of municipalities in heritage stewardship, it ultimately proved

difficult to sustain due to institutional, administrative, and resource-related challenges. By analyzing these lessons, the abstract highlights the importance of long-term planning, clear mandates, and integration with municipal development priorities. In contrast, the Heritage Unit in Umm el-Jimal was designed from the outset with sustainability in mind. The initiative seeks to formalize heritage management within the municipality by establishing dedicated responsibilities, integrating heritage considerations into local planning, and linking preservation efforts with community development, tourism, and environmental sustainability. The narrative therefore shifts the focus from heritage projects to heritage institutions. Rather than viewing heritage protection as an external or temporary intervention, it argues for embedding heritage governance within local administrative systems. By documenting this process, the study contributes a new perspective.

6C. Archaeology of Israel II (Continental C)

Chair(s): Zachary Thomas, Australian Catholic University; Charles Wilson, University of Chicago

To Be(-Egyptian) or Not to Be? Provenance Analysis of Calcite-Alabaster Objects from Tel Azekah

Jennifer Zimni-Gitler (German ProtCSTant Instiitutefor Archaeology), Avner Ayalon (Geological Survey of Israel), Nadya Teutsch (Geological Survey of Israel), Tami Zilberman (Geological Survey of Israel), Keren Weiss-Sarusi (Geological Survey of Israel), Olga Berlin (Geological Survey of Israel), Sabine Kleiman (Tel Aviv University), Oded Lipschits (Tel Aviv University)

*Virtual

Calcite-alabaster vessels found the Southern Levant have traditionally been interpreted as Egyptian imports. The recent identification of a Bronze Age quarry in the Te'omim Cave has reopened the question of local production. This study examines six calcite-alabaster objects from Tel Azekah, including two drill cores, in order to reassess raw material provenance and craft practices. Provenance analyses of calcite-alabaster remain relatively rare, particularly in the Southern Levant. By combining stable carbon ($\delta^{13}C$) and oxygen ($\delta^{18}O$) isotope analysis with ICP-OES chemical data, this study aims to determine the provenance of the Tel Azekah calcite-alabaster vessels. The results indicate that the stone derives from Egyptian sources. Building on this finding, the study further explores whether different Egyptian quarry regions can be distinguished based on their isotopic signatures. At the same time, the presence of drill cores provides direct evidence for local manufacture at Tel Azekah using imported Egyptian raw material. These findings suggest a more complex model of Egyptian–Levantine interaction during the Bronze Age, involving the movement of raw materials and technological knowledge rather than exclusively finished vessels.

The Iron Age IIB-C Extramural Shrine at ʻEn Ḥaẓeva: An Updated Assessment of the Evidence

Doron Ben-Ami (Israel Antiquities Authority), Erin Darby (University of Tennessee)

ʻEn Ḥaẓeva is situated at the northern end of the Arabah Valley. It is located on a shallow hilltop, at a critical convergence of trade routes connecting south Arabia with Edom, Judah, and the Mediterranean seaports, making it a vital waystation along the Arabian trade network. During the 1990s, large-scale excavations were carried out by R. Cohen and Y. Yisrael on behalf of the Israel Antiquities Authority. These excavations unearthed nearly the entire Iron Age IIB–C fortress. Notably, all architectural features, except for two extramural units near the fortress's gate, were located within the fortress walls. Of these two units, the one located to the west attracted particular interest due to a remarkable collection of cult objects discovered there (the ʻEn Ḥaẓeva favissa). This collection represents a significant addition to the increasing body of late Iron Age cult artifacts from the southern Levant. In this lecture, we provide an analysis of the extramural remains excavated west of the gate, including a well-defined shrine structure and the favissa. This analysis offers a new perspective on the favissa context and cultic traits, placing ʻEn Ḥaẓeva within the broader framework of Iron Age IIB–C trade outposts along the caravan routes traversing the southern Levant.

The Cremation Cemetery at the Foot of Tel Hazor

Igor Kreimerman (The Hebrew University of Jerusalem)

During the 1987 and 1991 seasons, the late Prof. Amnon Ben-Tor conducted a salvage excavation at the foot of Tel Hazor. The most intriguing discovery was a relatively short-lived cemetery consisting of approximately forty cremation burials dating to the Iron Age IIB. Both the architecture of the burial installations and the associated finds appear to be unique and do not conform to the well-known patterns of cremation burial documented in Phoenicia or the Aramaean states. This lecture will present the architecture and material assemblage from the cemetery and situate them within the broader context of Iron Age burial practices in Israel, Phoenicia, and Aram. Particular attention will be given to the cemetery's distinctive features and to the ways in which they may reflect the geopolitical dynamics of the region during the Iron Age IIB.

The Northern Kingdom of Israel in the Iron Age IIB

Erin Hall (University of California, Los Angeles)

The Northern Kingdom of Israel is often said to have reached its "peak" in the days of Kings Joash (798–782 BCE), and especially, Jeroboam II (co-regent, 793–782 BCE; sole ruler 782–753 BCE). This paper explores the archaeology of the Nimshide kingdom from the fall of the north to Hazael, King of Damascus, in the second half of the 9th century BCE, up until the Assyrian conquests in 732 BCE and 721/720 BCE. The goal of this paper is to provide an analysis, in broad strokes, of various aspects of the northern kingdom of Israel, ranging from city-planning and monumental construction to pottery, cultic practices, and burials. While there is evidence for robust, fortified settlements all over the kingdom, there is a question as to whether, when we look at the history of the north, it can be said to have truly reached its "zenith" at this time. Overall, the aim of this paper is to highlight the archaeology of the Nimshides and to call for further investigations into the material culture of this critical period.

Pollen Analysis of the Northwest Church Diakonikon at Hippos, Israel: A Comparative Study

Vy Cao (La Sierra University), Patrick Scott-Geyer (University of San Diego), Gabriella Perko (University of San Diego)

This paper presents the results of archaeobotanical sampling from the Northwest Church Diakonikon at Hippos, Israel, and evaluates these data through comparison with previously published pollen assemblages from the Northeast Church Diakonikon. Twelve core samples were collected from depths of 2–5 cm across discrete loci, including six from the eastern room floor, four from the western room floor, and two from the bench in the western chamber. The study builds on earlier pollen analysis conducted in the Northeast Church Diakonikon (initial sampling in 2010; expanded dataset of sixteen samples published in 2022), enabling controlled intra-site comparison between two contemporaneous ecclesiastical spaces. Analysis of the Northwest Diakonikon yielded twenty identifiable herbal taxa, with dominant representation of Glaucium sp., Papaver sp., Cyclamen sp., Atropa sp., and Hyoscyamus sp. Additional taxa present in the Northwest but absent from the Northeast assemblage include Rubia sp., Cannabis sp., and Nardostachys sp. Spatial distribution patterns differ systematically between the two structures: whereas the Northeast Diakonikon exhibited localized concentrations associated with shelf contexts, the Northwest assemblage is distributed across floor and bench samples, with internal variation between eastern and western rooms. These findings provide evidence for distinct depositional patterns within architecturally similar Diakonikon spaces. They also suggest that the Northwest Diakonikon, with its greater diversity and concentration of herbal taxa, may have functioned as a more extensive center for the storage and preparation of herbal resources relative to the Northeast structure.

6D. Archaeology and Biblical Studies II (Waldorf)

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

Is the Psalmist "Like a Lion" in Psalm 22:17b? Images of Lions and Lion Hunting as a Possible Solution to An Old Crux

Jerome F. Creach (Pittsburgh Theological Seminary)

Psalm 22:17b is a famous crux that has resisted a cogent solution (MT כארי ידי ורגלי ["like a lion my hands and my feet"]). The suggestion that ancient Near Eastern iconography might provide a new avenue into the problem has also heretofore yielded no convincing explanation. I will argue, however, that images of lions offer a potential solution if we follow a detail in the iconography scholars have largely overlooked. Instead of searching the images to understand the lion as predator and the psalmist as prey (thus, images of lions attacking or devouring human extremities), I will propose that "like a lion" describes the psalmist, whose hands and feet are grasped or bound by a hunter/enemy. Many images of lions and lion hunting depict a hunter or hero grasping the front or rear paw of a lion as a sign of control and domination. A prime example is a sculpture from the palace of Sargon II that depicts a hero (perhaps Gilgamesh) holding a lion under his arm, with his hand holding the lion's paw. If Ps 22 is a royal psalm, as many propose, the psalmist's identity with a hunted lion would fit a common royal motif (e.g. Ezek 19:2-9). The available leonine imagery would, in turn, illuminate the king's complaint of enemies encircling him and his hands and feet being like that of a (hunted/captured) lion.

A New Interpretation of the Codex Hammurabi Relief in Light of Exodus 34:29, Part 2

Takayoshi Oshima (Northeast Normal University)

Since its discovery in 1901–1902 at Susa, the ancient capital of the Elamite kingdom, the Codex Hammurabi stele has served as a central point of reference for archaeological, art-historical, and cuneiform studies of the Old Babylonian period. Yet the monument presents several paradoxes, including its unusual form as a stone monument, the relatively simplified rendering of the anthropomorphic figures in the relief, and the absence of an explicit divine symbol. In my ASOR 2025 paper, based on a close analysis of tool marks visible on the stele in the Louvre, I argued that the relief at the top of the monument underwent several phases of modification. The relief was likely originally erected to depict the Amorite king's devotion to Šamaš, the sun god and the deity of justice, but was later altered, possibly during Hammurabi's lifetime. This paper extends that proposal by examining additional elements of the monument, including the significance of the standing figure and the placement of the inscription, while also addressing questions raised after the 2025 presentation.

"As the Deer or Gazelle You Shall Eat It": Hunting and Feasting in Iconography and Biblical Law

Doren Snoek (University of St Andrews)

"Sacrifice" has been defined by J.Z. Smith and others as ritual slaughter of a domestic animal. Recent work on the iconography and archaeology of sacrificial cults in ancient Greece (Larson 2017) complicates this view, suggesting that non-domesticated cervids were also ritually killed and offered by fire. Indeed, hunting practices tend to be highly ritualized and may involve post-kill blood manipulation, offerings to various deities, preserving trophies, and / or feasting. This paper will read Levantine hunt scene iconography with the finds at Mt Ebal (which yielded the highest proportion of fallow deer remains from the Iron Period Levant), contemporary, zooarchaeological evidence for preferential cervid hunting across the region (Sapir-Hen 2022), and the biblical text. It offers a new reading of the levitical and deuteronomic allowances for non-centralized slaughter.

The Pit: Archaeology and Daniel 6

Stephen L. Cook (Virginia Theological Seminary)

This paper examines the "pit" of lions (Aram. gōb) in Daniel 6 through the lens of ancient Near Eastern archaeology and iconography. While often treated as a historical Persian punishment, evidence suggests that pits in the ancient world were used to capture lions rather than to house them. This discrepancy invites a symbolic reading. Drawing on Mesopotamian royal inscriptions and imagery—especially lion-hunting traditions that portray kings as defenders of order against chaos—the paper argues that Daniel's lions' pit evokes the cosmic Abyss rather than a literal penal practice. Intertextual links with the pits of Joseph (Gen 37) and Jeremiah (Jer 38), along with resonances in the Psalms, further support this interpretation. Daniel's descent into the pit thus represents a liminal passage through primordial disorder toward divine vindication and renewed life. By integrating archaeological data, comparative iconography, and biblical intertextuality, the paper proposes that Daniel 6 reconfigures the "pit" as a theological symbol of exile, chaos, and God's power to restore and perfect cosmic order.

"And God Said" and "Proclaims Darius the King": The Persian Origins of the Priestly Cosmology in Genesis

John T. Strong (Missouri State University)

Mark Leuchter has argued that in the Persian period Jerusalem scribes would have been trained in Persian scribal schools, and consequently would have been fully indoctrinated into Persian mythological traditions. While the Persian provenance of the priestly source in the Pentateuch is firmly agreed upon by scholarly consensus, scholars nevertheless turn to Mesopotamian intellectual culture as background for priestly texts, especially those found in the Primeval History (Gen 1–11). I will challenge this approach to the Urgeschichte, arguing that while the priestly scribes of this portion of the Biblical text remembered their Mesopotamian cultural heritage, they worked within the cultural milieu and spoke to an intellectual audience that was thoroughly indoctrinated into Persian mythical traditions. I will argue that evidence from Achaemenid royal inscriptions suggests that Persian mythology and ideology provided the intellectual context for the cosmology found in Genesis. As time allows, I will discuss inscriptions from Darius' tomb at Naqsh-i-Rustam (and elsewhere), which provide a context for the formula "And God said," the closing time stamp, "there was evening, there was morning, day NUMBER," and the Persian background for the six-day structure itself. The Genesis cosmology was a preamble for the priestly scribes' larger work that extended to Exod 40, with which they argued for Israelite identity and their own position within the Persian empire.

6E. Computational Methods and Simulations in the Near Eastern Archaeology (Marquette)

Chair(s): Bülent Arıkan, Istanbul Technical University

The Assessment of Land Use Patterns and Landscape Evolution During the Early Bronze Age in Anatolia

Bulent Arikan (Istanbul Technical University Eurasia Institute of Earth Sciences)

This talk focuses on the assessment of long-term land use patterns and how landscapes evolved in relation to agropastoral activities across Anatolia during the Early Bronze Age. The Early bronze Age represents a formative phase for the societies which transformed the villages to towns and then to urban centers. As part and parcel of these social, economic, and political changes, archaeological societies adapted their subsistence patterns to meet the ever-increasing needs of larger and more complex groups. These changes had direct impacts on land use patterns; strategies that aimed maximized yield from fields and grazing much larger herds brought soil exhaustion, faster de-vegetation across larger landscapes, and increased erosion-deposition rates. As population increased and reliance on agropastoral production grew constantly, the human groups faced with series of environmental perturbations. The long-term, complex, and dynamic human-environment relationships may be traced through the application of agent-based modeling in archaeology. Agent-based modeling reveals the intricate, dependent, and time-transgressive dynamics between social and ecological systems, which show us how certain processes and adaptive behaviors might have emerged.

Shaping the Neolithic Landscape: Palaeoenvironmental Change and Early Settlements in the Marmara Region

Bedel E. Emre (Istanbul Technical University), Bülent Arıkan (Istanbul Technical University)

*Virtual

The Marmara Region occupies a strategic geographical position between Anatolia, the Near East, and southeastern Europe, making it a key area for understanding early human mobility and cultural interactions. Located between the Dardanelles and the Bosphorus straits, the Sea of Marmara forms a natural boundary between Europe and Asia while simultaneously enabling connections across these continents. Archaeological evidence indicates that the Marmara Region has been inhabited since prehistoric times and reflects a long and continuous process of human occupation and environmental interaction. Early traces of hunter-gatherer communities have been identified in caves such as Ağaçlı, Gümüşdere, Domalı, Yarımburgaz, and İbonun Rampası. The transition from mobile lifeways to more permanent settlements marked an important shift in human–environment relations. While early forms of settlement already produced limited environmental impacts, these transformations intensified with the Neolithic transition, when agricultural practices and permanent architecture began to reshape landscapes and alter the distribution and density of natural vegetation and animal species. This study examines Neolithic settlements in the Marmara Region—including Fikirtepe, Pendik, Yenikapı, Yarımburgaz, and Beşiktaş—from the beginning of the Holocene to the end of the Neolithic period. These communities relied heavily on local resources and materials for settlement construction and subsistence practices. By focusing on the archaeological record associated with the Fikirtepe cultural horizon, the study aims to better understand the social organization, subsistence strategies, and environmental interactions of early farming communities in the region. Emphasizing domestication as a central component of the Neolithic transformation, the research integrates spatial environmental analysis using GRASS GIS with agent-based modelling approaches to explore the technological and adaptive strategies that shaped human–environment relationships during this transformative period.

Beyond Collapse and Resilience: Modeling Agropastoral Production and Landscape Relations at Çatalhöyük East (9100–8100 BP)

Neriman Erdem (Istanbul Technical University)

* Virtual

The development and transformation of early settled societies are often explained through linear narratives based on external climatic forces. However, this study re-examines the millennium-long agro-spatial evolution of Çatalhöyük's East Mound (9100–8100 BP) by moving beyond the simplistic dichotomy between external environmental determinism and internal social agency. Instead of deterministic approaches that attribute systemic shifts solely to external factors, this research analyzes the critical role of internal dynamics and nonlinear feedback loops within the socio-ecological system. Methodologically, a high-resolution agent-based model (ABM) is presented, integrating the MedLanD (MML) platform with a Macrophysical Climate Model (MCM) through a unique sequential simulation design. This approach has made it possible to measure path-dependency processes and cumulative environmental costs on the landscape, which are difficult to show with traditional methods. The findings reveal a critical socio-ecological paradox: the successful agricultural strategies that supported Çatalhöyük's high population density also led the system into a vulnerable state. The model demonstrates that short-term adaptation successes create structural limitations and vulnerabilities in landscape capacity in the long term. In this context, the eventual restructuring of the settlement should be considered not merely as a response to an external climate shock but as an emergent outcome of internal system stress. This study emphasizes that resilience is not a static state but a dynamic process shaped by the long-term interaction of human will and the landscape.

A Genome-Wide History of the Ancient Near East: Evidence from the Levant and Mesopotamia

Ali Kesserwani (Emory University)

This presentation is based on the final draft for a future publication. The publication will examine and review the entire corpus of the ancient DNA (aDNA) of the Near East (focused on the Levant, Mesopotamia, and Egypt) from the Epipaleolithic (12,000 - 10,000 BCE) to the Middle Ages (1400 CE). The major eras that will be chronologically covered are the following: Epipaleolithic, Chalcolithic, Bronze Age, Iron Age, Antiquity, and the Middle Ages. The goal of this presentation is to not only present the genetic composition of these periods but also tie in admixture events and population flow relevant to the historical record. For example, in the Bronze Age, increases in Mesopotamian ancestry in the Levant may be connected to Hurrian westward migrations. In addition, during the Iron Age, Anatolian/Western Mediterranean increases in ancestry may be connected to the eastward migrations of the Sea Peoples. The genomic composition of later periods such as the Hellenistic and Roman Near East are examined, as well as the overall increase in Levantine genetic signatures in Imperial Rome and its surrounding areas. Lastly, the Middle Ages will be examined through the lens of the Crusades in which burials have shown intermixing between local Levantines and Crusaders of European descent. While this presentation does not present new genetic data, it reexamines the existing aDNA corpus through the lens of Near Eastern archaeology and history, highlighting historical connections not previously explored.

Phylogenetics Applied to Ceramic Evolution: A Technological Approach

Michael Orellana (Andrews University)

Phylogenetics has long been an important methodological framework for reconstructing relationships among entities that exhibit shared traits and patterns of variation. Although originally developed within the biological sciences, this approach has increasingly demonstrated its potential for archaeological analysis, particularly in the study of ceramic development and technological transmission. This paper examines both the usefulness and the limitations of applying phylogenetic reasoning to the evolution of ceramic forms, treating ceramic attributes not as biological inheritances, but as structured technological traits that may reveal patterns of continuity, divergence, and clustering within an assemblage. The study presents a case analysis of approximately 400 ceramic pieces from Tall Jalul, Jordan. Each specimen was systematically evaluated according to a set of recurring morphological and technological variables, including ware color, rim type, vessel class, diameter, wall thickness, and surface treatment. These features were selected as comparable analytical characters in order to assess whether relationships among ceramic forms can be modeled in a manner analogous to phylogenetic branching. Rather than proposing a strictly biological lineage, this paper argues that phylogenetic analysis may function as a heuristic tool for visualizing probable connections among ceramic types and for identifying technological trajectories within a corpus. At the same time, the study acknowledges important methodological constraints, particularly those related to character selection, convergence, and the risk of interpretive circularity. The Jalul material demonstrates that phylogenetic modeling can contribute meaningfully to ceramic classification by moving beyond static typology toward a more relational understanding of variation and interconnection within archaeological assemblages.

6F. Flipping the Script: Museum Reinterpretations in Practice (Workshop) (Williford A)

Chair(s): Kiersten Neumann, University of Chicago; Katherine Blanchard, Penn Museum

From Label to Ledger: Reassessing the Provenance of a Cult Bétyle

Nadine N. Panayot (American University of Beirut), Aimée Maha Bou Rizk (American University of Beirut)

This study examines a limestone cult monument preserved in the Archaeological Museum of the American University of Beirut, representing a throne flanked by two sphinxes and surmounted by a trapezoidal stela or bétyle. Although the object entered the museum through the donation of a private collection, its earlier provenance remained uncertain. The article reassesses the piece through a detailed analysis of its typology, iconography, and stylistic characteristics. Particular attention is given to the sculptural treatment of the sphinxes, the presence of vegetal motifs such as the lotus, and the symbolic arrangement of the throne and bétyle. By comparing these features with parallels from Phoenician and Levantine cult

monuments, the authors propose a revised provenance in the region of Tyre (Sour) in southern Lebanon. This reinterpretation situates the monument within a broader tradition of Levantine religious imagery associated with aniconic cult stones and sacred thrones, which played an important role in local ritual practices. The study highlights the value of contextual and comparative approaches for reconstructing the origins of antiquities whose archaeological provenience has been lost. More broadly, it demonstrates how careful stylistic and iconographic analysis can contribute to a more nuanced understanding of religious traditions and artistic production in the Levant during the Hellenistic and Roman periods.

Reconstructing a Middle Bronze Age Hoard through the ISAC Archives

Tasha Vorderstrasse (University of Chicago), Brian Muhs (University of Chicago)

The ISAC Museum's special exhibition, Megiddo: A City Unearthed, a Past Imagined, provided an opportunity to examine narratives surrounding the ISAC excavations at Megiddo. As part of a class on hoards of the Levant that was done in association with the exhibition, an examination of the ISAC database led to an archival record of an unscanned photograph which stated: "Golden pectoral of unknown Palestinian king who received it as a gift from Amenemhet III, whose cartouche it bears. Obverse. This was Orinst. A 6051, but has been returned to Vester and company, Jerusalem, from whom it was purchased." The present location of the object was given as: Palestine museum (?) while the provenience was "Palestine: (Gaza) Byblos." Further research revealed that the pectoral in question was in fact one that was in the National Museum in Beirut Lebanon and published by Maurice Chehab in 1937. From the article, it became clear that this was part of a larger group of objects which were said to be from a tomb of the royal kings of Byblos that were acquired by the Oriental Institute from Vester & Company in Jerusalem and which they had to return to the British Mandate of Palestine. After that, the treasure was subsequently sent to Beirut. We examine this case study from the ISAC archival records and how it helps us better understand the find of the hoard and update the information available on this find.

Glazed Over: Assyrian Glazed-Brick Fragments and Archival Sleuthing in Chicago

Kiersten Neumann (University of Chicago)

The early twentieth-century expedition of the University of Chicago's Institute for the Study of Ancient Cultures (ISAC) to Khorsabad, the Assyrian capital city of Dur-Šarrukin, in present-day northern Iraq uncovered a complex of temples whose façades were artfully embellished with vibrant glazed-brick panels. Following their discovery, documentation, and division, a selection of those bricks was delicately and arduously packed for shipment to Chicago, where they joined the collections of the ISAC Museum. The most well-known of these—the left side of the Sin temple's façade—was meticulously recorded, accessioned, and stored, with a section being conserved and displayed in the museum's Khorsabad Court in the twenty-first century. These Sin temple bricks were at the top of my list for study during a 2012 research visit when working on my dissertation on Neo-Assyrian temples. Absent from this list, however, was another group of glazed-brick fragments from Khorsabad in the collection—a group I came to learn of during my visit, but whose exact provenience had remained unrecorded for close to a century: these fields were blank both on the object registration card and in the modern database. Thanks to several weeks sleuthing through the expedition's records and photographs in ISAC's archives and paying close attention to the decorative imagery preserved on the brick fragments, with much excitement those blanks were blank no more by the time I left.

The Demon Within (Storage): Newly Catalogued Lamashtu Amulets at the Penn Museum

Katherine E. "Katy" Blanchard (Penn Museum)

Most of the descriptions of the objects held at the Penn Museum are based on the catalogue information from the Field Registers, often from the 1930s when not a lot of comparanda existed. It is only now that more examples have been identified can we look back upon existing collections and recatalogue pieces in these legacy collections. This paper will discuss at least two newly catalogued Lamashtu amulets in the Museum's collections, and open a discussion on why three more should be part of the canon.

Between Two Disciplines: Al-Mina and the Ashmolean

Nancy Highcock (Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford)

The character of the site of Al-Mina, located in Hatay, Türkiye and excavated by Leonard Wooley in 1936 has long been debated: a native northern Syrian town and multicultural entrepôt or an early Greek trading post? Much of the utilitarian, and possibly local, ceramics were discarded during the excavations whilst the "Greek" ceramics ended up in museum collections leading to an overall distorted view of the settlement. At the Ashmolean, all material from Al-Mina is included in the ancient Middle Eastern collection but has only been studied by Classical archaeologists. The position of the site in the eastern Mediterranean has ramifications into the present as a collection caught between the disciplines of Classics and ancient West Asian studies. This has led to the collection itself falling between these disciplinary cracks, especially in light of a new departmental collections project. Who should be responsible for this collection? How can we build a case of interdisciplinary research and teaching through this collection? How do traditional museum and disciplinary boundaries obscure the messiness of intercultural exchange in the past?

A Mislabeled (and Misunderstood) "Horus Sarcophagus" in the Vanderbilt University Museum of Art

Rachel P. Kreiter (Vanderbilt University Museum of Art)

When Vanderbilt University acquired Peabody College in 1979, two art collections were merged into what is now the Vanderbilt University Museum of Art. Among 1,100 Peabody objects suddenly in Vanderbilt's possession was a coffinette labeled "Horus Sarcophagus" (1979.0434P). A better descriptor would be "corn mummy," a falcon-headed coffin assemblage containing no mummified material but a figurine embedded with soil and grain, wrapped to resemble Osiris. Corn mummies are not rare, but the one in VUMA's possession does not fit with types discussed by Maarten J. Raven (1982), Maria Costanza Centrone (2009), and Marilina Betrò (2024). There is a faded inscription on the coffin that is partially legible. These cult objects typically depicted not Horus but, rather, Sokar, another hawk deity. Literature attached to the object record signals a further misunderstanding: corn mummies are cultic, not funerary. Details of provenance are few, stating the object was purchased from a Royal Athenian Gallery and was formerly in the collection of a Dr. Puy-Haubert, Alexandria. A new object title, translation, identification of design type, and provenance research are needed. Also, the corn mummy's recent history suggests how VUMA's infrastructural issues, including a historical lack of curatorial expertise and consistent collections management, allowed a mislabeled object to sit in offsite storage for decades. Questions abound: is this corn mummy in suspiciously good condition? When did it come to Peabody? Is "Royal Athenian Gallery" an error? Can VUMA use or display this object? If so, how?

Written on Stone: Revealing Hidden Images and Inscriptions on Funerary Stelae from Terenouthis, Egypt

Caroline Roberts (Kelsey Museum of Archaeology), Chris Motz (Kelsey Museum of Archaeology)

In 1935, a team of archaeologists and excavators sponsored by the University of Michigan uncovered a vast necropolis at the ancient city of Terenouthis (Kôm Abou Billou), in Egypt's Nile delta. Hundreds of carved and painted stone grave markers were set into niches within the site's painted mudbrick tombs. Each marker was adorned with an image of the deceased, along with their name and age at death, as well as depictions of animal deities and banquet scenes. Approximately two hundred of these stelae are preserved at the University of Michigan's Kelsey Museum of Archaeology, where conservators have been studying the pigments used to decorate their carved surfaces. The Kelsey research team recently found that several stelae feature painted images (such as shrouds, jackal figures, and amphorae) and inscriptions visible only under longwave ultraviolet (UV) light. These traces remain unpublished. The team is using imaging programs such as DStretch to better visualize the inscriptions, and exploring the stelae's collection history to understand why these images have faded. Archival photographs taken soon after the stelae's excavation offer valuable clues about their original appearance, making legacy data integral to tracking the stelae's preservation history. The long-term goal of this

research is to identify individuals whose grave markers have previously been catalogued as "uninscribed", and to make this new information about the stelae accessible to both scholars and the public.

An Amarna Glass Workshop at the Toledo Museum of Art

Anna Johnson (Toledo Museum of Art), Roko Rumora (The Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge University)

*Virtual

Toledo's glass industry has earned it the nickname "Glass City," and the Toledo Museum of Art (TMA) houses one of the world's most comprehensive ancient glass collections. Yet, for a full century, the museum's earliest evidence of glassworking sat uninterpreted in storage. Acquired in 1923 from the Egypt Exploration Society, a box of over a hundred artifacts (vitrified debris, rods, beads, large crucible fragments, and pigment cakes) was compressed under a single accession number (1925.683) and generically labeled "glass production materials." TMA's museum-wide reinstallation, combined with an unusual inquiry from a 14-year-old student researcher, provided the impetus to finally untangle the history of this box. Correlating the physical contents with archival distribution lists, photographs, and handwritten notes, TMA, in collaboration with Anna Hodgkinson (FU Berlin), discovered that the materials represent the complete production sequence of ancient glassworking, originating most likely from a domestic-scale glass workshop (site M50.14-16) excavated by Leonard Woolley in 1922 in Amarna's Main City South. This breakthrough sparked a cross-departmental collaboration among TMA curators, registrars, imaging specialists, and the development team. They transformed the discovery into an opportunity for public engagement and targeted fundraising, successfully securing new photographic equipment specifically designed to capture the complex optical qualities of ancient glass. Properly cataloged and meticulously photographed, 1925.683 will be fully accessible for scientific study. When the reinstalled galleries open in 2027, these foundational materials will finally be on public view, linking Toledo's modern identity to its Bronze Age predecessor.

6G. Archaeology of Rural Communities: Landscape Approaches II (Williford B)

Chair(s): Helena Roth, Charles University, Prague

Life and Death in the Early Bronze I Period: An Assessment of the Ritual Landscape in Wadi Jadid, Jordan

Grant Ginson (University of Toronto), Stanley Klassen (University of Toronto), Andrew J. Danielson (Harvard University), Debra Foran (Wilfrid Laurier University), Nadia Ben-Marzouk (Loyola Marymount University), Jody Bloom (Harvard University)

The Wadi Jadid, located south-west of Khirbat al-Mukhayyat (Ancient Town of Nebo) in west-central Jordan, is renowned for its dolmen fields, menhirs, and the enigmatic structure known as Conder's Circle. Recent surveys by the Town of Nebo Archaeological Project (TNAP) have identified additional unpublished Early Bronze I features, adding to that investigated by Peder Mortensen's Danish team in the 1990s. During the 2025 season, TNAP's survey systematically documented 158 features in the Wadi Jadid Dolmen Field. Our research focuses not only on the preservation of these increasingly threatened features by comparing images of previous documentation, but adds substantial data which includes orientation, accurate measurements, coordinates, and LiDAR-generated 3D models. Preliminary analysis of the pottery and stone tools retrieved indicates use of local resources and wider interaction with surrounding EB I communities. This paper presents some preliminary insights into the TNAP surveys, focusing on the relationship between the EB I settlements in the Wadi Jadid, the surrounding landscape, and megalithic features identified in the Wadi Jadid Dolmen Field. Although ongoing, our research suggests that domestic, ritual, and mortuary features were closely interconnected as part of an interactive ritual landscape within the Wadi Jadid.

Ruralism and Landscape ina Non-Urban Milieu: The Early Bronze Age Site of Khirbat Iskandar

Suzanne Richard (Gannon University), Tucker Deady (Dickinson University)

Ruralism in a non-urban milieu has become an important research area for scholars, focusing on a community within its own regional setting rather than in relation to urban centers. Recent scholarship has advocated for a more accurate recognition of the permanence of rural settlement in the Early Bronze IV of the Southern Levant (ca. 2500-1960 cal BC) and has stressed the need for more nuanced understandings of the complex and durable nature of local identities these sites represent in their own right as explored through concepts of integration, place-making practices, as well as a purposeful renegotiation of antecedent social practices. Expansion of the Khirbat Iskandar (KI) research design incorporates landscape perspectives to tackle these lines of inquiry through more substantial investigation into the site's environs and asks how the settlement's relationship to its surroundings has shaped its role not as an isolated entity but as an important rural center in the Early Bronze Age. A newly discovered megalithic area on the hilltop, Umm il-Idham, behind the site, sheds light on the relationship of the community to a symbolic environment throughout the Early Bronze Age, affinities of which are strongest in the EB IV and the EB I period. This new dataset, in the context of a second megalithic area proximate to the site, multiple cemeteries, and new evidence for ritualistic behavior in EB IV on the site, all combine to inform us of regional practices demonstrating that KI was a rurally complex landscape, very likely an important regional center along the King's Highway.

A Landscape of Resilience: Rural Communities, Mortuary Practice, and the 4.2 ka PB Climatic Event in the Intermediate Bronze Age South-Central Souhtern Levant

Helena Roth (Charles University, Prague)

The Intermediate Bronze Age/Early Bronze Age IV (IBA/EBA IV, 2500–1950 BCE) in the western Southern Levant (west of the Rift Valley) is defined by strictly rural occupation and a significant departure from the preceding urban-like settlements of the Early Bronze Age II–III (EBA II–III). This shift is evident in material culture and new settlement patterns, including the establishment of exclusively rural sites on previously uninhabited land, distant from earlier tell-sites, as well as the creation of dedicated burial grounds. This paper analyzes these developments through a case study of the South-Central Hill Country, particularly the Rephaʿim Stream Catchment area. By applying the Saxe/Goldstein Hypothesis to the emergence of new communal burial grounds and examining their spatial relationships with settlements, the study identifies mortuary compounds as indicators of competition over resources. Using recently published absolute dates and environmental studies, the study reassesses this occupational phenomenon in the context of the 4.2 ka BP event. This event, or more precisely a sequence of climatic events, is now considered both a catalyst for the growth of rural communities west of the Rift Valley and, ultimately, a factor in their decline. Analyzing the 4.2 ka BP event as a driver of both rural expansion and its eventual decline underscores these communities' complexity, emphasizing their resilience, adaptability, and capacity for innovation in social organization, power structures, and resource management.

Landscape and Pastoralism in the Eastern Desert of Egypt

Laurel D. Hackley (University of Memphis)

This paper examines the human-landscape interactions of ancient pastoralist communities in the Eastern Desert of Egypt. Landscape-scale studies in the ancient Near East have often focused on the profound impacts that settled agricultural communities can have at the regional level, especially through irrigation and other extensive landscape modifications. Additionally, surveys of arid landscapes generally focus on road networks and other infrastructure for through-travel, rather than on the lifeways of the mobile and semi-mobile groups who inhabit these landscapes year-round. This means that subtle but important landscape-scale evidence for the ecological, economic, and cultural impact of pastoralist groups is often overlooked. This paper presents archaeological evidence for a variety of different landscape-shaping activities carried out in the Eastern Desert, including agriculture, the husbanding of wild desert species, water management, and mineral resource access. It compares this with recent ethnographic evidence from the same region. The paper will use two case-study areas from the Eastern Desert to demonstrate ancient organization of the desert landscape based on an understanding of microclimate and seasonal rotation of activities. It will also present how the long-term persistence of these practices fundamentally shaped the desert landscape,

including its plant and animal communities, and created important nodes for intercultural and cross-cultural communication.

6H. Archaeology of Syria (Williford C)

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

Empowering Local Communities through Remote 3D Documentation Activities: A Case Study from Ain Dara Site

Sari Jammo (Nagoya University), Yoko Taniguchi (University of Tsukuba), Nobuya Watanabe (Chubu University), Ayumi Igarashi ()Freelance Illustrator), Megumi Tashiro (University of Tsukuba), Naoko Hironaga (University of Tsukuba), Madoka Murakushi (Meiji University), Mariko Makino (Teikyo University)

*Virtual

In January 2018, reported airstrikes caused severe damage to the Ain Dara Syro-Hittite temple, one of the best-known archaeological sites in northwest Syria. This event highlighted the urgent need for reliable documentation methods in the conflict zone. In response, an international collaborative project was launched with support from the Agency for Cultural Affairs of the Japanese government. The project aimed to document the site remotely, strengthen the skills of scholars in Syria, and increase awareness of the site's importance among locals. The project used low-altitude drone surveys and ground photography to record the damage and collect high-resolution images. These images were used to create a detailed three-dimensional model of the site and a digital elevation map (DEM). Together, these records provide an accurate digital archive of the temple after the destruction. In addition, a digital archive of more than 800 photographs was created. These images allowed us to compare the condition of the site before and after 2018 to understand what was lost and what survived. Because of the security situation, it was difficult to send experts to Syria or collect data directly. Therefore, the project was carried out completely through remote collaboration. Despite that, the project achieved its main goals. This approach facilitated the collaborative documentation process, involving both international researchers and local collaborators, thereby ensuring a more inclusive and participatory approach to research. The present paper discusses the potential of 3D documentation for damage mapping and monitoring, for guiding emergency stabilization, and for providing a robust geometric baseline for future reconstruction planning at Ain Dara.

Mid-Late Third Millennium Pottery Production in the Region of Tell Leilan: A Petrographic Perspective

Madeline M. Ouimet (University of Chicago)

The Tell Leilan Regional Survey project (1987) identified a constellation of third millennium sites along the Wadi Jarrah which shed light on the origins of urbanism in the Khabur plains, demonstrating how the settlement system surrounding Leilan became more integrated throughout the latter half of the millennium (Stein and Wattenmaker 1993). Ceramic archaeometric and geochemical data from Leilan itself suggested, at the same time, that pottery production was performed by specialists but likely not centrally organized, with multiple production sites operating simultaneously and distributing to non-producer sites without clear top-down control (Blackman, Stein, and Vandiver 1993). In this petrographic study, I examine previously unanalyzed ceramic thin sections from the Tell Leilan Regional Survey. Sampled sherds represent three common ceramic types from the mid-late third millennium in the region. I compare the paste composition and microstructural features of these types as they appear throughout Leilan's settlement system to assess how and to what extent paste recipes and forming methods and gestures may have been shared or isolated among different sites and across different ceramic forms, and to what extent diversity in such technological choices is expressed within a ceramic type. How are potters' choices distributed across the newly urbanizing landscape, and how might they reflect underlying interactions among producer sites and between producer and non-producer sites? We can use the results from this regional-scale petrographic data to test and nuance the hypothesis of an early urban production system that was specialized yet not centralized.

Estimating the Agricultural Carrying Capacity of the Late Bronze Age Kingdom of Ugarit

Virginia Rufina Marquez-Pacheco (University of British Columbia)

In a period of heightened connectivity in West Asia, the Late Bronze Age (LBA) kingdom of Ugarit functioned as a major trade hub. Yet rather little is known about its population, who functioned as the backbone of the kingdom and of any trade it operated. How large was the population of the LBA kingdom of Ugarit? Though many scholars have provided estimates based on the written administrative documents found at the sites of Ugarit and Alalaḫ and the archaeological remains of the residential districts at Tell Ras-Shamra, scholars have neglected to consider the kingdom's agricultural ability to sustain itself. This paper takes into account the proportion of potentially exploitable land by examining climatic, topographical and soil conditions and estimates the amount of land required to sustain a population. This paper also supplements these environmental estimates with dietary evidence from recent zooarchaeological and archaeobotanical analyses from the site of Tell Tweini at the southernmost frontier of Ugarit. I propose a new population capacity obtained by determining the agricultural potential of its land, which is dependent on particular patterns of agricultural exploitation and labour. While outside the scope of this paper, I suggest that this novel information will incentivise future studies of the role agricultural production played in the development of the kingdom of Ugarit as a trade hub, especially when put into conversation with the host of extant Ugaritic texts dealing with trade, taxation, and labour.

Bronze Age Cranial Surgery at Ugarit: Evidence for Trephination in Bone and Myth

Talia Sankari (Institute for the Study of the Ancient World, New York University)

The Bronze Age site of Ugarit on the coast of modern Syria has provided archaeology with a vast wealth of information thanks to its extensive archives and long history of excavation; however, its skeletal remains have yet to receive in-depth osteological analysis, leaving a lacuna in the understanding of the site. This paper examines 4 skulls excavated from Ras Shamra with signs of trephination, focusing on one (skull R6) which provides a clear case for this form of early cranial surgery at Ugarit. I then propose a new reading for KTU 1.16 in light of this evidence, interpreting an episode of the King Kirta myth as a reference to the use of trephination to treat illness believed to have been caused by evil spirits.

6I. Theoretical and Anthropological Approaches to the Near East (Astoria)

Chair(s): Matthew Winter, University of Arizona

Ancient Egyptian Kingships: Re-Contextualizing Royal Power

Niv Allon (The Metropolitan Museum of Art), Luiza Osorio G. Silva (University of California, Irvine), Jessica Tomkins (Wofford College), Tara Prakash (College of Charleston), Jeffrey Newman (UCLA), Julia Troche (Missouri State University), Jonathan Winnerman (UCLA)

Today, Egyptian kings are virtually synonymous with "ancient Egypt." However, the mechanisms of royal power—its intersections with and practicalities beyond royal ideology—are poorly understood. In recent decades, studies of Egyptian kingship, both in Egyptology and in comparative works, have often privileged the divine aspect and the consequent legitimacy of royal power, overshadowing other dimensions of what was a dynamic and complex institution. Such approaches were the norm when Ancient Egyptian Kingship, edited by O'Connor and Silverman, was published in 1995, and they have dominated the field since. This paper refocuses attention on three understudied aspects of Egyptian kingship, namely, power, politics, and practice, to allow for a more holistic consideration of its intersections with other parts of society, in Egypt and beyond. We argue for kingship to be understood in the plural: by considering "kingships," we allow for more flexible uses of the office and dynamic change over time while prioritizing the (re)construction, negotiation, and adaptability of royal power by both royal and non-royal actors. In doing so, this approach moves past stagnant considerations of the nature of kings to how kingships were expressed and performed on the ground. To contextualize Egyptian kingships in a broader intellectual framework, this paper engages critically with theories of power, political

philosophy, and sociological approaches to practice, while placing Egyptian kingship in dialogue with ancient Near Eastern studies. We invite conversation between disciplines to question how the study of Egyptian kingship(s) can be more meaningfully integrated into kingship studies at large.

A Whole New World: Schismogenesis and the Emergence of the Early Bronze Age IA Southern Levant

Julian M. Hirsch (The Hebrew University of Jerusalem)

The transition between the Late Chalcolithic (~4500-3800 BCE) and Early Bronze Age IA (~3800-3400 BCE) in the Southern Levant represents a drastic social transformation. In particular, the near-total disappearance of the Chalcolithic period's rich body of art, symbolism, and ritual has perplexed and fascinated scholars for decades. This shift has been explained through a myriad of factors including social or ritual collapse, climatic fluctuations, longer-term economic trends, and ideological or cognitive shifts. The succeeding period, the EB IA, has generally been understood as a regenerated form of society which formed in the aftermath of Chalcolithic collapse and after a transition period of uncertain length which has hardly been located within the archaeological record. In this presentation, I argue that the EB IA can instead be understood as a coherent body of practices and beliefs, which was formed in intentional contrast to the Chalcolithic and whose emergence may itself have contributed to the disappearance of Chalcolithic society. Examining the character of ritual practices in both periods, I argue that EB IA rituals, especially burial practices, were intentionally visible, inclusionary, and focused on forging new communities. These practices took place in different regions than had been prominently utilized for Chalcolithic ritual, perhaps indicating intentional avoidance while creating new sacred landscapes. This redrawing of space and set of inverse and transgressive practices allows us to see the EB IA as a competing social discourse operating as a fundamental pull towards a new type of society.

Towards an Epistemology of Ancient Egyptian Religion

Jordan Miller (Cornell University)

Egyptian religion is celebrated for its pluralism and openness. Most research centers on substantive features: temple iconography, mythic traditions, and "biographies" of deities, to name but a few. This paper addresses structural features instead. Treating religion as a paradigm for constructing knowledge, it presents a method for apprehending its principles, with implications for Egyptology's relationship with cognate disciplines. Ancient sources seldom employ abstract terms comparable to current scholarly discourse. This paper introduces concepts from social anthropology, such as "controlled equivocation" and the "ethnographic moment," which embrace rather than elide such discursive differences. Contemporary abstractions such as mathematical objects and operations provide analogies for the workings of Egyptian religion. Vectors and transformation serve as case studies. Elaborating on recent framings of deities' names as concepts, this paper treats gods as vectors with direction and scale. Amun-Re is not equivalent to Re-Amun, and a god can be more or less of an Amun. The findings synergize with research on ancient image concepts such as twt "likeness." Next, the pluralism of Egyptian religion may represent the transformation of vectors between religious domains in horizontal or vertical relationships: translated or reflected between two temples, dilated or sheared between temple and domestic practice. Gods are relativized; one context's Hathor may be another context's Isis. Like anthropologists, Egyptian practitioners filtered alien phenomena through familiar terms, readjusting prior conceptual frameworks in the process. Aside from illuminating longer-term developments in Egyptian religion, this perspective suggests how Egyptology might contribute to theoretical innovation.

6J. Archaeology of Jordan II (Private Dining 2)

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

Renewed Excavations in Busayra's Area A Monumental Building: The 2025 Season

Jordan Weitzel (University of California, Berkeley), Shawn Bubel (University of Lethbridge), Kevin McGeough (University of Lethbridge), Benjamin W. Porter (University of California, Berkeley)

Busayra's Area A Monumental Building has intrigued scholars ever since Crystal Bennett's excavations in the 1970s. Bennett excavated portions of this 2,325 meters squared horizontal building that was designed in two halves, each of which was organized around an interior rectangular courtyard. The building's purpose is unknown, but there is a consensus that it was either a temple or palace that played an important role in Busayra's elite administration. One goal of the Busayra Cultural Heritage Project is to clean, conserve, and study the building in order to answer outstanding research questions. In this paper, the authors describe the results of their 2025 research season. The team excavated deposits adjacent to Bennett's trenches that were at risk of collapse in order to document gaps in the building's architectural plan. Areas in need of additional visual documentation were cleaned, studied, and photographed. Achievements of the 2025 season include 1) the excavation of Phase Three deposits associated with the building's destruction that provide a date for the event in the late seventh or sixth century BCE; 2) the cleaning and documentation of multiple walls that provide a more detailed plan of the building; and 3) the cleaning and documentation of ritual installations located in the building's courtyard and cella. After describing these activities, the authors will conclude with fresh insights about the building's function and design.

Navigating the Northern Gulf of Aqaba: Tell el-Kheleifeh, Jazīrat Fir`awn and Ezion-geber

Joseph A. Greene (Harvard University)

In 1938–40, Nelson Glueck excavated at Tell el-Kheleifeh on the northern shore of the Gulf of Aqaba, firm in his conviction that he was uncovering the remains of biblical Ezion-geber, Solomon's Iron Age seaport. He could not locate any ancient harbor works along the shore near Kheleifeh, so he proposed that Solomon's sailors must have hauled their ships onto the sloping sandy beach 500 m from the site. These ships, Glueck reasoned, were not much larger than the fishing boats he had observed in the waters off Aqaba. However, the biblical texts that Glueck relied on to identify Kheleifeh with Ezion-geber (1 Kings 9:26, 10:22) can also be read to suggest that Solomon's navy (*'ŏñî taršîš*) consisted of much larger vessels. As an alternative, Benno Rothenberg and Alexander Flinder revived proposals made by 19th century European travelers that Ezion-geber should be be identified with Jazīrat Fir`awn ("Pharaoh's Island") near the western shore of the Sinai below Taba, about 12 km south of Kheleifeh. Relying on the same biblical passages as Glueck, they also adduced archaeological, architectural, topographic and bathymetric data collected in 1956–57 and 1967–89 to support their argument, which included parallels to supposed Iron Age Phoenician harbors in the Mediterranean. Although there is no fresh evidence from Jazīrat Fir`awn itself, more is now known about early Iron Age Arabia and the early Phoenician Mediterranean which permits a critical re-evaluation of these claims.

Mapping Continuity and Transition in Petra's Non-Monumental Funerary Features: Updates on Recent Fieldwork

Björn Anderson (University of Iowa), Jennifer Ramsay (SUNY Brockport)

This paper presents the results of the third survey season of our project, 'Exploring Continuity and Transition in Southern Jordan' (CTSJ). The CTSJ project engages the late Iron Age in Southern Jordan, examining the elusive Persian Period (ca. 530-300 BCE) and early Nabataean remains. A key focus that emerged in past seasons has been ritual and funerary contexts, and in 2026, the CTSJ team began building a comprehensive geodatabase of Petra's shaft and pit tombs. To this point, these tombs have been incompletely mapped, which prevents location-based studies and typological trend analyses. In consultation with ACOR and the Petra Park,

we are developing a universal JTM-based inventory system that will allow us to plot every tomb, integrate photographs and 3D models, and build them into an interactive web server. The 2026 season focused on tombs and nearby rock-cut features (e.g., basins, niches, betyls, and nefeshes) in three main locations: near the Snake Monument in southern Petra, near the Round or "Conway's" tower, and in the Wadi Mataha area of northeastern Petra. Note: If the current regional war prevents us from working in the field this summer, we will instead present on developments in our online geodatabse and web server.

Preliminary Results from the Spring 2026 Field Season at the Palace and Port at Kallirhoe ('Ain ez-Zara) on the Eastern Dead Sea Littoral

Holly Hughes (The American Center of Research), Aktham Oweidi (The American Center of Research)

This paper presents the preliminary results from the Spring 2026 field season at the maritime villa/palace and port at Kallirhoe (Jordan) located in present day 'Ain ez-Zara, on the eastern shore of the Dead Sea. Kallirhoe, established at least by the late Hellenistic period and active through the early Roman period, possibly later, served as the port for the citadel of Machaerus. It enabled regional strategic control, facilitated commercial activity, and provided access to the nearby villa and thermal springs. Field operations at both the port and villa sites were conducted from January through April 2026 by ACOR. At the port, excavations were initiated to determine the character of the eastern area and evaluate its relationship to the broader site. At the villa, excavations commenced in the southwestern portion of the villa interior to expose architectural features and better understand the layout and organization of the structure. The present paper provides the current status of the findings.

Preliminary Archaeobotanical Results from the Spring 2026 Field Season at the Palace and Port at Kallirhoe ('Ain ez-Zara) on the Eastern Dead Sea Littoral

China P. Shelton (The American Center of Research)

This paper presents the preliminary results of an archaeobotanical study conducted during and following the spring 2026 field season at the maritime villa/palace and port at Kallirhoe (modern 'Ain ez-Zara) in Jordan. Samples were collected according to a blanket sampling strategy, with at least one sample collected from all archaeological contexts. There were some challenges, including significant modern disturbance in the upper levels. The intent of this study is first, to assess whether we have any relatively intact, undisturbed layers which can be used as the basis for interpretation about past lifeways. Second, should this assessment of preservation ultimately permit, we will explore what the archaeobotanical remains may tell us about ancient diet and environment, and about trade patterns and economic activities along the Dead Sea in which the occupants of the site participated.

Forensic Numismatics: A Multi-Tiered Scientific Approach for the Comparative Authentication of Ancient Coinage

Mohammad A. Rababah (Technische Universität Berlin)

As sophisticated replication technologies fueled by digital manufacturing and 3D-modeling rise, the infiltration of high-quality modern forgeries into institutional collections has necessitated a shift toward advanced scientific verification. This research has established and implemented a multi-tiered, non-destructive analytical framework that bridges traditional numismatic diagnostics with material science to distinguish genuine ancient coinage from modern replicas. The study analyzed the "physical biography" of coins, focusing on the distinct markers left by ancient manufacturing techniques—such as hand-carved dies and manual striking—which modern forgeries fail to replicate with metallurgical or iconographic accuracy. Central to this research was a comprehensive comparative analysis of a diverse and statistically significant sample set (N=200), which has been successfully processed and documented: 90 coin specimens from the DoA collections were examined, focusing on a critical subset of recently confiscated forgeries to analyze modern counterfeiting techniques." The Jordan Museum: 30 high-value reference coins utilized for comparative standard analysis. The Jordan Ahli Bank Numismatic Museum: 30 diverse specimens (Gold, Silver, and Bronze) where the methodology was applied across varied alloy compositions. The Münzkabinett (Staatliche Museen zu Berlin): 50 historical samples analyzed at the Rathgen Research Laboratory to establish definitive metallurgical "chemical fingerprints." By integrating Portable X-ray Fluorescence (pXRF), high-resolution digital microscopy, and machine learning-assisted data analysis, this research has successfully identified inconsistencies in trace elements, wear patterns, and minting characteristics. The findings have resulted in a replicable forensic framework that provides a vital tool for numismatists, law enforcement, and heritage professionals in combating the illicit trafficking of fraudulent cultural property.

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 20, 2026

2:00pm – 4:05pm (CST)

7A. Urbanism and Polities in the Bronze and Iron Age Levant III (Continental A)

Chair(s): Omer Sergi, Tel Aviv University; Daniel Master, Wheaton College; Karen Covello-Paran, Israel Antiquities Authority

Early Iron Age Jerusalem: Urbanism as a Mirror to State Formation

Omer Sergi (Tel Aviv University)

Twenty years ago, the status of Jerusalem as an urban and political center during the early Iron Age was fiercely debated, as scholars grappled with the uncertain nature of the archaeological finds from numerous excavations on the southeastern hill of the city. In recent years, however, new and significant discoveries from excavations on the southwestern ridge have gradually transformed earlier views of Jerusalem and its urban character, opening new avenues for understanding its early development as the capital of Judah. This presentation discusses the urban character of Jerusalem during the early Iron Age and the ways in which it reflects the gradual development of Judah as a territorial polity. Engaging with Yuval Gadot's new book *A Historical Archaeology of Jerusalem*, which for the first time offers a comprehensive reconstruction of the city and its history, the paper explores the relationship between king, city, and polity, and how these relationships evolved throughout the Iron Age. Examining these dynamics through archaeological evidence provides the socio-political backdrop against which the biblical literature concerning monarchic Judah—particularly the traditions associated with David and Solomon—may be better understood.

Reconstructing Urbanism in Iron II–Hellenistic Jerusalem: Evidence from the Western Slope

Deirdre N. Fulton (Baylor University)

Yuval Gadot's recent study of Jerusalem brings renewed attention to the archaeological investigations at the Givati Parking Lot and the broader western slope of the City of David. These excavations have uncovered stratified architectural remains, administrative installations, and material assemblages that allow for a more precise reconstruction of Jerusalem's urban development from the late Iron II through the Hellenistic periods. In this paper, I will examine Gadot's evidence from the western slope, particularly its continuous stratigraphy and newly identified public structures, which necessitates a reassessment of Jerusalem's territorial extent, defensive strategies, and administrative organization. By synthesizing these new data with earlier excavation results, Gadot's study offers a revised framework for understanding how Jerusalem expanded, fortified itself, and adapted to shifting political landscapes during the late first millennium BCE.

"He Shall be Like a Tree Planted by Waters, Sending Forth its Roots by a Stream (Yuval)": The Urbanism of Jerusalem in Light of the Roots of Yuval Gadot's Research

Joe Uziel (Israel Antiquities Authority), Yiftah Shalev (Israel Antiquities Authority)

*Virtual

With so much already excavated in Jerusalem, it often feels like an impossible challenge to bring new insights into the city's past, particularly in terms of the Iron Age, which has been the focus of scores and scores of

papers. Yet as shown in the publication of the excellent volume that is the focus of this session, through the integration of new approaches and methods, coupled with continued fieldwork, there is still much to uncover in the ways in which Jerusalem developed into an urban entity and how that development changed the site and its surroundings. In the following lecture, we will engage in discussions on three points that have been at the center of Yuval Gadot's research on Jerusalem—three discoveries and insights that changed the way we understand the Iron Age city: The effects of Jerusalem's urban expansion on the city's natural habitat; The relationship between the urban center and the surrounding hinterland; and the fluctuating status of the urban elite in its interactions with the broader political sphere.

Landscape Logic and the Family Tombs of Ancient Jerusalem

Andrea M. Berlin (Boston University)

Across the first millennium BCE, man-made cataclysms carved Jerusalem's history into just two epochs: the first four centuries, down to the destruction by the Babylonians in 586 BCE; and the next six centuries, down to the destruction by the Romans in 70 CE. In his marvelous new book, *A Historical Archaeology of Jerusalem – Bronze and Iron Ages*, Yuval Gadot crafts twin achievements. The first is a full, clear presentation of the first epoch, with archaeological data, written testimony, and historical perspectives gracefully integrated. His second achievement is to make Jerusalem's landscape features – bedrock patterns, water sources, valleys, and viewsheds – key actors in the city's development. Yuval shows how their logic persisted over centuries, pushing residents and also rulers to the same sorts of building choices, from wall placement to water access to ceremonial routes. In this presentation, I build on Yuval's insights to consider the landscape logic of the city's two defining valleys, the Hinnom and the Kidron. I use the category of remains that more than any other reflects how people impress meaning into the land, namely tombs. From the city's first historical epoch into its second, some of Jerusalem's most well-connected residents built family tombs on the slopes of these valleys. The tombs face in, framing the city like sentinels, and they root down, holding place as time passes. As Yuval writes: Jerusalem's "real asset is sacredness of space." In the past, and still today, the city's tombs show us that enduring reality.

Continuity and Change: Notes on Jerusalem Urban Nature During the Early and Late Iron Age

Yuval Gadot (Tel-Aviv University)

Textual sources describe Jerusalem as the seat of a local ruler during the Bronze Age and of a king throughout the Iron Age. In light of that, scholars tend to define Jerusalem as a city, assuming the settlement held the same characteristics as urban centers located in the coastal plains. While the definition of the term 'city' is constantly discussed, a review of available archaeological evidence shows Jerusalem was uniquely shaped and functioned differently. The proposed lecture will present four turning points in Jerusalem development during the Iron Age as it gradually reached the status of a royal capital of a territorial kingdom. Emphasis will be placed on exploring the way older traditions were in play, shaping the newly formed Jerusalem of the 8th-6th century BCE Jerusalem.

7B. Cultural Heritage: Preservation, Presentation, and Management III (Continental B)

Chair(s): Jessica R. Robkin, University of Central Florida; Nancy Serwint, Arizona State University; Barbara Anglisz, Independent Researcher

Empowering the Local Voice: a Community Based Archaeology Project at Tall Husban, Jordan

Isabel Srour (Indiana University of Pennsylvania and Andrews University)

Tall Husban, located in the Amman governorate of Jordan, is a multi-component archaeological site that has been continuously occupied for over 9,000 years. During its last 3,000 years of occupation, the local voice was overpowered by empirical voices arriving outside of Jordan. This is mirrored by the European and Western voices that have overpowered the voice of the local villagers in the 60 years of archaeological research on the site. As characteristic of this imbalance of power, archaeologists at Tall Husban and other sites in the Middle East have practiced take and leave archaeology. This archaeology, though an archaeology of the past, is still prevalent today. This project uses Community Based Participatory Research (CBPR) to move towards a more collaborative approach to archaeology at Tall Husban. This project, along with what Andrews University and Sela for Training and Protection of Heritage have been doing and continue to do, sheds light on the local voice in telling the story of Tall Husban in addition to planning for the future of archaeology and conservation at Tall Husban.

The Town of Secrets: Heritage, Memory, and the Politics of Knowledge Production about the Past In Qalhat, Oman

Nora Al-Aati (University of Pennsylvania)

This paper draws from my PhD dissertation research which examines how residents of Qalhat, Oman, negotiate the relationship between the concepts of turath, tarikh, and khurafat amid Omani state modernization projects and heritage regimes. Since the 1970s, Oman's nation-building project has transformed knowledge about "the past" into distinct temporalities: tarikh derived from archaeology, and khurafat marginalized to "superstition." Positioned between them, turath—as memory, materiality, and affect—embodies lived forms of belonging, identity, and faith. Drawing from community-based participatory research, I explore how Qalhat's residents negotiate state narratives through storytelling, embodied practice, and collaborative workshops. I ask: how do residents navigate and reconfigure the distinctions through which the state authorizes tarikh and turath while disqualifying other modes of historical and spiritual knowledge as khurafat? How do everyday engagements with Qalhat's UNESCO Islamic sites—as material remains, sites of memory, and loci of unseen presence—destabilize institutionalized boundaries between history and belief, heritage and superstition, past and presence? How do these encounters generate alternative historical and temporal frameworks that coexist with, exceed, or quietly contest state heritage narratives? Preliminary fieldwork revealed rich intergenerational stories of tribal lineages, offerings to the jinn, and life histories of the UNESCO sites as spaces of both pride and dispossession. By placing local epistemes in dialogue with global heritage frameworks, this research contributes to anthropological debates on the governance of historical knowledge, the temporalization of "tradition," and the entanglement of faith, materiality, and modernity in the political production of the past.

Heritage Preservation: Measuring the Effectiveness of Community Engagement in Two UNESCO World Heritage Sites in Jordan

Jenna D. Morton (Umm Al-Jimāl Archaeological Project, ACOR, Harvard Extension School)

This paper will present the findings of ethnographic research that seeks to measure the effectiveness of community/stakeholder engagement on the protection and preservation of cultural heritage sites. The study will analyze management strategies at two UNESCO World Heritage sites in Jordan: Umm Al-Jimāl and Umm er-Rassas. Consistent in the literature on heritage preservation and management, and as prescribed in UNESCO's Operational Guidelines, is the insistence that stakeholder engagement can be more effective than traditional security methods such as guards, fences, and cameras. To that end, more than a decade ago, heritage professionals in Umm Al-Jimāl in Jordan initiated a series of efforts to preserve the physical site while engaging the local community over time to revive its sense of ownership through a strong heritage awareness and economic benefit structure. The presumption has been that the preservation of the ancient site depends on a rekindling of a sense of place that encompasses the ancient and the contemporary among the current inhabitants. By contrast, Umm Er-Rasas has received different treatments on a spectrum of community engagement. As UNESCO World Heritage sites in Jordan that have several similarities, a comparison of the two sites may offer insight into the relative effectiveness of the community engagement strategy. The simple question is: does heritage engagement change minds? The more practical question is: do changed minds translate into mutual benefit between stakeholders and material culture? The warrant that heritage improves lives fundamentally is not in question; the operationalization of that improvement is.

7C. Archaeology of Israel III (Continental C)

Chair(s): Zachary Thomas, Australian Catholic University; Charles Wilson, University of Chicago

Storage Strategy in the North Southern Levant in the Iron Age I: A Perspective from Pithoi

Akane Morikawa (University of Tsukuba)

The Iron Age I in the Southern Levant (ca. 1200–1000 BCE) witnessed the emergence of new groups, primarily in the Central Highlands, that likely later formed the core of the Israelites, while the material culture of this period exhibits both continuity with and discontinuity from the Late Bronze Age II. Storage, an essential aspect of daily life, was likely practiced strategically through facilities such as storage pits, storehouses, and storage vessels. This study focuses on storage practices involving pithoi (large storage jars) in the northern region of the Southern Levant, particularly given that storage pits are relatively rare in the Northern Highlands, whereas pithoi were widely used there. This regional variation in storage practices is also supported by the fact that pit sizes in the northern region are generally smaller than those in the south. To re-evaluate how pithoi were used in the north, this study examines their spatial contexts within settlements. Unlike other types of pottery, pithoi are basically immobile and tend to remain where they were used, making them particularly valuable for spatial analysis. On the other hand, studies considering the typological variation of pithoi remain limited, although several types (Galilean, wavy-band, and collared-rim pithoi) are known. Therefore, examining pithoi from both spatial and typological perspectives is essential for understanding storage practices in this region. This study argues that the use of pithoi reflects regional differences in storage practices, with the northern region employing a unique storage strategy during the Iron Age I.

The Iron Age Temple at Tel Dan Still Stands: A Response to a Recent Reinterpretation of Area T at Tel Dan

Jonathan Greer (Grand Valley State University), Yifat Thareani (Hebrew Union College / NYU Tel Aviv)

This paper provides a response to Levana Tsfania-Zias's recent article "The Sacred Precinct of Tel Dan Revisited" (BASOR 2025) in which she argued that much of what Avraham Biran, the original excavator of the temple area (Area T) at Tel Dan, assigned to the Iron Age should be re-dated to the Persian, Hellenistic, and, in some cases, Roman periods. We provide a correction to some of the data that were presented and argue for a nuanced affirmation of many of Biran's initial proposals, specifically his identification of a major Iron Age II temple complex in Area T.

Tel Manoaḥ: A Rural Iron Age Site in the Western Negev

Eli Itkin (University of California, Los Angeles), Alexander Fantalkin (Tel Aviv University)

Tel Manoaḥ is located on the northeastern bank of Naḥal Ofakim in the Gerar Basin, approximately 9.5 km southeast of Tel Haror and ca. 20 km northwest of Beersheba. Situated along the frontier between Philistia and Judah, the site occupies a strategic position within this border region, providing an extensive field of vision to the west as far as Gaza and Ashkelon. The site was first surveyed by Ram Gophna (1964), who identified Tel Manoaḥ as a local center that served nearby rural settlements. Based on late Iron Age I and early Iron Age IIA pottery collected during the survey, Gophna suggested that the site may represent one of the biblical "Ḥatzerim", or small hamlets in the northwestern Negev that extended as far as Gaza (Deut. 2:23). A small-scale salvage excavation conducted in 1987 on behalf of the Israel Department of Antiquities and Museums uncovered limited architectural remains but yielded a rich ceramic assemblage dating primarily to the Iron IIB. Despite excavations taking place almost 40 years ago, the site has never been published. This paper presents the remains from Tel Manoaḥ for the first time, including its stratigraphy, architecture, and ceramic assemblages. On this basis, the study situates the site within the broader settlement system of the western Negev and reassesses the role of small rural settlements in the region during the Iron Age.

"Archaeology of Restoration" in British Mandate Palestine: Archival Research, GIS Mapping and Post-Classical Stratigraphy

Giovanni Simeone (Sapienza University of Rome)

Between 1917 and 1948, the British Mandate in Palestine profoundly shaped the archaeological and monumental landscape of Jerusalem and the wider region through surveys, excavations, restorations, and structural consolidations. While the institutional and political-cultural dimensions have recently attracted renewed scholarly attention, its material impact on post-classical contexts remains comparatively understudied. This paper proposes a methodological framework for analyzing Mandate interventions by integrating systematic archival research, the construction of a GIS database, and stratigraphic analysis. Documentation preserved in the archives of Jerusalem and London makes it possible to reconstruct the chronology, technical nature, and objectives of restoration and excavation activities carried out during the Mandate. These data are integrated into a GIS platform designed to map interventions at urban and regional scales through the combination of historical cartography and contemporary topographic data. The georeferencing of maps from the Survey of Western Palestine and the conversion of coordinates from the Palestine Grid to the Israel 1993 system enable the precise correlation of archival sources with archaeological contexts still visible. A case study focusing on the Rotunda of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre highlights the potential of this approach. Structural interventions carried out during the Mandate can be understood as stratigraphic markers affecting the legibility of historical phases, particularly in the horizontal stratigraphies beneath the current floor level. From this perspective, Mandate activities thus constitute a material and documentary trace through which the post-classical stratigraphies of Jerusalem's monuments and those across the historical region may be reexamined.

Amorites, Elamites, and the Origin of Genesis 14

Peter Feinman (Institute of History, Archaeology, and Education)

Genesis 14 has been a problem text in biblical studies. For a long time it was assigned to author "X" since it did not fit any of the JEDP writers. For a long time Chedorlaomer and the Elamites were the subject of an intense archaeological search to find a campaign that stretched from Susa to the Mediterranean. All such quests were in vain. Questions that should be asked are "How did Israel know about him and why was he linked with the Amorites in this cosmic showdown?" The answers unlock early Israelite history and the composition of Genesis 14.

7D. Archaeology of Islamic Society I (Waldorf)

Chair(s): Ian W. N. Jones, New York University; Tasha Vorderstrasse, University of Chicago

A Historical Overview on the Development of Water Infrastructure in Jeddah

Otto Bagi (University of Bonn)

From its foundation as the port of Makkah, Jeddah, on the west coast of the Arabian Peninsula, faced a chronic shortage of potable water, a constraint that shaped its urban development, local architecture, and daily life. Historical sources from across much of the Islamic period consistently highlight the challenges faced by travellers, pilgrims, and the local population in securing reliable water supplies within this arid coastal environment. These accounts document a range of adaptive strategies employed over centuries. Local communities created an intricate network of underground cisterns (locally known as ṣaḥrīj) and tunnels designed to collect and store rainwater, while water imported from inland wells supplemented local resources. In the Late Islamic period, efforts intensified to provide a more permanent solution to water scarcity, including the construction of a qanāt system that conveyed water to Jeddah from several kilometres to the north-east. This paper examines the principal challenges Jeddah faced over its centuries-long history in securing water for its residents, as well as the measures adopted by private individuals, local authorities, and central administrations to address the persistent water scarcity. The historical data compiled in recent years provide a coherent narrative tracing the evolution of Jeddah's water-supply system.

"Chariots of the Tide:" The Tantura B Shipwreck and the 9th-Century Maritime Revolution

Jerome Hall (University of San Diego)

The early 9th-century CE shipwreck discovered in Tantura Lagoon, Israel (Tantura B), marks a pivotal transition in Mediterranean maritime technology: the shift from shell-first to frame-based assembly. At an estimated 19–30 m in length with a 5 m beam, this flat-bottomed, shallow-draft hull hints at a vessel designed for riverine or estuarine environments. Furthermore, the recovery of wooden toggles and scattered cordage provides material evidence for a lateen-rigged sail configuration. These architectural features suggest a ship specialized for coastal and inland waterway navigation, perhaps functioning as a support vessel in the Arab fleet.

Seismic Destruction and Social Transformation: A Typology of Human Responses to Earthquakes with Bet She'an as a Case Study

Sagi Freiman (Tel Aviv University)

This paper examines how major seismic events reshaped urban society in the Southern Levant. It argues that earthquakes functioned not only as destructive episodes but as catalysts of structural and social transformation. Focusing on Bet She'an (Scythopolis/Besan), located along the Dead Sea Transform, the study analyzes the societal consequences of the earthquakes of 363 CE and 749 CE through an archaeoseismological framework integrating archaeological, seismological, and textual evidence. A systematic reassessment of excavation reports identifies both direct seismic damage and longer-term recovery patterns. On this basis, the study develops a typology of human responses consisting of three analytical categories: renovation, new construction, and abandonment. Application of this model reveals distinct response trajectories. The fourth-century earthquake prompted extensive rebuilding within a stable imperial framework, reinforcing urban continuity. In contrast, the eighth-century event coincided with administrative and economic transformation, accelerating contraction and selective abandonment of architectural complexes and, in some cases, entire settlements. Comparative evidence from Hammat Gader, Tiberias, and Sussita demonstrates that these patterns reflect broader regional processes rather than isolated local developments. The findings indicate that the impact of earthquakes depended on the scale of destruction and on the political and institutional capacity available for recovery. By introducing a transferable analytical typology and demonstrating its applicability across multiple sites, this study advances archaeoseismology beyond damage identification and positions seismic events as active agents in long-term urban change.

7E. Art Historical Approaches to the Near East I (Marquette)

Chair(s): Bianca Hand, University of California, Davis; Miriam Said, Tufts University

Originality and Tradition in the Synagogue Art of Dura Europos

Micah Larson (University of British Columbia)

The frescoes in the synagogue at Dura Europos stand apart as one of the earliest examples of Jewish art and religious expression appearing outside the land of Palestine. While comparable depictions of Biblical narratives appear in Judaea in the fourth-century, the third-century frescos of Dura Europos remain one of the earliest, if not the earliest, extant uses of narrative imagery in a Jewish religious context. In this paper, I examine how this imagery transposes preexisting themes in Jewish artistic expression both outside and from within Palestine, analyzing how it reproduces both visual motifs and the values behind them to work known themes into an original expression. In particular, I focus on diverse manifestations of the temple, menorah, and Akedah motifs depicted on the Torah Shrine. I compare these to prior examples evidenced through other media, such as numismatics and funerary stone carvings. At the same time, I analyze new artistic elaborations that appear in late antique Judaean synagogue mosaics. I demonstrate how the Torah Shrine fresco at Dura Europos exemplifies iconographic expression found both within Palestine and among diaspora communities while infusing the art with influences entirely its own.

"The Beloved Servant of Inshushniak": Middle Elamite Continuities and Change in Religious Piety at Susa under the Šutrukids

Rachael Maxon (University of Iowa)

Middle Elamite king Shutruk Nahhunte I (1180s-1155s BCE) is remembered for the collection of objects he brought to Susa following his military campaign against Mesopotamia. Many of the political monuments he collected, such as the Victory Stele of Naram-Sin, were often reinscribed with their acquisition history as well as dedications to Inshushniak, the 'Lord of Susa', and placed within his temple on the Susa Acropolis. This repeated insistence by Shutruk Nahhunte I in the majority of his surviving inscriptions on crediting Inshushniak for his successes, served as prominent reminders for those viewing these objects not only of the power and authority of the collector, but of the power of Inshushniak at Susa in particular, whose religious center had been previously moved to Chogha Zanbil by earlier Igihalkid-era king Untash-Napirisha upon his establishment of the city as his new religious, political, and cultural capital. With the Šutrukid restoration of the Temple of Inshushniak at Susa and the movement of the collection of objects to the Acropolis of Susa, I suggest that Shutruk Nahhunte I may have had a religious motivation for this repeated insistence in crediting Inshushinak, and that the visible display of these objects and their inscriptions at his at Susa was a deliberate act intended to re-center and re-localize the god and the Elamite political and religious capital at Susa after it had been moved over a century before.

Figurines and Representational Change in the Early Bronze Age Southern Levant

Shira Albaz (Bar-Ilan University), Nicole Callaway (Haifa University)

Anthropomorphic figurines were a persistent feature of southern Levantine material culture for nearly three millennia. At the start of the Early Bronze Age, their presence declines sharply. This paper argues that this reduction marks not a disappearance but a significant shift in representational permissibility. Figurines are small, portable, and designed for intimate handling, which are sensitive indicators of how agency, value, and social relations are negotiated. Drawing on evidence from the Paleolithic through the Early Bronze Age, we show that Early Bronze urbanization reoriented representational practice: the human form becomes increasingly restricted to other controlled media, such as seals, stelae, and monumental contexts, while zoomorphic figurines—especially the standardized donkey—signal a redefinition of symbolic priorities within both domestic and cultic contexts. The prominence of the donkey and the absence of the human in figurine form illuminate shifting social priorities. The donkey, central to transport, exchange, and agricultural productivity, embodied connectivity and collective identity, while the human form was relocated to media better suited to expressing authority and ritual. This transformation demonstrates how figurines articulated new social strategies, embedding economic realities into visual culture and redefining the symbolic repertoire of Early Bronze Age communities. This shift reflects changing social priorities tied to infrastructure, circulation, and institutional authority. By tracing the relocation of the human form into increasingly regulated media, this paper highlights how figurine practice registers broader transformations in political organization and the social conditions under which forms could be materially depicted.

7F. Dwelling in Past: Scales of Settlement, Time, and Society in Anatolia II (Williford A)

Chair(s): N. İlgi Gerçek, Bilkent University; Müge Durusu-Tanrıöver, Temple University

Toprakkale 1 Höyük and the Iron Age Settlement Landscape of Central Anatolia

Çağlayan Bal (University of Chicago)

Toprakkale 1 Höyük, one of the largest mounds west of Tuz Gölü in Konya Province, central Anatolia, occupies a strategic position between the Phrygian cultural core centered on Gordion and the increasingly complex political landscape of south-central Anatolia. Although earlier surveys identified Iron Age material at the site and its substantial size suggests regional importance, Toprakkale has never been systematically investigated. This paper presents the results of the first intensive

archaeological survey of the site, designed to reconstruct the chronology, spatial extent, and organization of settlement at Toprakkale, with particular emphasis on the first millennium BCE. The project combines systematic surface collection, spatial analysis of artifact distributions, and comparative study of ceramic assemblages in order to identify chronological phases of occupation and spatial patterns of settlement use across the mound. These data allow the reconstruction of a preliminary settlement biography and provide a new dataset for evaluating regional settlement patterns in central Anatolia. Located in a transitional zone between northwestern and south-central Anatolia, Toprakkale offers an important case for examining how communities in this region participated in broader regional dynamics during the Iron Age.

Urban Wilderness at Herakleia under Latmos (Türkiye)

Marta Doglio (Brown University)

This paper examines the relationship between urban and natural landscapes and the cooption of natural traits into urban contexts through the case study of Herakleia under Latmos in western Anatolia. Herakleia was founded in the early Hellenistic period (ca. 4th century BCE) at the foot of Mount Latmos. According to Greek mythology, it was the home of the mythical Endymion, a young shepherd loved by the moon goddess Selene. Endymion was a personification of the mountain itself and was associated with a natural cult cave located on its slopes. Two elements structure my discussion. The first is the myth of Endymion as founder of Herakleia and the presence of a cave-shrine built in the city, which appears to replicate the natural cave connected with the myth. The second is the monumental fortified system of Herakleia, which occupies a prominent rocky setting and adapts to the surrounding terrain, incorporating natural features into its design. I argue that an ongoing imperfect mirroring existed between the natural landscape of Mount Latmos and the urban fabric of Herakleia. Through myth, architecture, and fortifications, the inhabitants integrated elements of the natural environment into the planning and symbolic landscape of the city.

Mountain Urbanism in the Anatolian Highlands: An Alternative Form of City Building and Dwelling in the Iron Age

Peri Johnson (University of Illinois Chicago), Ömür Harmanşah (University of Illinois Chicago), Elizabeth Baughan (University of Richmond), Julia M. Koch (German Archaeological Institute [DAI] Istanbul)

The Mountain Urbanism Project (MUP) investigates the emergence of the city as mountain on the Anatolian Peninsula in the Middle Iron Age (c. 900–540 BCE) through the survey of the newly identified city on Aladağ. Founded on sacred mountains, Aladağ and comparable cities such as Göllüdağ and Kerkenes Dağ present an alternative urbanism to the highland plains urbanism of Gordion or Türkmen-Karahöyük. This paper presents the results of the first season of the MUP in the summer of 2026. Because Aladağ has not been surveyed even extensively, the primary objective of MUP's first season is to understand how the mountain grounds an urban architectural and infrastructural intervention into a sacred landscape. The defensive walls rise on the precipitous shoulders of cliffs: is mountain urbanism merely a defendable city? In later historical sources, the landscape of Aladağ is associated with pastoralism, and defensive walls and a temple complex embrace mountain meadows. The northern cliffs of the city are also the location of copper mining and processing. Fieldwork in 2026 focuses on how the city works from its temples on cragged outcrops and neighborhoods in sunken slopes to hazy vistas of distant plains. MUP has a longer arc that investigates the deep time of deified mountains in the Iron Age and the difference between cosmologically embedded settlements and their daily lives.

The Role of Building Orientation on Social Order at Ancient Kerkenes

Atakan Atabas (University of Central Florida)

This is ongoing dissertation research on "The Role of Building Orientation on Social Order at Ancient Kerkenes", an ancient city located in central Anatolia, which represents an important example of urban development in the late 7th and early 6th centuries BCE. Extensive archaeological research has employed excavations, aerial photography, and geophysical surveys to gather data since the early 1990's. This study examines the urban planning of Kerkenes by analyzing the orientations of buildings and their potential relationships with landscape features and human-made elements. The research aims to identify patterns in building orientation and explore how these patterns relate to the social organization of the city. Environmental, transportation, cultural, and economic factors are also considered in interpreting the spatial structure of the settlement. The study integrates Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and statistical methods to analyze the spatial data. Visibility and viewshed analyses help assess relationships between significant locations within the city. Statistical approaches, including spherical or circular regression, model relationships between orientation variables, while Kernel Density Estimation (KDE) is applied to detect spatial clusters and hotspots. Additionally, machine learning techniques are employed to estimate missing data in the settlement plan caused by incomplete electrical resistance surveys. Combined with a phenomenological approach, these methods aim to reconstruct the spatial logic and experiential aspects of the city's design. Overall, the study seeks to provide new insights into the planning principles, social structure, and broader purpose of the Kerkenes settlement and the role of building orientations on social order. Key Words: Urban Planning, Building Orientation, Machine Learning, GIS, Spherical Regression, Kernel Density Estimation, Ancient Anatolia, Phenomenological Approach

7G. Ancient Inscriptions I (Williford B)

Chair(s): Andrew Burlingame, Wheaton College; Jana Matuszak, University of Chicago

Aspects of Materiality in the Linear B Tablets from Pylos and Mycenae: Examination and Experimentation

John Evrenopoulos (Independent Researcher)

*Virtual

This paper focuses on a current research project of the author, which combines traditional investigation methods for archaeological findings with information gained from experimental Archaeology. The macroscopic and microscopic examination of the Linear B documents from two important Mycenaean sites, Pylos and Mycenae, gives us new insights into the processes of making, inscribing and reusing the clay tablets. Through this study and the experimental production of replica clay documents, new quantitative parameters relating to these objects are now under consideration. We have a credible idea of how the tablet-writing equipment and the timeframe of the recording procedure affected the form of the inscribed signs. In addition, writing conditions in general (writing/standing position, scribes' experience, wet/dry clay surface, writing tool, etc.) played a much greater role than anticipated in determining the morphological features. Tablet-writing could have occurred even days after the formation of these objects, while many clay documents could have been rehydrated to delete any identifiable previously written signs. These palimpsests could have served as an invaluable source of writing material, which was available to the literate officials. Practicality and multifunctionality seemed to govern the choices of Mycenaeans, from the tablet-making techniques and the addition of straws/strings to the clay fabric, to the writing process and reuse of these documents. It is hoped that any conclusions reached by this study can be used to promote a better understanding of the visual parameters of the Linear B tablets and their signs.

The Earliest Alphabetic Writing? An Updated Assessment of the Umm el-Marra Cylinders in Relation to the Egyptian Scripts and Their Potential Significance for Egypto-Levantine Interaction during the Late Third Millennium BCE

Nadia Ben-Marzouk (Loyola Marymount University)

A recent proposal to interpret four inscribed, enigmatic clay cylinders from Umm el-Marra (Syria) as potentially Early Alphabetic writing would push the origin of the alphabet back by half a millennium and require a major paradigm shift in the history of writing. While some epigraphers have recently evaluated this hypothesis favorably, a critical comparison with contemporary Egyptian scripts remains underexplored. This presentation offers such a reassessment and proposes that one cylinder may plausibly preserve a notation employing Egyptian-derived signs that can be plausibly read as a textile tag and day date. By contextualizing the Umm el-Marra cylinders within the exchange communities and networks of textile distribution mentioned in the Ebla archives, this study complicates an early

alphabetic identification for the Umm el-Marra cylinders and explores their potential significance for examining the contexts in which Egyptian writing and possibly other administrative practices may have been transmitted and adapted in the East Mediterranean during the late third millennium B.C.E.

Abecedaries in a Literary Context on Tablets from Ugarit

David Hamidovic (University of Lausanne)

Scribal culture in Ugarit is documented, among other things, by various writing exercises (Dietrich and Loretz 1988, Dietrich 1995, van Soldt 1995, Hawley 2008). These include copying different types of exercises onto the same tablet. Five or six tablets (RS 15.010; RS 16.180(?); RS 16.265; RS 20.148+21.069; RS 20.164; RS 94.2440 [nos. 6-7, 12-13, 18]) contain both an abecedary and a literary text. The coexistence of these two types of texts is often explained as the mark of a still-apprentice scribe. However, as exemplified by RS 15.010 (Dijkstra 1993, Wilhelm 2003, Ernst-Pradal 2015, Ernst-Pradal and Vita 2017), the scribe's hand is steady and the copy is of high quality, suggesting not a scribe in training but an experienced one. Moreover, the literary text is a wisdom text with a rather elaborate content, quite different from the simple literary texts usually copied. Finally, the copied literary text is bilingual: in Akkadian and then in Hurrian. Furthermore, there is no doubt that the alphabet that follows is in the same scribal hand. This is why the recognition of a combination of scribal exercises by the same scribe warrants further investigation, and the coexistence of a literary text and an abecedary in the same scribe's hand raises even more questions.

An Inscribed Ivory from Ugarit and the Battle of Qadesh

Theodore J. "Ted" Lewis (Johns Hopkins University)

In 2001, Jacqueline Gachet and Dennis Pardee published an inscribed conical shaped ivory object (RS 20.398 A [6]) that was found in the Southwestern Archive of the Royal Palace of Ugarit among 47 fragmentary inscribed ivories interpreted by their shapes to be liver models. Because the text refers to "your lord, the king of Egypt" and Hatti, Pardee wonders if the object is a scepter head presented by the King of Egypt to the King of Ugarit, perhaps commemorating the Battle of Qadesh. This paper will offer a new reading that has Ramses II proclaiming "I destroyed Hatti" (*kalliyatu > kallâtu), dividing the words differently (klt ḫt; cf. KTU 6.84) and with the verb kly in contrast to Pardee who has Hatti being struck down (k dṯ ḫt) using the root is dṯṯ. Ramses II's first person rhetoric ideologically frames the stalemate event to the Ugaritic monarchy who had participated in the battle on the side of the Hittites and who needed to continue navigating their diplomatic relationships with Egypt and Hatti. The paper will also explore the object through the lens of materiality and scribalism. What is the significance of writing on ivory? Gachet noted that the other objects found in this collection are the only examples in the entire ancient Near East of divinatory models being inscribed on ivory. As for scribalism and script selection, how is it that the Egyptian Pharaoh would be communicating through a text written in Ugaritic and not Akkadian?

Has the Name of Meshaʿ Been Discovered at Ataruz?

Aaron Schade (Brigham Young University), Chang-Ho Ji (La Sierra University)

This presentation discusses an inscription that has been discovered at Ataruz during archaeological excavations. The ostracon was uncovered in 2022 in Square E7, Locus 33, on a floor or compact surface dating to the late ninth to the early eighth centuries BCE. The ostracon was discovered among numerous potsherds, animal bones, and a rectangular structure in E7, the sum context possibly indicating a cultic installation. Stratigraphically, this floor is associated with the Moabite sanctuary excavated in Square E1 and where the larger Ataruz Inscription was found. Within this framework, we will discuss the possible readings of this two-letter inscription. We will examine its larger archaeological context, its place amongst the Moabite epigraphic corpora, and discuss possible historical implications of the find. We will also situate the inscription within the larger backdrop of Ataruz and collate the data in relation to Meshaʿ's involvement at the site through the lens of the Meshaʿ Inscription and archaeological discoveries. We will then explore this Moabite context in relation to the possible readings of the inscription and how it fits that storyline.

7H. The Region of Aqaba in La Longue Durée (Workshop) (Williford C)

Chair(s): Joseph A. Greene, Harvard University; Erin Darby, University of Tennessee-Knoxville

La longue durée in the Region of Aqaba: A Short Overview

Joseph A. Greene (Harvard University)

A short overview of the region of Aqaba in la longue durée will show that an Annales approach to archaeological problems remains fruitful, but first it is worth recalling the origins of this approach. La longue durée means literally "the long term." For French historians of Les Annales (the "Annales School"), however, it is a concept integral to the innovative approach of researching, writing and teaching history developed in the 1920s by Lucien Febvre and Marc Bloch. They believed historians should focus on long-term historical change rather than on short-lived "great men" and short-term "great events." In 1929 they founded a journal whose title advertised their purpose: *Annales: Économies, Sociétés, Civilisations*. Fernand Braudel later articulated the levels of long-term history: structures (physical environments little changed over la longue durée), conjonctures (social and economic forces observable only cumulatively over la longue durée), événements (readily observable but ultimately inconsequential in la longue durée). Braudel envisioned these levels in a tripartite metaphor drawn from the sea: sea bed (structures), sunken currents (conjonctures), surface waves (événements). Braudel's metaphor encapsulated histoire totale, history from bottom to top. The 1972 English translation of Braudel's La Mediterranée et the monde Mediterranéen à l'epoque de Philippe II (1966) introduced Les Annales and la longue durée to a rising generation of anglophone Levantine archaeologists then caught up in the Biblical Archaeology/New Archaeology debate. An Annales approach offered a middle way between event-based Biblical Archaeology and rigorous but historically sterile New Archaeology.

Pot-Marks from Tell el-Kheleifeh: A Typological and Comparative Study in the Iron Age Southern Levant

Miguel Correa (Harvard University), Jody Bloom (Harvard University)

Tell el-Kheleifeh, an Iron Age site in present-day Jordan, is located at the northern tip of the Gulf of Aqaba, and the southern end of the Wadi Arabah and the Negev Desert region. During the site's excavations by Nelson Glueck between 1938 and 1940, a significant number of ceramic vessels bearing pot-marks were unearthed. Two issues have limited our understanding of these marks. First, neither Glueck's preliminary reports nor Gary Patrico's later reappraisal (1993) engage with the pot-marks. Second, the excavations were, by modern standards, limited in their precision (i.e. the stratigraphic and spatial information of the pottery bearing these marks were not recorded). As a result, the lack of engagement with the pot-marks has created a gap in archeological and historical research of the region. This study addresses these issues by presenting a report on the pot-marks from Tell el-Kheleifeh. It includes a typology of the marks and a comparative study of other pot-marks from sites in neighboring regions including the Negev, Jordanian Highlands and the Coastal Plain. The results shed light on pottery production and distribution patterns, as well as Tell el-Kheleifeh's relationship with other Levantine sites. By placing Tell el-Kheleifeh in conversation with other sites, we will explore what the similarities and differences of their pot-marks signify, and what they can reveal about production, trade, and local and regional economies in the Iron Age Levant.

Command and Control in the Wadi al-Yutm in the Classical Period

Craig A. Harvey (University of Alberta)

* Virtual

Just as is the case today, the Wadi al-Yutm served as an important line of communication and trade throughout antiquity, connecting the inland Hisma Desert to the Red Sea and port of Aila (modern Aqaba). During the Classical period, the significance of this corridor was reinforced by the construction of the Via Nova Traiana and the establishment of military outposts at Qasr al-Kithera, Khirbet al-Khalde, and Quweira. These small forts, in conjunction with a network of watchtowers, enabled the effective monitoring and control of all travel and trade through the wadi. The military

and trade infrastructure of the Wadi al-Yutm has significant potential to help characterize connectivity and commerce in this region, yet despite recent survey work by multiple teams, these sites remain largely understudied, with minimal publication of the few excavations to have taken place. This short contribution presents the current state of scholarship of the Wadi al-Yutm from the Nabataean to the late Roman period and considers potential avenues for future study.

The ALIA-AI Project

Andrew M. Smith II (The George Washington University)

I will provide a brief of the ALIA-AI Project (GWU, Center for Ancient Arabian Studies) and address the issue of scarcity and abundance in the material culture of the Aqaba region.

The Kheleifeh Digitization Project and the Longue Durée of Archaeological Publishing

Erin Darby (University of Tennessee), Gabrielle Puckett (University of Tennessee)

The Kheleifeh Digitization Project aims to improve accessibility for researchers and cultural heritage managers to the records of the Nelson Glueck excavations (1938-1940) of Tell el-Kheleifeh in southern Jordan. The project is a joint effort between the University of Tennessee, Knoxville and the University of Wyoming, where the ASOR archives are currently held. Although the American Heritage Center (AHC) is an invaluable resource in the curation of ASOR affiliated early twentieth century excavation records, for sites like Kheleifeh researchers are not able to access remotely a master registration list that would help them identify whether particular classes of objects were uncovered or which AHC records might be relevant to their interests. As only a portion of the site's artifacts have been published, a large amount of material culture from Kheleifeh is currently excluded from scholarly discussion. Nevertheless, even without complete publication, Kheleifeh plays a prominent role in scholarly attempts to understand the geopolitical organization of southern Israel and Jordan, particularly in the Iron IIB-C. In view of the site's significance, this presentation will introduce researchers to the ASOR archive resources at the AHC and report the outcomes of Phase 1 (2025-2026) of the Kheleifeh Digitization Project, which aims to produce an online registration list of the site's artifacts to be made available to the public for future research. The presentation will also provide specific examples of the way unpublished artifacts from the Kheleifeh records might impact our understanding of the site and its role in Iron IIB-C.

7I. Archaeology of Lebanon (Astoria)

Chair(s): Hanan Charaf, Lebanese University; Nadine Panayot, American University of Beirut; Helen Dixon, East Carolina University

South Lebanon Built Heritage, Another Victim of the Ongoing War

Joanne Farchakh (Biladi, Lebanese NGO)

Byblos and Its World: Mapping Networks and Sociocultural Landscapes in the Late Bronze Age Northern Levant

Marwan Kilani (University of Basel)

Byblos is often conceptualized first and foremost as a physical city, with its temples, palaces, streets, and tombs. These features are undeniably central to understanding the city's history and material reality, yet they tell only part of the story. Beyond its architecture, Byblos was in fact a living community, an active participant in broader regional and interregional interactions, and a political actor both influenced by and exerting influence across its surroundings. But how did the city participate in these networks, and what can the broader regional material and textual evidence reveal about its sociocultural and economic connections? This presentation addresses this question by situating Byblos within selected wider sociocultural landscapes, focusing on the Late Bronze Age and, in particular, the Amarna period, when the city's political, economic, and cultural connections were especially visible. Methodologically, the study first examines Byblos' engagement in multiple sociocultural networks, mapping, through GIS tools, the distribution of selected evidence across the region, such as epigraphic types, linguistic patterns, ceramic forms, and imported goods. These indicators serve as proxies for reconstructing the city's cultural, political, and commercial ties. The analysis then contextualize these networks within broader contemporary realities, including Egyptian imperial infrastructure and regional communication routes. By tracing these overlapping layers, the study highlights the sociocultural dimensions and dynamics that shaped the history of Byblos and its inhabitants during this pivotal period.

Reflections of Phoenician Afterlives? Hand Mirrors from First Millennium BCE Sidonian Burials

Helen M. Dixon (East Carolina University)

Well over thirty hand mirrors were recorded from legacy excavations (ca. 1860–1965) as coming from first millennium BCE tombs at Sidon—modern Saida, Lebanon. The mirrors consist of round copper or bronze reflective surfaces inserted by a long tang into wood, ivory, or bone handles. In excavation reports these artifacts were rarely described in any detail, probably because they are largely undecorated and fragmentary, although they were sometimes collected (e.g., Ernest Renan brought back at least eleven hand mirrors from the rock-cut tombs at Magharat Abloun, which are now held by the Louvre). This paper brings this corpus together for the first time, evaluating hand mirror inclusion in burials according to their placement and orientation near preserved inhumations, other grave goods associated with the mirror burials, and their depiction in Sidonian art. While early interpretations viewed these as a sign of a woman's burial, I argue that this is not a gendered grave gift, but instead perhaps an object with significance to Sidonian afterlife beliefs. While at this stage we can only speculate about how the hand mirror's mortuary meaning operated, I offer some suggestions based on comparative evidence from earlier Phoenician contexts, as well as contemporaneous data from Egypt and the Punic world.

Death, the Transfigured Body, and Personhood at Roman Baalbek-Heliopolis: A Shimmering Spectacle in the City of the Sun

Nicholas Aherne (University of Groningen)

* Virtual

One sarcophagus of Roman Baalbek preserved the remains of a scintillating burial: a skeleton, facial coverings, wreath, figural gold appliqués all made of gold, a gilded ring, a coin, and glass unguentaria. In this paper, I reconstruct how the deceased's body, identity, and personhood were reconfigured in death, funerary preparation, and ritual display and concealment. Furthermore, I trace the sensorial and emotional experience of those crafting, adorning, and viewing the body, with attention to sight, touch, smell, sound, and environmental conditions. Throughout this performative process the body became both objectified and elevated, inserted within an artistic choreography orchestrated by loved ones and professionals tending to the deceased. By examining the material, sensorial, and performative affordances, I will demonstrate how the deceased became a liminal entity, challenging fixed distinctions between living, dead, statue, and god, and between the status of the deceased as unwedded versus married. Once this sarcophagus was concealed beneath the earth, physical and symbolic processes continued. Simultaneously, the gold coverings and their figural decoration became more powerful as decomposition progressed and shifts in personhood amongst the deceased and the figural decoration became more critical, until a certain point when the artificial illusion began to crumble. This paper, inspired by my PhD comprising the first catalogue and analysis of sarcophagi of Roman Lebanon, reconstructs for the first time sarcophagi contexts within funerary ritual. Building upon projects with colleagues in the Lebanese heritage sector, the paper presents the potential to make ancient lived experiences accessible for museum audiences.

7J. Archaeology of Cyprus I (Private Dining 2)

Chair(s): Kevin Fisher, University of British Columbia; Catherine Kearns, University of Chicago

The Prehistoric Cemetery at Makounta-Voules-Mersinoudia: Excavations in 2025-2026

Kathryn Grossman (North Carolina State University), Tate Paulette (North Carolina State University), Lisa Graham (College of Southern Nevada), Andrew McCarthy (University of Edinburgh)

In 2025, the Makounta Voules Archaeological Project began excavation of a cemetery adjacent to the site's Chalcolithic and Bronze Age village. The cemetery consists of a series of vertical rock cut shafts and bell-shaped pits. Artifacts and human remains were rare, but the tombs that did contain grave goods suggest a Chalcolithic date for this cemetery, as does the morphology of most of the tombs. In this talk, we will present the results of the 2025 and upcoming 2026 excavations of this cemetery, and situate those results within the broader context of the highly heterogeneous mortuary practices of Chalcolithic Cyprus.

Recent Work at Bronze Age Kissonerga-Skalia

Lindy Crewe (CAARI)

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 2026 season of excavations, as we finish excavating the final phase and work towards understanding the earlier Bronze Age deposits.

Kalavasos and Maroni Built Environments Project: Updates 2026

Sturt W. Manning (Cornell University), Kevin Fisher (University of British Columbia)

This paper reports the on-going work at the Late Bronze Age (LBA) (ca. 1700-1100 BCE) urban centres of Kalavasos Ayios Dhimitrios, and Maroni Vournes, in southern Cyprus undertaken by 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. In particular, we focus here on investigations carried out over the past year. At Kalavasos Ayios Dhimitrios our most recent work has concentrated on Building 16, a monumental, court-centred structure southwest of Building X excavated previously by Alison South. Building 16 was originally mapped via ground-penetrating radar (GPR) survey, and a substantial portion has now been the subject of detailed excavation and further investigations. Our 2026 work will focus on articulating the south end of the building, while completing excavations of the north end, where we have recovered compelling evidence for ritual activity that involved ceremonial feasting focused on deer. At Maroni Vournes our recent foci have been (i) the spatial and temporal linking of our KAMBE excavation area with the previous excavations at the site directed by Gerald Cadogan, and in particular the large 'Ashlar Building'; and (ii) seeking to clarify and define the timeframe (dates and duration) of the place-making monumentalization of the Vournes site area, including the Ashlar Building, and in terms of the overall Maroni LBA polity, through the integration of stratigraphic and material culture evidence from our excavations with a substantial program of radiocarbon dating on organic sample materials recovered.

Getting the Cypro-Minoan Corpus Online (GeCCO)

Cassandra Donnelly

The past two decades have seen a relative flourishing in the study of Cypro-Minoan (CM), with the publication of two corpora (Olivier 2007; Ferrara 2013), four relevant European Research Council grants (CREWS; INSCRIBE; ComPAS; VIEWS), several monographs (Ferrara 2012; Steele 2013, 2019; Donnelly 2024), as well as dissertations (Valério 2016; Donnelly 2021; Polig 2022). Nevertheless, several impediments to the field's advancement remain. Impediments include the uneven quality in the published CM inscription photographs and drawings, a lack of an agreed upon signary and an incomplete understanding of the inscriptions as archaeological objects (e.g. Muti 2024). Accurate 3-D models of CM inscribed objects can help resolve each impediment, giving paleographers the resolution to create an agreed-upon signary and providing archaeologists with the opporunity for close study of the inscribed objects; such images in fact exist (Polig 2022), but they remain unpublished because their creator, Dr. Martina Polig, has left academia. My ASOR paper will discuss the progress of my Peltenburg Fellowship project at the Cyprus American Archaeological Research Institute (CAARI), Get the Cypro-Minoan Corpus online (GeCCO), tasked with publishing an online open access corpus of 3-D Cypro-Minoan models created by Polig. It will discuss its impacts not only on the study of CM and its potential decipherment but also on public engagement with the script.

Landscape Archaeology in the Rural Hinterland of Kourion: A New Project in Progress

Monika Rekowska (University of Warsaw), Anna Kordas (University of Warsaw), Demetrios Michaelides (University of Cyprus, Cyprus Academy of Sciences, Letters and Arts), Szymon Popławski (Independent Researcher), Maksym Mackiewicz (Independent Researcher)

In 2024, a new archaeological project "In Search of the Lost Temple: The Sacred (?) Landscape in the Hinterland of the Sanctuary of Apollo Hylates in Kourion, Locality Latsithkia, Limassol District, Cyprus" was launched aiming to investigate the rural territory of ancient Kourion, a city in southwestern Cyprus. The research focuses on the hills and valleys extending north of the nearby Sanctuary of Apollo Hylates, and explores the function and development of this landscape, particularly during the Roman and Late Roman periods. Conducted within the framework of this project, the study combines museum, archival, and cartographic research with non-invasive surface survey. It was prompted by observations in the Latsithkia area, including rock-cut tombs, traces of roads, quarrying activity, water-management remains, and numerous architectural fragments documented on the slopes of one of the hills during previous campaigns. The latter gave rise to the hypothesis that one or more buildings of Classical architectural form may once have existed at the site. The territory's significance is underscored by its proximity to the sanctuary and by its position along routes connecting Kourion with Paphos and Marion/Arsinoe. Taken together, the available evidence may point to the region's active role within broader networks of movement, exchange, and religious activity linking Kourion with other major centres of southwestern Cyprus.

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 20, 2026

4:25pm – 6:30pm (CST)

8A. Recent Work in the Archaeological Sciences (Continental A)

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

The Role of Metals in Urban Reemergence along the Middle Bronze I Levantine Coast: New Elemental and Lead Isotope Evidence

Daniel Finn-Kandel (The Hebrew University of Jerusalem)

The early Middle Bronze Age (MB I, ca. 2000–1800 BCE) marks the reemergence of fortified urban centers along the Southern Levantine coast. Contemporaneously, tin-bronze appears for the first time in large quantities, circulating alongside arsenical copper alloys that persisted from earlier metallurgical traditions. As both tin and arsenic-containing minerals are foreign to the region, their use implies the expansion or reorganization of long-distance exchange networks. This paper presents elemental and lead isotope analyses of copper-based objects from six MBI Levantine coastal sites: Tel Ifshar, Tel Nami, Nahariya, Sidon, Byblos, and Tell Arqa. Applying a suite of geochemical tools, including a two-stage Pb-Pb geological age model and multi-source mixing models, at least four compositionally distinct metal sources are identified. Results demonstrate that urban centers on the Southern Levantine coast sat at the intersection of at least two concurrent long-distance exchange networks: a southern circuit supplying Egyptian and Arabah Valley copper, and an eastern circuit delivering copper, tin, and arsenic from the Zagros Mountains and Central Asia. The convergence of these geographically distinct supply networks at sites undergoing urban transformation suggests that access to foreign metals was a key driver of MB I coastal urban development.

Let the Floors Speak: Microarchaeological Evidence for Spatial Organization in a Neolithic Storage Room at Aşıklı Höyük

Fatma Kalkan (Koç University), Rana Özbal (Koç University), Carla Lancelotti (Universitat Pompeu Fabra, Catalan Institution for Research and Advanced Studies (ICREA))

*Virtual

Reconstructing how Neolithic households utilized and arranged their spaces is inherently difficult, as many daily activities leave behind no clear marks in archaeological deposits. Floors, being primary surfaces of activities, are among the most informative yet often underutilized data sources for understanding spatial practices in prehistoric structures. This paper presents a microarchaeological study of floor sediments from a storage room within a double-room quadrangular mudbrick building, which dates to the 8th millennium BCE at Aşıklı Höyük in Volcanic Cappadocia, Türkiye. We evaluate how a multiproxy approach to floor sediments can help identify activity areas and spatial use patterns within Neolithic built environments. An integrated methodology that combined multi-element geochemical (ICP-OES), phytolith, and spherulite analyses was employed to analyze sediments. Geochemical signatures revealed localized anthropogenic enrichments, while phytolith assemblages provided evidence for plant processing and illuminated how plants and plant-based materials were incorporated into the room in divergent ways. To assess whether the plant assemblage could originate from herbivore dung in certain areas, the presence or absence of spherulites was evaluated as a third proxy. Using different lines of evidence revealed microspatial patterning within the room and identified activity signatures associated with plant processing and storage practices. Based on our results, floor sediments preserved detailed records of everyday activities and illustrated how the implemented method refines interpretations on spatial use and human–nonhuman interactions on them. This approach also provided a methodological framework for future studies aimed at reconstructing household practices and spatial organization in Neolithic spaces in a nuanced way.

Increasing the Regional Comparability of Dung Spherulite Analysis in Western Asia

Ellie Stankiewicz (Utah State University), Elise J. Laugier (Utah State University)

Dung spherulites are an effective tool for identifying dung in the archaeological record and are increasingly used to investigate past human-animal-environment relationships as well as the formation processes of archaeological sites. However, different approaches to dung spherulite quantification produce results at fundamentally different scales, hindering cross-study comparison. In this paper, we evaluate the offsets between two widely used protocols in Western Asia and develop a framework for standardizing results across studies. This framework provides a mechanism for cross-study comparison and increases the interpretative potential of archaeological dung across the region.

Cryptic Tsunami Signatures in Archaeological Contexts: Discoveries and Challenges

Beverly N. Goodman Tchernov (University of Haifa, Charney School of Marine Sciences, Department of Marine Geosciences, Zinman Institute of Archaeology)

The 2004 Boxing Day megatsunami significantly heightened global awareness of tsunami hazards and stimulated growing interest in identifying and interpreting past tsunami records, including those preserved in archaeological contexts. Consequently, both the number of recognized tsunami deposits and the methodological toolkit for their identification have expanded considerably. At the same time, skepticism regarding the relevance of paleo- and ancient tsunami deposits has diminished, as their importance for hazard assessment and disaster risk management has become increasingly clear. Coastal archaeological stratigraphy offers a valuable archive of tsunami-derived horizons, enabling reconstruction of event magnitude, timing, and recurrence. More importantly, such contexts provide critical insights into human responses, behaviors, and decision-making in the aftermath of extreme marine events. While tsunamis are natural phenomena, they become disasters only through their societal impacts, including loss of life and economic and social disruption. Archaeological records are therefore uniquely positioned to illuminate the dynamic interplay between environmental processes and human systems. For example, a tsunami might result in the abandonment of one site with clear mixed tsunami debris layers; yet the same tsunami might be 'missing' in another equally impacted site due to post-event clean-up and renovation. Such differences may reflect differences in societal resilience and stability rather than event magnitude. This presentation highlights a series of recent examples from the eastern Mediterranean (Israel, Turkey, Greece) that demonstrate both the significant contributions and the ongoing interpretive challenges.

8B. Gardens of the Mediterranean, the Ancient Near East, and Beyond (Continental B)

Chair(s): Rona Shani Evyasaf, Technion Israel

Archaeological Evidence for Desert Rainwater Harvesting Techniques in the Mughal/Rajput Gardens of the Ahhichatragarh Fortress Palace, Nagaur, Rajasthan, India

Kathryn Gleason (Cornell University), David Lentz (University of Cincinnati)

The gardens of this fortress-palace were poetic expressions of sensuality, pleasure, and wealth (Joffee and Ruggles 2007). To create paradisiacal settings in the Thar Desert of Rajasthan, a reliable water supply was essential to provide optimal cultivation conditions for the plants displayed. (Jain et al. 2009) Archaeological investigations by the Mehranghar Trust (Jodphur) have revealed imported soils that were chosen for monsoon water storage and plant cultivation in "garden tanks". Each garden had its own configuration, responding to the varied water sources and conceptions of garden design over time: sunken below the walks, waffle-surfaced, or set into ornamental shapes, such as lotus pools. Archaeobotanical analysis has revealed associated plants. This paper examines whether the innovative soil structure of the gardens was unique or characteristic of cultivation in this region (Gleason and Lentz, forthcoming). It compares some of the desert water harvesting strategies with more ancient parallels deployed by the Nabataeans and other desert cultures over the centuries.

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Epigraphical Gardens in Early South Asia

Divya Kumar-Dumas (University of Maryland)

While Sanskrit literature describes multiple Indian garden typologies—ranging from domestic and urban gardens to those associated with monasteries and temples—the archaeological identification of early South Asian gardens remains limited. Scholarship has largely treated such spaces as textualized imaginaries, lacking fixed architectural boundaries or recoverable plant materials. This paper instead proposes epigraphy as a methodological tool for reconstructing pre-Islamic gardens. From the early centuries CE through the second millennium, inscriptions on stone slabs and temple walls record acts of planting, endowment, and maintenance. An inscription dated July 18, 1190, for example, documents a woman named Siridevi planting trees near three temples. Other records preserve codified plant lists associated with ritual practice. Although gardens are not typically indexed in epigraphical corpora, such inscriptions can be read as material indices of designed landscapes, preserving traces of spatial organization, patronage, and practices of selection and cultivation. Building on comparative work on epigraphic gardens in Roman contexts, I suggest that inscriptions can serve as proxies for otherwise archaeologically elusive landscapes. Read alongside extant architectural traces, these records enable the reconstruction of networks of unexcavated planted environments. The paper will therefore attempt to reframe early South Asian gardens not as absent archaeological objects, but as a set of landscape practices without known forms dispersed across built environments made of permanent materials.

Reconstructing the Invisible: Methodological Challenges and Opportunities in the Archaeology of the Shanglinyuan

Li Bai (Cornell University)

The Shanglinyuan ("the Supreme Forest") of the Western Han dynasty (206 BCE–9 CE) was the largest and most significant designed landscape in early imperial China, yet its archaeological study remains peripheral to the global conversation on garden archaeology. Unlike the sites of ancient gardens in the Near East and the Mediterranean, which possess a certain number of physical remains, the core area of Shanglinyuan has been erased or concealed by the rapid urbanization of modern city of Xi'an. The Shanglinyuan survives only in fragmentary traces, it is known primarily through historical texts and limited excavations. Due to these preservation conditions, scholarly attention has largely focused on the architectural remains within the Shanglinyuan, at the expense of a holistic understanding of the site as an imperial garden. And I suggest that to understand the Shanglinyuan, we must develop methods that go beyond architectural remains. Drawing on published reports from the Shanglinyuan archaeological team's 2004–2012 excavations, this paper outlines the project's history, scope, and methods, and reflects on the methodological challenges and opportunities posed by a site of this nature. By comparing the Shanglinyuan with contemporaneous gardens southern China and in the Mediterranean and Near East, this paper considers the Shanglinyuan's role in possible intercultural exchanges between East and West, examining how ideas of landscape, power, and cosmology may have traveled across Eurasia.

Plants of Eternity: The Comparison between Botanical Reality and Symbolic Representation in Ancient Egyptian Tomb Gardens

Filipa Simal (Faculdade de |Arquitectura da Universidade do Porto)

The study of ancient gardens presents significant methodological challenges, particularly because botanical remains rarely survive in the archaeological record. This paper proposes a methodological framework that integrates archaeobotanical evidence with systematic iconographic analysis reconstruct aspects of ancient Egyptian gardens. In the context of Ancient Egypt, the reconstruction of relies on an interdisciplinary approach combining archaeological excavation, archaeobotanical analysis, and the interpretation of visual sources. These combined methods allow researchers to reconstruct aspects of ancient environments, gardens, and cultivated spaces despite the scarcity of preserved vegetation. Within this framework, tomb paintings and reliefs constitute one of the most important sources for understanding ancient Egyptian plant life and garden design. Because many funerary monuments contain detailed representations of gardens and vegetation, these images provide valuable evidence that complements the limited archaeobotanical record. The study behind this paper is based on a corpus of New Kingdom tomb scenes from Thebes, in which plant representations are systematically recorded and quantified according to identifiable morphological and iconographic features. A quantitative survey records the number of identifiable plant species and the frequency with which they appear in funerary imagery. Certain plants—such are depicted repeatedly, suggesting both their presence along the Nile and their symbolic importance. By comparing visual frequency with archaeobotanical evidence, this study evaluates the extent to which these depictions reflect real cultivated gardens rather than purely idealized landscapes. The results demonstrate how iconographic evidence can function as a methodological tool for reconstructing the botanical composition of ancient Egyptian gardens.

Ars topiaria: Methodologies from the Modern Discipline of Landscape Architecture and Their Application to the Archaeology of Monumental Ancient Gardens

Rona S. Evyasaf (Technion Israel)

The growing awareness of the existence of ancient gardens, together with the development of new archaeological techniques, has significantly expanded the knowledge available for the study of ancient gardens. For many years, research relied mainly on literary descriptions by ancient authors, as well as on artistic representations preserved in wall paintings, reliefs, and mosaics. While these sources remain valuable, archaeological investigations have provided a much richer dataset for understanding ancient garden design. Garden archaeology can uncover a wide range of physical elements, including garden paths and walkways, pools and other water elements, railings and pergolas, planting beds, and even evidence for specific plant species. The accumulated data on the physical elements of the gardens is allowing us a better possibility in reconstructing the ancient gardens plans. This paper proposes integrating analytical tools from the modern discipline of landscape architecture into the study of ancient gardens. By applying concepts used in contemporary landscape design analysis, such as spatial organization, axial planning, focal points, visual corridors, and the relationship between built and natural environments, we can develop new ways of interpreting archaeological remains. Such an approach enables investigation of issues including the relationship between gardens, domestic architecture, and the broader landscape; the design of open versus enclosed spaces; the organization of garden divisions; and the placement of key elements within the overall composition. Comparative analysis of landscape design features across different sites can also illuminate regional variations and cultural influences that shaped ancient garden design.

8C. Use and Reuse of Tombs in the Theban Necropolis (Continental C)

Chair(s): Lauren Dogaer, University College Oxford

Interpreting the territory of Sheikh Abd el-Qurna: the uses of Landscape Archaeology in the Theban necropolis (Luxor, Egypt)

Angeles "Angie" Jimenez-Higueras (University of Granada)

*Virtual

This contribution aims to present the targets and methodology of the research project 'Study of the territory of Sheikh Abd el-Qurna' (ETSAQ henceforth). The project is being carried out at the Prehistory and Archaeology Department at the University of Granada (Spain). The main target of the ETSAQ project is to reconstruct the landscape of Sheikh Abd el-Qurna during the 18th Dynasty in an area that includes 50 tombs. The study of this territory has been motivated by the idea that the location of a tomb was not subject to chance, but important criteria had to be present during the selection process of the locations where the tombs were going to be built. An analysis of the spatial organisation of the territory and the creation of a GIS database are mandatory. To accomplish these two objectives a series of tasks has to be completed: a prosopographic study of the tomb owners; a geological-geomorphological study of Sheikh Abd el-Qurna; and a topographic survey to create the digital cartography. Once the GIS database is created, several tools will be applied to run visibility studies and spatial statistics between the tombs and the main funerary monuments of the Theban necropolis. Thanks to the Landscape Archaeology approach, the ETSAQ project hopes to contribute to the reconstruction of the palaeo-landscape of Sheikh Abd el-Qurna and the Theban necropolis. A more rigorous image of the whole necropolis in terms of organisation of the tombs is expected to be achieved, highlighting the dynamic ritual environment of the necropolis and its urbanism.

Dwelling with the Dead: The "Domestic Deathscape" of Graeco-Roman Deir el-Medina

Livia Hoffman (The University of Pennsylvania)

In recent years, Egyptological scholarship has displayed a burgeoning interest in exploring how bodies interacted with (and within) funerary landscapes, or "deathscapes," through GIS-based multisensory approaches. Despite this development, current research often limits its scope to bodily encounters within Pharaonic phases of mortuary environments—a limitation particularly evident in studies of Deir el-Medina, whose deathscape continued to evolve throughout the Graeco-Roman Period: beginning in the Ptolemaic and Roman Eras, and culminating in the Coptic Era, living (persons) and dead (corpses) bodies increasingly made meaningful assembly through the reuse of former tombs for "domestic" activities.

Employing a GIS-based "somatic" approach, this presentation geo-references both recent and archival data from the Institut français d'archéologie orientale's (hereafter the IFAO) excavations at Deir el-Medina, in order to trace the spatial and experiential intensification of these bodily engagements into and throughout the Coptic Era. This mapped phenomenon is then considered alongside roughly contemporaneous and co-spatial accounts of tomb inhabitancies and interactions between the

persons and corpses within. Taken together, one finds that ascetic sensibilities at Deir el-Medina reconfigured prior boundaries between the living and the dead, as Coptic individuals increasingly sought out necromantic encounters with corpses as a means for cultivating the self. Manifesting in the reoccupation and habitation of Pharaonic tombs, such inclinations towards the dead visibly and spatially transformed the site's funerary landscape into a "domestic" deathscape.

Recycling the Afterlife: Tomb (Re)use and Religious Developments in the Necropoleis of Mentuhotep II at Asasif and Deir el-Bahari
Antonio J. Morales (University of Alcalá)
*Virtual

The establishment of the funerary complex of Mentuhotep II at Deir el-Bahari led to the renewed use of the surrounding area, previously employed for the burials of priestesses of Hathor and high officials of the late Old Kingdom. This development stimulated the construction of several saff and rock-cut tombs in the necropoleis of Asasif and Deir el-Bahari. Among them are the monuments of officials such as Dagi (TT 103), Djari (TT 366), and Ipi (TT 315), who served the remaining lineage of the Intef Dynasty –from Mentuhotep II to Mentuhotep IV– as well as king Amenemhat I in the early Twelfth Dynasty. These tombs represent the culmination of the First Intermediate Period cemetery in this region and reflect not only the reorganization of the necropolis but also the growth and reorientation of the city of Thebes. They also illustrate the emergence of new cultic activities associated with the Theban god Amun. This presentation examines the impact of the royal funerary temple and the rise of the Amun cult, while also exploring the meaning and context of tomb reuse in three cases from the concession of the University of Alcalá and its Middle Kingdom Theban Project. The tombs of Djari, Ipi, and Dagi provide significant case studies for analyzing the appropriation of Theban funerary structures in the New Kingdom, Late Period, and even Coptic times, shedding light on the purposes, patterns, and principles governing the recycling of funerary spaces.

Whose Tomb is This? New Kingdom Tomb Reuse as a Statement of Belonging
JJ Shirley (Journal of Egyptian History; Research Associate and Bryn Mawr College)
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The reuse of tombs in the Theban Necropolis is a well-known phenomenon. It can take many forms – including altered decoration and architecture, the addition of courtyard shafts, and subsequent burials. Generally, when one hears the phrase "tomb reuse", the most immediate thought is of reuse done not by family members but by individuals disconnected to the original occupants. However, there are instances of reuse and modifications undertaken by family members or by those intentionally wishing to connect to the original owner of the tomb, as well as reoccupation within a relatively short period of time from the tomb's original creation. In these cases, one might ask – whose tomb is it, really? This paper will focus on New Kingdom reuse of tombs by family and colleagues who were roughly contemporary with, or not significantly later than, the original occupants. Several questions will be asked, including: how was the tomb reused, what is the connection between the occupants, was reuse sanctioned, can we discern a wider social meaning and purpose to tomb reuse? While the answers may not be entirely clear, (re-)evaluating tomb use and reuse through these questions enables us to better understand how the ancient Egyptians perceived – and utilized – the Theban necropolis landscape.

Theban Tomb 16 and the Landscape Legacy of Amenhotep I's Cult
Suzanne Onstine (University of Memphis)

Theban Tomb 16, a Ramesside tomb in the Dra Abu El Naga section of the Theban necropolis, represents a somewhat typical picture of tomb reuse between the New Kingdom and the Greco-Roman period. Around 150 individuals used the tomb during the Third Intermediate Period through the Greco-Roman period. Looting obscures the specific information about the secondary occupants, however there are many factors related to the original decorative scheme and the use of this tomb that can be interpreted in wider cultural contexts shedding light on funerary ideology, cultural practices, and the importance of place in patterns of reuse. Specifically important is the role of Amenhotep I in this area of the Theban necropolis, and TT16's relationship to the posthumous cult of the king.

8D. Archaeology of Islamic Society II (Waldorf)

Chair(s): Ian W. N. Jones, New York University; Tasha Vorderstrasse, University of Chicago

Daily Life in a Medieval Alquería: The Menorca Archaeological Project's 2024-2026 Seasons at Torre d'en Galmés, Spain
Alexander Smith (SUNY Brockport), Amalia Pérez-Juez (Boston University)

Since 2020, the Menorca Archaeological Project, located in the Balearic Islands of Spain, has been excavating the medieval houses of Torre d'en Galmés, known generally for its megalithic, Iron Age structures and prehistoric settlement nucleation. Our project has revealed a large-scale settlement of the medieval Islamic period at the site, roughly from the early 11th century CE until the forced abandonment of the site in 1287 CE. This paper presents our field results at Torre d'en Galmés, focusing primarily on Spatial Unit (SPU) 7, a large domestic unit that we have been excavating since 2021. Summer 2026 marks our final season of intensive excavation in SPU 7, which has proven to be much more sprawling than we first envisioned, exhibiting eight rooms and over 200 square meters of living space. Within SPU 7 we have found evidence of numerous facets of medieval life, including textile production, food preparation and cooking, plastering and decorative roof tiling, as well as indications of metalworking, all roughly dating to the 12th and 13th centuries CE. Along with our finds, we will discuss the layout of SPU 7 as well as other architectural evidence from the site, where we have identified over 30 medieval structures. Finally, we will conclude the paper with plans to publish our results and remarks on the potential of Torre d'en Galmés and Menorca for future scholarship of the medieval Islamic world.

Early Islamic Tell Brak: A Reassessment of the Abbasid Occupation
Fernando Casamayor Molina (Harvard University), Jason Ur (Harvard University)

Tell Brak functioned as a planned, irrigated settlement with a significant fortified component during the early Islamic period. As one of the most important sites in Mesopotamian archaeology, scholarly work here has largely focused on excavation reports by Oates, McMahon, and Ur, but little attention has been paid to the Islamic occupation. This paper builds on the initial survey conducted by Ur et al. (2011), which identified a fortified structure and an early Islamic settlement containing Abbasid-period materials comparable to those from other Syrian sites such as Tell Aswad. We aim to shed light on this understudied phase by reassessing the surveyed material culture, the layout and organization of the irrigation zone, and the architectural remains of both the fortified complex and the settlement. The methodology employed combines satellite imagery analysis, spatial analysis using GIS technology, as well as the study of material culture and the built landscape. Additionally, the fortification and urban landscape are compared to other Abbasid sites, such as Raqqa, Basra, and Samarra. This approach provides a more comprehensive understanding of the extent and character of the Islamic presence at Tell Brak, including patterns of land management, settlement organization, and the logic behind the spatial distribution of material culture. Our study suggests that the estate's administrators did not operate on a blank slate; rather, the irrigation system was designed in response to a 5,000-year-old archaeological landscape. This points towards a substantial and organized Abbasid presence in the region.

The Coarse Wares of Ayyubid Hisban: New Evidence from the Rural Remodeling of a Byzantine Villa
Bethany J. Walker (University of Bonn)

The 12th and early 13th-century repurposing at Tall Hisban of a large, urban-style house of the Early Byzantine period, a process documented over the course of the last three seasons of excavations, has produced a corpus of previously unknown wares at the site. The best preserved of these Late Antique structures was remodelled into one of the farmhouse clusters typical of Mamluk occupation at the site. Adjacent rooms and the courtyard were transformed into areas of intensive food preparation, with

rows of tannurs, heavy cookpots embedded into the floors, and miniature cooking vessels - new to the ceramic repertoire at the site – recovered from both cooking deposits and storage contexts. The recovery of tabuns of a variety of sizes and forms speaks to specialization of food preparation and possibly cuisine. Handmade wares of various typology and function characterize this phase of (re)occupation; many do not continue into the Mamluk period. A series of radiocarbon dates from key stratigraphic contexts, collected over many seasons of fieldwork, has produced a chronology of sporadic occupation of the building that extends from the Fatimid period, culminating with the late Ayyubid permanent occupation of its ruins. The C14 series, along with a stratigraphic sequence of surfaces, floors, and sealed contexts, allows for a stratigraphic separation of handmade Ayyubid wares at the site. This paper presents this Ayyubid ceramic corpus in its spatial and stratigraphic contexts, exploring the way the site was reoccupied and functioned in this period.

Sphero-Conical Vessels Reconsidered: Interpretations and Realities

Jeffrey Cumonow (Bryn Mawr College)

Sphero-conical vessels are widely recognized as unique objects associated with the early and medieval Islamic cultural sphere. While the subject of discussion for many decades and a frequent presence in museum exhibits, they remain consistently misunderstood causing misrepresentation to this day. Proposed uses include: grenades, aeolipiles, drinking vessels, water pipes, and containers for mercury or perfumes, among others. These interpretations have been reproduced across years of discussion without systematic reassessment. This paper re-examines sphero-conical vessels through a comparative evaluation of the available evidence. I approach these objects in a way that considers their many contexts and histories and, ultimately, weigh and evaluate the validity of past conclusions. The analysis considers vessel morphology, material composition, geographic distribution, and archaeological contexts, together with epigraphic inscriptions, historical references, representations in art, and chemical and lipid residue analyses. This holistic approach shows that these vessels vary widely in purpose, complicating interpretations that propose a singular, specialized function for these objects. Residue analyses indicate the presence of different substances, including oils and other organic materials, and potentially volatile compounds. Historical and epigraphic evidence further indicate associations with the storage and controlled use of liquids. Sphero-conical vessels constitute a formal category defined by shape rather than function, whose use varies according to need, which requires context to be understood. As such, this study allows the sphero-conical vessel the fuzzy edges it possessed during its use-life and leaves behind unwarranted conclusions.

Between the Sultan's Court and the Rural Kitchen in the Levant: Study of Nutrition and Kitchen Traditions in the Mamluk Period Based on Ceramic Records and Culinary Archaeology

Shurouq Munzer (University of Bonn)

*Virtual

Kitchens in the Mamluk era reflected important aspects of the social, economic, and cultural structure of society. In palaces and castles, the kitchens of the Mamluk sultan were linked to the political and social status of the ruler and reflected the abundance of the state's resources and its administrative organization. Historical sources such as Al-Qalqashandi indicate the large sums spent on sultanic banquets, chefs, and servants, in addition to the multitude of jobs and positions associated with managing the sultan's kitchen. In contrast, domestic kitchens or village kitchens are not mentioned in historical textual records, which means that their study relies heavily on archaeological evidence, such as pottery and installations. This paper presents a study of cooking pots, storage jars and remains of tabuns from the sites of Tall Hisban, Khirbet Beit Mazmil, and Khirbet Beit Loya in the southern Levant. By studying the archaeological evidence, it is possible to answer how food was prepared in household kitchens, both in terms of the pottery used and the associated cooking installations and methods. This helps to understand how village kitchens looked like and what made them distinct from public kitchens in the markets or palaces. This study explores kitchen traditions and nutrition in the Mamluk period. This paper also contributes to revealing the nature of rural kitchens which are comparatively understudied. Thereby it contributes to our understanding of the relationship between food practices and the social and cultural identity of Mamluk society in the Levant.

8E. Art Historical Approaches to the Near East II (Marquette)

Chair(s): Bianca Hand, University of California, Davis; Miriam Said, Tufts University

The Contexts of Greek Sculpture in Graeco-Roman Art-historical Writing about the Near East

Kristen Seaman (University of Oregon)

*Virtual

Since the mid-20th century, context has grown increasingly more important in the study of ancient Greek sculpture. Art historians and archaeologists have investigated and reconstructed the political, intellectual, and social contexts of stone, metal, and clay sculpture from the Archaic, Classical, and Hellenistic periods. And they have studied the later Roman contexts of Greek statues and their copies. While scholars have looked to ancient Graeco-Roman art history and criticism for information about Greek sculpture, they have largely overlooked the significance of context in ancient art-historical writing, particularly when ancient sources contextualize Greek sculpture in the Near East. In addition, scholars often encounter such ancient writing in passages that have been excerpted and decontextualized. Therefore, in this paper, I juxtapose the modern decontextualization of excerpted ancient passages about Greek sculpture with the ancient literary contextualization of it. I pay special attention to how Greek sculpture was contextualized within what could be called the global art history of the Near East. Examining the works of ancient authors such as Philostratus and Pliny, I analyze how they consider Greek sculpture within their discussions of the cultural production of the Near East. I explore their treatments of art-workers, patrons, and viewers. I investigate how they approach what we now call period style, personal style, cultural style, and the environment. I note how they contextualize sculpture within both artistic production and historical periods. And I consider how they treat Greek sculpture within discussions of cultures both in and outside the Greek-speaking world.

Threads of Influence: Neo-Assyrian Textile Motifs in Greek Pottery

Alexa O'Day (University of Iowa)

The iconographic shift during the Greek Orientalizing period (c. 8th-7th century BCE) is widely attributed to cross-cultural exchange between Near Eastern craftspeople and the Greek consumer. Piotr Bienkowski and Alan Millard have convincingly argued that the stylized floral palm tree seen in Greek pottery has derived from the Mesopotamian sacred tree; while this connection between Mesopotamia and Greece is well-documented, it hasn't accounted for other designs which share similar roots. My research seeks to reunite wild goat and tassel iconography with the modus of Greek entry, recontextualizing the Greek Orientalizing style and clarifying the modus of entry for these Eastern elements. In my paper, I explore the Assyrian roots of other orientalizing period motifs in Greek ceramics, focusing on the wild goats of Rhodes and the tassel on the New York Nessos Amphora, arguing that textiles are the specific medium of transmission from Assyrian art to Greek ceramics. Evidence for this shift appears in the Steward's Archive at Aššur, where trade inventories describe textiles decorated with "stumbling ibex". This motif directly mirrors the wild goat style found on the Rhodian Jug among others. Additionally, palatial reliefs from Nineveh depict tripartite fringe lining the hems of Assyrian garments. A similar row of tassels encircles the base of the New York Nessos Amphora: a detail notably omitted by the connoisseur John Beazley. Ultimately, this paper suggests that the portability of textiles, corroborated by archival and sculptural records, demonstrates that these motifs emerged from Assyria's trade with the markets of Rhodes and Athens.

Encountering Visually Elusive Garment Imagery in the Northwest Palace Sculpture

Avary R. Taylor (Yale University)

Viewing the wall reliefs in ancient Assyrian palaces was an embodied, kinetic process. This was especially true when engaging with visually intricate details with imperfect visibility. The Northwest Palace at Nimrud, Iraq, offers a compelling case. Its reliefs, dominated by formulaic, larger-

than-life images of the king, supernatural beings, and attendants, formed a tightly controlled and ideologically saturated visual program. Unexpected and easily missed, however, are the minute embellishments incised into these figures' garments. Strikingly different in scale, content, and creative flexibility, these details reward close looking while simultaneously frustrating it. This talk argues that these complex and difficult-to-see embellishments demanded effortful bodily engagement—bending, leaning, reorienting—transforming passive viewers into active participants. Yet the same conditions that invited close looking also discouraged sustained attention, rendering such encounters brief, distracted, and unfinished. I suggest that the power of these encounters lies in their incompletion.

Ornament as Evidence: Reconstructing the Mosaic Industry of the Near East

Ana Silkatcheva (University of Oxford)

Geometric patterns are ubiquitous on floor mosaics all over the Greco-Roman world. Their analysis, however, remains a niche topic, passed over in favor of more accessible figural imagery. This is not least true for the mosaics of the Near East, where even basic recording and identification of patterns on individual mosaics remains a desideratum. Meanwhile, work elsewhere in the discipline of mosaic studies has identified that specificity of certain patterns may stand as a proxy for the 'signature' of groups of mosaicists. Applying this principle to a regional corpus might then permit us to trace the movements of mosaicists across space and to understand directions of knowledge transmission through time. Until now this has remained untested. This paper discusses the process and results of a PhD project that implements this approach for the mosaics of the Near East. After collating evidence of all known mosaics across the countries of Syria, Lebanon, Israel/Palestine and Jordan and resolving methodological and theoretical obstacles to working with patterns, the project has mapped the distribution of every geometric pattern on every mosaic across the region, from the Hellenistic to the Islamic period. As a result, the project has achieved a fine-grained understanding of the development of the mosaic industry through time and across the region. Patterns argue against a continuity between the Roman and Byzantine periods and for an identification of both large and small geographic clusters of mosaic practice in the Byzantine period. Analysis also indicates the origins of mosaicists working under Muslim rulers.

8F. Dwelling in Past: Scales of Settlement, Time, and Society in Anatolia III (Williford A)

Chair(s): N. İlgi Gerçek, Bilkent University; Müge Durusu-Tanrıöver, Temple University

Adaptive Settlement Patterns in the Pre-Roman and Roman Cilicia

Cem Almurat (Bryn Mawr College)

From the late second century BCE onwards, the establishment of Roman hegemony in Anatolia was a gradual process that required a variety of policies and methods to integrate different regions and local societies. This phenomenon triggered adaptations and significant changes in settlement patterns in the Anatolian countryside, as new sophisticated urban centers under Roman rule offered greater economic opportunities, safety, and access to a broader range of services. Since the relationship between cities and their countryside is reciprocal, this situation led to the gradual occupation of the countryside, the systematic exploitation of environmental and agricultural resources, and the opening of these regions to broader markets through road networks. In this frame, this study aims to examine the integration of Cilicia (modern-day Southern Turkey) into the Roman Empire as a province, through the urban development of Cilician cities and their impact on the settlement patterns in the Cilician countryside. The reciprocal relationships between rural settlements and cities in Cilicia will be examined with a comparative approach from the pre-Roman to Roman era, by synthesizing the results of diverse archaeological field surveys conducted over the last two decades with the available archaeological data from selected Cilician settlements offering continuous occupation, specifically Tarsus, Anazarbus, and Elaiussa Sebaste. Consequently, the initial reaction of Cilician societies to Roman rule, in terms of urban development and rural life, will be conceptualized as an "adaptation" of previous settlement patterns with a gradual expansion of occupation in the countryside, rather than a complete overhaul by the Romans.

When the Port Lit Up: Railways, Gasworks, and the Making of Night in Modernizing Izmir

Elvan Cobb (Hong Kong Baptist University)

*Virtual

In the second half of the nineteenth century, the Ottoman port of Izmir was refashioned as a modern city, and the night no longer kept its old boundaries. As quays were rebuilt and rail lines bound the harbor to the interior, the after-dark city took on new rhythms under gaslight and railway time. This paper situates the illumination of Izmir's night within that broader transformation, framing railways and gasworks as emblematic infrastructures through which technological networks materially and socially produced a modern urban night. Tracing the rollout of gas lighting from the waterfront and commercial arteries to station districts and select neighborhoods, it shows how illumination and railway timetables reorganized temporal regimes and, in turn, reshaped everyday routines and ways of inhabiting the city after dark. Drawing on concession contracts, Ottoman- and non-Ottoman newspapers, travelogues, maps, and photographs, this paper maps the uneven geography of this nocturnalization. Its glow concentrated along quays and in commercial and Levantine quarters, spread more slowly into other neighborhoods, and produced differentiated access across class, gender, and community. Treating the city as an active, inhabited environment, this paper shows that making the night was central to Izmir's project of urban modernity and contributes to comparative debates on how nineteenth-century Anatolian towns and cities fashioned the night as a social landscape.

Adapted Eclecticism: Italians in the History of Late Ottoman-Egyptian Architecture

Ryan J. Mitchell (Temple University, Tyler School of Art and Architecture)

* Virtual

Mehmed Ali's nearly forty-year reign as Ottoman governor of Egypt from 1805 until his death in 1849 profoundly transformed the province's visual and architectural culture, which were critical tools in his modernizing initiatives that allowed Egypt to emerge as Istanbul's primary opponent in cultural, aesthetic, and political arenas until the end of the Ottoman Empire in 1922. The executors of this visual transformation hailed both from Egypt and locales across the Mediterranean, many emigrating from the Italian peninsula. This talk examines the role of Italian professionals in Mehmed Ali's building activities across the Eastern Mediterranean, as well as the social milieux that they developed in Cairo and Alexandria. My analysis explores Italian influence over the design and execution of religious structures, palaces, industrial buildings, infrastructural projects, and institutions such as hospitals and school under Mehmed Ali's auspices. The presentation aims to contextualize institutions such as Alexandria's Commissione d'Ornato (Board of Works) and designers working between coastal Egyptian cities and Cairo, highlighting the understudied relationship between the broader fields of late Ottoman-Islamic architectural history and the Italian peninsula before Italian unification in 1861. This analysis further reveals the entangled, extractive antiquarian interests of Italians in early nineteenth century Egypt, how impressions of the ancient world in the late Ottoman period influenced Egypt's visual transformations, and the as yet unexplored bonds between Mehmed Ali, his royal descendants, and Italy—bonds reinforced through architecture and cultural initiatives between the Italian fascist government and the Egyptian royal family in the early twentieth century.

Making Islam(ic) Heritage: Urban Encounters Between People, Stories, and Landscapes in 20th Century Eyüp

Timur Hammond (Syracuse University)

*Virtual

This paper focuses on the Eyüp, a district of Istanbul, Türkiye. Widely acknowledged to be one of the city's most important Muslim devotional sites and simultaneously home to a dense cluster of mosques, medreses, tekkes, cemeteries, and other religious buildings, Eyüp's 'Islamic' character of the neighborhood is often assumed to be fixed and unchanging. In contrast, this paper argues that Eyüp's landscapes have been made Islamic in particular times and places. I challenge reductive and essentialist accounts of 'traditional Islam' and show how the process of making Eyüp

Islamic has been embedded within broader institutional and individual histories. In the process, my local, place-based history provides a point of entry into a wider discussion of how Islamic heritage has been defined and mobilized. To support this argument, I focus on two periods: The 1920s and the 1990s. Such a perspective helps us understand the changing environments of Islamic heritage while also emphasizing the powerful continuities at work in Eyüp's Muslim and Islamic identities.

8G. Ancient Inscriptions II (Williford B)

Chair(s): Andrew Burlingame, Wheaton College; Jana Matuszak, University of Chicago

Preliminary Observations on New Epigraphic Discoveries at Tell Atchana (Alalakh): Cuneiform Tablets from the 2025 Excavations

Zeynep Türker (Johns Hopkins Universitty), Jacob Lauinger (Johns Hopkins University)

Cuneiform tablets from Late Bronze Age Alalakh (Tell Atchana, Hatay, Türkiye) provide important insights into the political, economic, and administrative organization of the region. While earlier discoveries, primarily from Sir Leonard Woolley's excavations in the 1930s and 1940s, established the existence of a well-documented local administration, recent excavations have begun to expand this corpus with new epigraphic material. During the 2024 excavation season, several new tablets were discovered, including a group of four tablets recovered during cleaning and stabilization work in the southern part of the Palace-Castle Complex. These tablets were found in a heavily burnt deposit sealed beneath the later Hittite Fortress phase in an area that had not previously been excavated. Their discovery prompted targeted excavation of the surrounding area in 2025, which resulted in the recovery of approximately two dozen additional tablets. At the same time, excavations in the Level IV palace area yielded several further tablets. This paper presents an overview of the cuneiform tablets recovered during the 2025 excavations, examining their contents and archaeological contexts and discussing their contribution to our understanding of the organization of local administration at the Late Bronze Age Alalakh.

News from the Archives – An Update on the Work on Old Babylonian Letters

Nicholas Reid (RTS Orlando), Klaus Wagensonner (Yale University)

The Siegfried H. Horn Museum, also known as the Horn Archaeological Museum, is part of the Institute of Archaeology at Andrews University in Berrien Springs, Michigan. It holds a substantial collection of cuneiform artifacts. About 80 of them are Old Babylonian letters. Through archival and prosopographical research, the places of origin of many of these letters can be established. The talk will be a progress report on work being done on the extant letters.

Fragments of Hammurabis Code

Hanan Hamza (Ministry of Culture, Tourism, and Antiquities; State Board of Antiquities and Heritage, Iraq)

The Code of Hammurabi was not the first law code that came to us from the Mesopotamian civilization. It was preceded by various legislations, such as the Urukagina reforms in 2355 BC, the legislation of Urnammu in 2111 BC, the legislation of Lipit-Ishtar (r. 1934-1924 BC), and the legislation of Eshnunna. However, this law collection is truly considered the first organized legal work that addressed areas of ancient Babylonian society to protect the weak. The Code of Hammurabi, currently displayed in the Louvre Museum, was discovered by a French expedition that excavated in Susa, located in southwestern Iran, under the leadership of the French scholar Scheil in 1901-1902. They also found a group of nine fragments of black diorite stone alongside the original obelisk dating back to a second copy of the Hammurabi stele. It is possible that the original stele was placed in the Temple of Esagila, the temple of the god Marduk in Babylon, and a second copy was placed in the temple of the god Shamash in the city of Sippar, like the rest of the major ancient Iraqi cities, which were equipped with copies of the Code of Hammurabi. This paper studies the provenience of the fragments and how they entered the museum, while also analyzing the legal provisions preserved on the fragments and their relation to the better-preserved stele.

Ashurbanipal's Royal Inscriptions and the Beginnings of Biblical Historiography

Nikita Artemov (Ruhr University Bochum)

*Virtual

As a genre of cuneiform literature, Assyrian royal inscriptions experienced significant transformations during the reigns of Esarhaddon and Ashurbanipal. The innovations include (1) the introduction of non-royal agents; (2) the inclusion of narrative elements which do not describe military events but rather physical condition, moral qualities, or reactions of the protagonists or supply the listener with additional information helping to both "contextualize" the described events and make them more vivid and emotionally appealing to the audience; (3) the inclusion of religious acts and experiences such as prayers, omens, and prophetic dreams into the narrative, turning the gods into actors interfering into human affairs and acting as divine patrons of the Assyrian king and his rule; (4) theological interpretation of history, especially, explaining military defeats or other catastrophes that befell Assyria's enemies or rebellious vassals as divine punishment for oath-breakers; (5) increased use of words for body parts highlighting the personal aspects of relationships and the agent's involvement in the events. These new features can be seen both as innovations integrating elements from other literary genres (such as royal epics, literary "letters" to deities, and prophecies) and as a continuation of the tendency toward the literarization of royal inscriptions which becomes increasingly manifest since Tiglath-pileser III and Sargon II. The reconfiguration of royal inscriptions under the last Sargonid kings was accompanied by an increased interest in the past. It may be speculated that the flourishing of historical literature in the 7th century Mesopotamia impacted the formation of Biblical historiography.

8H. The Sampling Trilemma: Balancing Conservation, Curation, and Research (Workshop) (Williford C)

Chair(s): Anna Eirich, Israel Antiquities Authority; Adrienne Ganor, Israel Antiquities Authority; Erez Ben-Yosef, Tel Aviv University

Why Adding Destructive Sampling to Artifacts' Biographies Should Be Encouraged

Erez Ben-Yosef (Tel Aviv University)

Progress in the archaeological sciences increasingly relies on destructive or semi-destructive sampling of artifacts. Although such practices often raise concerns regarding conservation and collection stewardship, they frequently yield information that cannot be obtained through non-invasive approaches. Drawing on case studies from recent archaeometallurgical and archaeomagnetic research, this paper argues that carefully designed sampling strategies produce disproportionately large scientific returns and should be considered an essential component of responsible archaeological research rather than a threat to cultural heritage. It further demonstrates that the information derived from such analyses can directly benefit conservation and curatorial strategies, while modern documentation and reconstruction technologies can largely compensate for physical loss, even to the point of visual indistinguishability. At the same time, it is argued that the traces of sampling are better left visible: rather than being treated as damage to be concealed, they should be recognized as part of the artifact's biography, reflecting the ongoing scientific investigation that enriches the story it has to tell.

Cutting into the Past: Curatorial Perspectives on Sampling Objects of Museological Value

Debora Ben-Ami (Israel Antiquities Authority), Anna Eirikh Rose (Israel Antiquities Authority)

The Sampling Trilemma: Balancing Conservation, Curation, and Research Workshop Scientific sampling is essential to archaeological research, yet it poses significant challenges for curators tasked with the long-term preservation of national collections. This lecture examines the tension between research-driven sampling and curatorial stewardship, focusing on the Israel Antiquities Authority's National Treasures collection. A central issue is the evolving status of artifacts. During excavation, sampling is primarily motivated by research objectives. Once objects are registered within national collections, they are governed by preservation, exhibition,

and heritage management requirements. This transition frequently generates tensions, especially for high-value artifacts, between research imperatives and curatorial responsibilities. Drawing on my curatorial experience at the IAA National Treasures, this lecture explores how curators navigate sampling decisions in the absence of established ethical protocols, emphasizing the need for comprehensive ethical decision-making frameworks. The discussion includes case studies from the National Treasures collections, representing diverse materials and research questions associated with sampling requests. These examples illustrate various strategies and solutions adopted in practice, reflecting the negotiation among scientific objectives, conservation priorities, and curatorial responsibilities. Additionally, we present cases in which objects were sampled prior to their transfer into national collections, demonstrating the challenges and inconsistencies that arise when standardized procedures or shared ethical guidelines are lacking.

Sampling Archaeological Artifacts: Let's Talk About It and Reduce Tensions Between Researchers, Curators and Conservators

Adrienne Ganor (Israel Antiquities Authority)

Scientific sampling of archaeological artifacts has become an essential tool for advancing archaeological research. Methods such as compositional analysis, dating techniques, residue analysis, and material characterization often require the removal of small samples from complete artifacts. While these analyses can significantly expand our knowledge of ancient technologies, trade networks, and cultural practices, they also raise important ethical and professional concerns regarding the preservation and integrity of cultural heritage. This presentation addresses the tension that sometimes arises between researchers seeking analytical samples and conservators responsible for safeguarding artifacts for future generations. The differing priorities of research advancement and long-term preservation can lead to hesitation, misunderstandings, or conflict in the decision-making process. Drawing on practical experience in archaeological collections and conservation practice, the lecture explores key questions: When is sampling justified? How can risks to artifacts be minimized? What role do conservators and curators play in evaluating and supervising sampling procedures? And how can institutions develop transparent policies that balance research needs with conservation responsibilities? The talk presents case studies illustrating both successful collaborations and challenging situations involving researchers, conservators, curators, and heritage authorities, including institutions such as the Israel Antiquities Authority. These examples highlight the importance of early dialogue, shared responsibility, and clear professional guidelines when planning analytical sampling. Ultimately, the presentation advocates a collaborative framework in which archaeologists, scientists, conservators, and curators work together to ensure that sampling is conducted ethically, thoughtfully, and with minimal impact on the artifacts entrusted to our care.

Sampling Strategies for Mandate-Period Legacy and Museum Collections

Melissa S. Cradic (Bade Museum of Archaeology, Pacific School of Religion; University at Albany, SUNY; Alexandria Archive Institute/Open Context)

The Badè Museum of Archaeology at Pacific School of Religion stewards an extensive legacy collection of ca. 4,000 historical photographs, 12,000 archival records, and 6,000 archaeological artifacts excavated from the site of Tell en-Naṣbeh (Ramallah, Palestine). These collections and records were created during the excavations undertaken at the multi-period site by William F. Badè on behalf of the Pacific School of Religion in Berkeley, CA between 1926-1935. Badè established the Museum as a center to house, research, and teach with archaeological material that he excavated from Naṣbeh. In order to stay true to its original mission, museum staff handle regular research, visit, and teaching requests involving the collection, requiring a chain of decision-making around access and use of the materials. This talk will review the Museum's current policies around research, scientific sampling, and nondestructive techniques. Through a brief case-study focusing on the Iron Age materials—which have historically attracted the greatest amount of scholarly interest—it argues that nondestructive or minimally invasive sampling and new imaging techniques are often the best path for balancing conservation concerns, long-term curatorial strategies and responsibilities, and research practice in the field for legacy and museum collections.

Balancing Preservation and Research Potential when Considering Destructive Sampling for Accessioned Collections: Ethical Considerations and Policy Guidance from a Professional Conservator

Suzanne L. Davis (University of Michigan)

Art museums and many other types of collections repositories are justifiably cautious about approving requests for destructive or semi-destructive (micro-) analysis, even when these analyses can contribute substantially to research goals and knowledge production. After all, once samples are removed for testing, they cannot be returned, and materials that are the subject of perennial research interest may be requested for destructive testing many times, as scientific techniques advance and scholars develop new questions. As a conservator who has worked with field- and collections-based research projects for more than a quarter century, my advice to curators and collections stewards often represents the more conservative side of the "sampling trilemma." Yet destructive testing can be warranted and worthwhile. My talk will examine how conservation and archaeology professional associations address destructive testing in their ethical codes, and it will discuss how institutions can create values-based policies to guide their decision making on this important question. Sample policies, guiding questions, and—if time allows—brief case studies will be presented.

8I. History of Archaeology I (Astoria)

Chair(s): Leticia R. Rodriguez, University of Houston; Caitlin Clerkin, Harvard Art Museums

Excavating the MFA Egyptian Expedition Archives

Brooke E. Norton (MFA Boston & Bade Museum)

The Museum of Fine Arts, Boston is home to several archaeological archives, one of which is the extensive excavation archive of the Harvard University-Museum of Fine Arts Expedition, which was directed by George Andrew Reisner. For the past seven years undergraduate student interns in the department of Art of Ancient Egypt, Nubia, and the Near East have worked together with museum staff on a digitization project seeking to digitize field notebooks and tomb cards recorded by Reisner's team over four decades. This vital work by our interns makes the archives more accessible to students and scholars and expands the type of research questions scholars can interrogate. As an example of the kind of work made possible by this digitization, this presentation highlights my own work investigating the individuals who worked with Reisner throughout his career and mapping out the Egyptian work force to understand the people who were integral to the excavations but who may have gone unnoticed in texts describing the history of archaeology of this region.

Labor, Precarity, and the Archaeological Archive

Kathleen Garland (Harvard University)

Previous studies of archaeological labor have highlighted the importance of theorizing and describing labor relations for our understanding of the historical development of archaeological practice; they have also demonstrated how archaeological labor relations are often embedded within and articulated through gendered, racialized, and colonial relations of power (Doyon 2018; Holley-Kline and Mickel 2024; Mickel 2021; Quirke 2011). This paper aims to develop the concept of precarity in the context of archaeological labor. Based on archival research undertaken at the Penn Museum, I use case studies from the Museum's early twentieth-century Cyprus Expedition (excavations at Lapithos, 1931-1932, and Kourion, 1934-1953) to explore how funding structures and the economic shocks of the 1930s contributed to precarity for academic workers in the United States, as well as the local laborers who made up the bulk of the workforce in the field. Precarity was most acutely felt by those already inhabiting marginalized identities, and had serious and detrimental impacts on the lives of professional archaeologists and archaeological laborers; but it also affected the archaeological knowledge they produced. Drawings, photographs, and field notes—even recovered artifacts—might also enter into a state of precarious existence. Such was the case with the Lapithos excavations, where the data waited nearly a century for Stella Diakou's (2018) "rescue excavation" of the archived materials. These histories of precarity and its effects are especially salient today, when, in the wake of

federal funding cuts, geopolitical crises, and the widespread adoption of genAI, we find ourselves in increasingly uncertain terrain.

"Said to Be from Antinoë": Provenance, Dispersal, and the Colonial Afterlives of Excavation

Lissette M. Jiménez (San Francisco State University)

In 1914, Albert Gayet described Antinoë as "forgotten and ignored," presenting his excavations as an act of recovery. This paper argues that this language of rediscovery was tied to the colonial structures that shaped the site's archaeological and museum afterlives. Drawing on Gayet's publications, correspondence, and early twentieth-century museum inventories, I examine how burial assemblages were divided under the French partage system among the Louvre, the Musée Guimet, provincial museums, and private donors. Textiles were cut, mounted, redistributed, and at times relabeled, while in other cases they remained attached to mummified bodies that were themselves dispersed. Together these practices produced the recurring archival notation "said to be from Antinoë." This instability of provenance was structural rather than accidental. It reflects the priorities of colonial archaeology: excavation staged as spectacle, objects circulated as institutional and diplomatic capital, and documentation often secondary to exhibition and distribution. Gayet's framing of Antinoë as the revelation of a "Greco-Oriental" civilization further encouraged the separation of objects from their burial contexts and their reassignment within emerging art-historical categories later grouped under the label "Greco-Roman" or "Romano-Egyptian." By foregrounding provenance fragmentation and rhetorical framing together, this paper situates Antinoë within the history of archaeology as a case in which excavation, classification, and museum practice produced both knowledge and fragmentation. Rather than a forgotten city rediscovered, Antinoë emerges as a site reconstructed through colonial infrastructures of extraction and display.

8J. Archaeology of Cyprus II (Private Dining 2)

Chair(s): Kevin Fisher, University of British Columbia; Catherine Kearns, University of Chicago

Still Looking for those Cypriot Neandertals!

Alan Simmons (University of Nevada, Las Vegas/Desert Research Institute, Reno)

For many years, the earliest human presence on Cyprus was from the Neolithic, despite unverified claims for much earlier materials that could have included pre-homo sapiens, such as Neandertals. Although Akrotiri Aetokremnos shattered this "Neolithic barrier," it only dates to the Epipaleolithic at around 10,000 BC. Thus it did little to establish an actual Paleolithic presence. Documenting early sites is difficult, since these often are unstratified surface manifestations, contain limited intact deposits and diagnostic artifacts, and usually lack materials that can be absolutely dated. Despite these challenges, progress is being made on several Mediterranean islands, where careful studies indicate that Middle Paleolithic humans were present. Sadly, Cyprus is not one of these. But this has not stopped claims for earlier material, despite poorly founded archaeological evidence. Most commonly invoked are Middle Paleolithic Neandertals, although there also have been arguments for even earlier Lower Paleolithic materials. One such recent allegation suggests both periods from one site. It comes from a palimpsest locality where Acheulo-Yabrudian and Middle Paleolithic occupations are proposed, based on presumed artifacts indicative of these periods. But the materials presented are largely unconvincing, as is a conference presentation that seems very AI-like. It is not my intention to disparage research into the pre-Neolithic of Cyprus. Indeed, much of my work deals exactly with this. But, given that even a well-documented site such as Aetokremnos continues to generate controversy, extreme caution must be exercised before materials that are not well-substantiated with rigid Paleolithic protocols enter into the published record.

Lithic Landscapes: Coastal and Mountain Occupations in Cyprus' Hunter-Gatherer Past

Danielle Macdonald (The University of Tulsa), Lisa Maher (University of California, Berkeley), Bri Jones (University of California, Berkeley)

Pre-Neolithic occupations in Cyprus remain rare but are increasingly documented through recent fieldwork. The Ancient Seafaring Explorers of Cyprus (ASEC) Project has expanded the corpus of known Epipalaeolithic sites through survey and targeted excavation near Agios Theodoros in the Larnaca District. Work conducted in 2018, 2019, and 2023 identified multiple sites in the Tremithos Valley and Mazotos-Petounta area, where lithic assemblages—particularly diagnostic cores and thumbnail scrapers—closely resemble material from Akrotiri Aetokremnos, dated to ca. 12,000 cal BP. These parallels suggest that the Mazotos sites belong to the Akrotiri Phase, despite challenges in precise chronological placement. These findings support a model of sparse, small-scale Epipalaeolithic activity by early seafaring groups experimenting with new island environments. Building on earlier coastal research, the 2025 ASEC field season shifted inland to investigate landscape connectivity and mobility. Pedestrian survey in the Pentaschoinos River Valley identified alluvial terraces with intact paleosols and dense lithic scatters, including diagnostic Epipalaeolithic material. These results suggest that early exploratory activity extended beyond initial landfall zones into interior landscapes, potentially marking pathways, resource use strategies, and emerging settlement patterns. This research contributes to a more nuanced understanding of early human movement, landscape use, and the processes of initial island colonization in Cyprus.

Shaping Power: Water Management and Access in Late Bronze Age Cyprus

Madeline Topor (University of British Columbia)

Water management played a significant role in the development of urban settlements in the arid environment of Late Bronze Age (LBA) Cyprus, where water was essential for food and craft production. Although the presence of water management infrastructure has been acknowledged in previous studies, infrastructure has not been considered alongside its relationship to access, power, and monumentalization more broadly. This study takes a multi-scalar approach to investigate water as a political, economic, and social resource through an analysis of water management infrastructure within LBA urban environments. Using published data and excavation plans, water management infrastructure is analyzed in relation to the overall architecture and layout of urban settlements, including Kalavasos Ayios Dhimitrios and Alassa Paliotaverna. I conduct architectural and spatial analyses to examine the accessibility of specific water management infrastructure and its potential for affecting social interaction. Results from these analyses suggest that the presence, location, and use of water management infrastructure was often associated with monumental public buildings as a resource whose access could be highly controlled. This indicates that access to water and its integration within processes of monumentalization was important for structuring relationships of power.. Through an architectural and spatial analysis of water management infrastructure in relation to the surrounding urban environment, this study shows how water access shaped patterns of interaction, resource use, and settlement organization across LBA sites. This approach demonstrates the importance of understanding both water as a resource and water management infrastructure in shaping the development of power and monumentalization.

Masons' Marks and the Organization of Local Stone Construction in Greco-Roman Cyprus

Anna Kordas (University of Warsaw)

Recent scholarship has significantly advanced the study of ancient quarrying and stone artifacts through petrographic analyses, stylistic studies, and the examination of tool traces, inscriptions, and masons' marks. These approaches have greatly improved our understanding of extraction techniques, raw material provenance, and the organization of stone production in the Mediterranean. However, research has largely focused on marble artifacts associated with long-distance trade, while monuments constructed from local stone remain comparatively understudied. Cyprus offers a particularly valuable case for addressing this imbalance. Numerous monuments across the island preserve masons' marks, yet these have never been examined systematically. This paper presents preliminary results from my doctoral research project, which involved direct study of mostly unpublished material. At the same time, the island's insular character and its role within Mediterranean maritime networks make it an important setting for exploring the circulation of

materials, technical knowledge, and craftsmen. Notably, during the first two centuries of the Roman Empire, public architecture on Cyprus was constructed exclusively from local stone, as marble resources were not exploited on the island in antiquity. This paper offers new observations based on masons' marks recorded on architectural elements from several Cypriot sites, including Nea Paphos, Palaipaphos, Geronissos, Kourion, Latsithkia, and Amathus. Through comparative analysis, the study explores the organization of construction processes, the identification of stonecutters' workshops, and the possible mobility of craftsmen, while assessing whether Cypriot marking systems reflect local traditions, regional practices, or wider eastern Mediterranean connections.

Cyprus, Mercenaries, and pre-Hellenistic Egyptian Coinage: Reconsidering a "Kition" Bronze Issue

Thomas Landvatter (Reed College)

This paper examines the development of Cypriot-Egyptian connections in the 4th century BCE through coinage, and in particular through the lens of one particular bronze coin issue. This coin features, on the obverse, a lion striding left with a ram's head above; and, on the reverse, a horse striding left with a star above and a sign of Tanit in the left field. Based on the issue's imagery and the findspots of many excavated examples, these coins have been attributed to Kition in Cyprus. However, underwater excavations at Thonis-Heracleion revealed more than 200 examples of this issue, dwarfing the number of examples found elsewhere. Since bronze coins usually do not circulate far from their place of manufacture, the large-scale presence of these coins at Thonis-Heracleion raises significant questions. This paper will discuss the corpus of these coins, including finds from Thonis-Heracleion and Naukratis in Egypt, as well as Kition and the early-Hellenistic fortified of Pyla-Vigla in Cyprus, while examining different possibilities for the issue's ultimate origin. Their presence at Pyla-Vigla, where bronze coins are almost certainly being used by mercenaries, is particularly important. This paper will ultimately argue that these "Kition" issues have, if not an Egyptian origin, considerable Egyptian connotations, and are indicative of the significant movement of people and mercenaries between Egypt and Cyprus in the 4th century BCE.

9A. Africa in the Ancient World I (Continental A)

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

Archaeology and Community Building in Wartime (and After): Community Engagement around Jebel Barkal, Sudan 2023-2026

Sami M. Elamin (National Corporation for Antiquities and Museums, Sudan), Geoff Emberling (Kelsey Museum of Archaeology, University of Michigan), Anawar Mohamed (Department of Anthropology, Purdue University)

*Virtual

While archaeological excavation and bioarchaeological analysis have the potential to identify identities in the past, community engagement practices through archaeology can contribute significantly to community building in the present. In Sudan, identity and community have been threatened by a war that began in 2023 and continues today. Within the first months of the conflict, refugees fleeing active combat in the capital region of Khartoum settled in safer regions, including the area around Jebel Barkal on the Nile River in northern Sudan, where a joint project of the University of Michigan and Sudan's antiquities service (the National Corporation for Antiquities and Museums) had been working. Sudan is an ethnically and linguistically diverse country, and the arrival of a huge influx of refugees—by some estimates three times as many people as had lived in the area before the war—posed challenges for site management and also opportunities and imperatives for the project to connect both with local residents and with refugees. This talk summarizes our project's efforts, which have included events for schoolchildren, university students, community members; training of a group of archaeology students from the local university to be site guides; and addressing issues including construction of new houses, driving vehicles on the site, and dumping trash. These efforts have been led by Sami Elamin, the only member of our team who has lived at the site throughout the conflict but supported by other team members.

Living Heritage and the Archaeology of Identity: Community, Memory, and Continuity in Northern Sudan

Jenail Marshall (William Leo Hansberry Society)

This paper examines how identity and community are constituted and sustained through time in northern Sudan, drawing on archaeological and ethnographic research in the Sudan. While studies of ancient northeast Africa have often approached identity through material culture and mortuary practices, this research extends those approaches by examining how Sudanese archaeologists and local communities engage the archaeological past as part of ongoing processes of identity formation. Focusing on sites in the Tombos region and surrounding areas, I explore how relationships to ancient landscapes, burial grounds, and heritage practices are not simply reflections of the past, but ongoing engagements that shape how identity is understood and enacted in the present. Oral histories, site stewardship practices, and local interpretations of archaeological remains reveal forms of continuity that exceed standard archaeological frameworks yet remain central to how communities situate themselves within the deep histories of Sudan and the Nile Valley. At stake is not only how identity is reconstructed, but how "community" itself is defined within archaeological practice. In many African contexts, community is not bounded, static, or external to the site, but relational, historically entangled, and continuously produced. This paper argues that archaeology must expand its understanding of community accordingly. By bringing archaeological interpretation into conversation with lived engagements, it demonstrates how identity is not only evidenced through the material record, but sustained through practices of memory, care, and responsibility. In doing so, it repositions archaeology as a participant in rather than an observer of ongoing formations of identity and community.

My Journey to Nobiin: The Language of Nubia

Rosetta Cash (William Leo Hansberry Society)

Language plays an essential and vital role in the culture of a people. I will share how my journey to the study of the Nubian language Nobiin (a language spoken in the Sudan) reinforced the importance of language, its importance to the people and to the preservation of their culture. I will relay what I have learned because of my studies exploring the contemporary as well as the historical aspects of the language.

Communicating Identity through Body Modification in the Nile Valley

Anne Austin (University of Missouri - St. Louis)

This paper considers how evolving body modification practices evidenced in the Nile Valley can communicate identity. Body modification practices are often considered public and permanent ways that people can display a variety of identities including communal or ethnic affiliation, profession, life stages, and gender. Tattooing is one body modification documented in human remains from over 50 individuals across the Nile Valley, spanning from ca. 3000 BCE to 1000 CE. Additionally, artistic depictions of tattooed individuals also provide evidence of the practice. In this paper, I will present a new approach to assess under what circumstances tattoos could act as communicators of identity. Building on proxemics theory—the culturally normalized patterns of interpersonal space—and viewshed analysis, I treat the body as a dynamic landscape with body modifications acting as features whose visibility varies based on cultural, temporal, and social context. Factors like clothing, movement, and interpersonal distance further refine when tattoos become visible and identifiable. Using case studies from Deir el-Medina (ancient Egypt) and Kulubnarti (ancient Sudan), I assess where, to what extent, and how tattoos could communicate identity to multiple observers. Although this paper primarily focuses on tattooing, this approach can be applied to other forms of body modification and adornment, enabling the integration of permanent and temporary ways of dressing the body when describing past identity formation practices.

9B. Archaeology of Arabia I (Continental B)

Chair(s): Jennifer Swerida, University of Pennsylvania

Reimagining the Neolithic of Southeast Arabia: Results from the Second Season of the HERDS Project in Al Khashbah, Oman

Lucas Proctor (Dartmouth College), Maria Pia Maiorano (Czech Academy of Sciences), Jakez Moreau (Paul Valery University of Montpellier), Fadhiah Abu Ghrieganah (University of Brno), Joseph Harris (University of Chicago), Rayyan Al Kiyumi (Bait Al Zubair Museum), Elena Maini (Sapienza University of Rome), William Maughan (Utah State University), Paige Paulsen (Dartmouth College), Brooklyn Warner (Utah State University)

Archaeological survey and excavation conducted during the second field campaign 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 area of north-central Oman. The KHS complex of Neolithic sites, located 4 km east of the modern oasis of Al Khashbah, consists of lithic procurement sites and surface stone alignments and lithic scatters on relict terraces overlooking the wadi. The largest identified site in the complex, KHS-A, covers an area of nearly ten hectares and documents the repeated, temporary inhabitation of the site by mobile communities throughout the 6th–4th millennia BCE. Multiple phases of preserved hearths are associated with evidence for onsite tool and bead production, as well as food processing activities. Meanwhile, the identification of non-local raw materials and mangrove wood provide information on the role of long-distance mobility in Neolithic lifeways. Following a summary of fieldwork activities and major finds from the 2025 field campaign, the KHS complex and the area of Sufrat Al Khashbah as a whole will be contextualized as an important persistent place structuring lifeways in north central Oman throughout the Holocene. Results from the KHS-A site, in particular, suggests that the area held a particularly

meaningful place in the social, economic, and perhaps ideological foundations of Neolithic communities in north-central Oman.

In the Heat of the Night: Thermal Imaging Reveals Extensive Subsurface Features at Neolithic Al Khashbah, Oman

Paige Paulsen (Dartmouth College), Lucas Proctor (Dartmouth College), Joseph Harris (University of Chicago), Wajd Al Zakwani (Sultan Qaboos University), Rayyan Al Kiyumi (Bait Al Zubair Museum), Jakez Moreau (Paul Valery University of Montpellier), Maria Pia Miaorano (Czech Academy of Sciences)

In this presentation we report on a novel application of thermographic prospection for the identification of subsurface fire features at a Neolithic campsite located in north-central Oman. Recent work by the Human Environmental Resilience and Desert Subsistence in Neolithic Oman (HERDS iN Oman) project has identified a large complex of Neolithic sites in the Wadi Samad near the modern oasis of Al Khashbah. The largest and densest Neolithic occupation in the area is at the sites of KHS-A and KHS-B, where repeated, temporary occupations on top of a relict Pleistocene terrace between the 6th and 4th millennia BCE have produced a landscape marked by shallowly stratified hearth features among other material culture. A thermal imagery survey of the main terrace area of these sites has provided a detailed view of subsurface stone features, allowing estimates of occupation and the recognition of widespread arrangements of hearth features likely to date to the Neolithic. Following the mapping of these features, we conducted targeted test excavations to ground truth a prominent subcircular arrangement of thermal anomalies, confirming them as hearths and providing chronological evidence. These results demonstrate the potential of thermal imaging in arid environments like Southeast Arabia for archaeological documentation of spatially extensive but ephemeral sites. They allow a broader description of the spatial organization of the site, raise opportunities for quantifying repeated use, and suggest information about social aspects of mobile, Neolithic lifeways.

The Archaeological Landscape of Jabal Tadhraʿ: Exploring Northwest Arabia's Volcanic Hinterland

Jacob Dunn (Independent Researcher)

This paper presents the author's preliminary archaeological assessment of the landscape surrounding Jabal Tadhraʿ, a basalt-capped Cambrian sandstone plateau in the al-Jaww basin of northwestern Saudi Arabia. Situated directly along the Darb al-Bakrah caravan route, the Tadhraʿ plateau is characterized by the Ḥallat al-Badr scoria cone volcano and a high-elevation paleolake basin surrounded by a dense concentration of anthropogenic features. High-resolution drone photography reveals multiple classes of archaeological features distributed across the plateau surface, paleolake basin, escarpments, and adjacent sandstone outcrops, including ring cairns and keyhole structures, triangular pendants, circular stone clearances, a massive rectilinear drystone enclosure, Dadanitic and other Ancient North Arabian inscriptions, 'Thamudic' rock art, and a Neolithic rock-art panel depicting a herd of more than twenty long-horned domesticated cattle rendered in low relief. The cattle frieze, carved beneath a sheltered sandstone overhang along the southern escarpment of Tadhraʿ, is exceptional within the corpus of Arabian rock art for its three-dimensional modeling and apparent piebald coat patterning. Taken together, these features suggest that the Tadhraʿ paleolake and its surroundings constituted a persistent focal zone of human activity and mobility, including ritualized practices and perhaps pilgrimage, spanning multiple periods from Holocene pastoral wet phases through the oasis-linked cultural horizon represented by the Dadanitic inscriptions. As the first integrated archaeological study of the Tadhraʿ complex, this research helps fill a significant gap in our understanding of hinterland sites in the volcanic interior of northwestern Arabia.

Intermittent Wetlands in Bronze Age northwest Oman?: A Case Study from Rakhat al-Madrh

Jennifer L. Swerida (University of Leiden), Eli Dollarhide (New York University Abu Dhabi), Aleksandra Prosperini (Sorbonne University), Alessandra Dominguez (University of Pennsylvania), Eric Fouache (Sorbonne University), Claude Cosandey (Sorbonne University), Tara Beuzen-Waller (University of Perpignan Via Domitia), Max Engels (Heidelberg University), Laurence le Callonnec (Sorbonne University), Robert Bryant (University of Pennsylvania)

Recent archaeological scholarship in southeast Arabia has emphasized human-environment interaction at sites interpreted as oases, where groundwater access enabled sustained cultivation. However, far less is known about how communities engaged with more arid parts of the landscape. This paper investigates the potential role of potential intermittent wetlands in Bronze Age subsistence strategies through a case study at Rakhat al-Madrh, a small basin site in northwest Oman located approximately 7.5 km from the UNESCO World Heritage site of Bat. Situated beside the Wadi al-Hijr but lacking direct access to its groundwater, the basin temporarily retains surface water following intermittent flooding events for a short time. Paleoenvironmental and geomorphological evidence suggests that during the Bronze Age, this basin periodically functioned as a wetland. This paper presents results from the Bat Archaeological Project's archaeological and geomorphological research at Rakhat al-Madrh, 2020-2026. Evidence from the site reveals a distinctive occupation sequence—tombs, buildings, agropastoral activities—beginning in the Hafit and continuing into the Wadi Suq period. One structure shows intensified use during the Umm an-Nar–Wadi Suq transition, contrary to regional patterns of decline. The paper considers how such ephemeral, intermittent wetland environments may have shaped land use, mobility, and the development of adaptive strategies in marginal Bronze Age settings.

Preliminary Report on Three Seasons of Archaeobotanical Investigation from Bat, Oman

Alessandra Dominguez (University of Pennsylvania)

This paper will present the preliminary findings of archaeobotanical analysis from the past three (2024, 2025, and 2026) seasons at the archaeological site of Bat, Oman. The research aims of this initiative are to contribute to the broader project goals of understanding the natural and social history of ancient oasis systems during the 3rd millennium BCE—locally and across Arabia. Bat offers a unique opportunity to investigate the ways in which Early Bronze Age populations shaped and cultivated oases as ecological anthropogenic niches that enabled them to successfully navigate the surrounding volatile geography and turbulent climate. Despite their significance, reconstructing the extent of an oasis through archaeobotanical methods presents a series of challenges, especially in the Arabian Peninsula, where hostile environmental conditions and rapid modern development are deleterious to organic preservation. The project, therefore, collates both macro- and micro-archaeobotanical remains to capture fragmentary evidence at multiple scales. Although carpological evidence remains sparse, wood charcoal and phytolith samples offer a critical look into local wood and botanical resource availability. Future investigation will incorporate ethnobotanical analogs, broader palaeoecological synthesis, and further archaeobotanical analysis to deepen our knowledge about greater oasis systems and their critical role in supporting both ancient and modern societies.

9C. The LCP Handbook Series: Eastern Sigillata A (ESA) (Continental C)

Chair(s): Andrea Berlin, Boston University; Nicole Constantine, Stanford University

Eastern Sigillata A in Hellenistic Time and Space

Peter Stone (Carleton College)

Fine sets of well-made, fully slipped, and often decorated vessels for dining and drinking are a hallmark of Greek household archaeology. Thus, it would be reasonable to suppose that Alexander's conquest of the Persian Empire and the inauguration of a "Hellenistic" Period would lead to a profusion of similarly fine sets of pottery in the lands of the former Persian Empire. The reality is much messier. In Cilicia, Syria, and the Levant, the first century and a half of the Hellenistic Period is defined by a series of low to middling quality tablewares that are partially and sloppily slipped, rarely decorated, and usually produced in a functionally limited range of shapes. It is only around the middle of the 2nd century BCE that potters in these regions diversified their tableware output and experimented with new forming, firing, and decorative techniques to make sets that approximate the quality and richness of Late Classical or Hellenistic assemblages in the Aegean, even as they show stylistic differences. The most successful of these experiments were the black slipped predecessor of Eastern Sigillata A (ESA), and ESA itself, the latter of which would become the first in a series of fine, red-slipped superwares that are a hallmark of household archaeology in the Roman World. Here, I will discuss why it makes sense that these fine, mass-produced tablewares were invented in the eastern Mediterranean at a time that was defined by both increased international connections and political and social upheaval.

Eastern Sigilata A and the late Seleucid Empire

Boris Chrubasik (University of Toronto)

This paper explores the socio-economic environment of the late Seleucid empire and the meteoric rise and spread of Eastern Sigilata A both to the east and to the west. The emergence of Eastern Sigilata A around 145 BCE coincides with an intensified political fragmentation of the Seleucid empire. Kings were fighting counter kings, and warlords, dynasts and independent cities attempted to do away with their political dependence on the Seleucid kings. Yet despite open hostilities and destruction in some regions of the empire, it is also a period of increased trade and economic prosperity in others. It shall be argued in this presentation that the movement of Eastern Sigilata A allows an insight into the economic connectivity of the regions of the Levantine coast, its limitations, and into the vitality of certain trade routes.

ESA at Sea: Two 1st century BCE Shipwrecks and their Sigillata Pottery

Nicole N. Constantine (Stanford University)

The 1st century BCE was a bustling era on the Mediterranean Sea – more ships bearing larger cargoes were taking to its waters, and ships and their crews were expanding in size. The Mediterranean would not witness this level of maritime movement again until the early Modern era. Historical explanations for this heightened connectivity have centered on growing Roman political and economic control, which capitalized upon and expanded pre-existing markets of exchange in the eastern Mediterranean. In celebration of the LCP Handbook to Eastern Sigillata A, I look at two 1st century BCE shipwrecks that offer a glimpse into this world. Both ships sank carrying ESA pottery. The first is the Antikythera Wreck – famed for the mechanism recovered by sponge divers in 1901. Subsequent studies have revealed a rich cargo of sculpture and furniture as well as an assemblage of cooking and table vessels, including ESA – objects that must have belonged to the ship's crew. The second wreck, from the Mediterranean coast of Turkey at Adrasan, sank carrying a full cargo of ESA, and stacks of plates, bowls and cups are still visible on the sea floor. These two wrecks are attestations of a lively 1st century BCE maritime world, and the ways that growing Roman demand may have reoriented maritime markets. The evidence from the Antikythera wreck demonstrates the ways that popular dining and drinking wares were utilized onboard a ship and may attest to a changing social status for mariners in the well-connected world of the 1st century BCE.

The Last Supper: ESA on the Eve of Antioch's 115 Earthquake

Andrea M. Berlin (Boston University)

On December 13, 115 CE, a powerful earthquake devastated Antioch and Daphne. Visiting at the time were Trajan and his successor Hadrian; both miraculously survived unscathed. The imperial connection occasioned generous support for rebuilding – and indeed, most of Antioch's public infrastructure and Daphne's lavishly decorated homes date to the post-earthquake years. For centuries, the two cities remained glamor destinations, their dazzle best conveyed by the mosaics that adorned Daphne's rebuilt villas. In 1939, when a looming world war required the archaeological team to make emergency shipping choices, mosaics took up the bulk of the cargo – along with a compact, critical accompaniment: bags of ESA sherds from beneath them, which the team saw as the best evidence for their date. The Daphne mosaics have long stood as avatars of Roman luxury décor, the pottery beneath mere chronological supporting players. This is their role in Frederick Waagé's fundamental 1948 study, wherein he identified a consistent bundle of four or five forms from these contexts, and in John Hayes' equally fundamental 1985 corpus. Now, thanks to the LCP Handbook to Eastern Sigillata A, we can see Waagé's "bundle" as lifestyle avatars in their own right. In the decades before the earthquake struck, in house after house across the scenic, hilly landscape, Daphne's wealthy residents set tables with a matched ESA set, small and medium vessels for individual settings and large ones for serving. The forms' simple, refined elegance reveal the aesthetics of the moment, and show how dinner was made a destination event.

Industry Interrupted?: ESA after the Earthquake

Brigitte Keslinke (Bowdoin College)

In mid-December, 115 CE, a devastating earthquake shook the city of Antioch and its surrounding region — an attack so forceful that the peaks of Mount Casius itself toppled onto the city below (Cassius Dio, Roman History 25.6). Despite the large-scale devastation, the city seems to have recovered rather quickly, but what about its pottery industry? This paper will explore how, and to a certain extent how successfully, Eastern Sigillata A (ESA) producers in the region around Antioch re-entered the sigillata market. The generation of vessels produced following the earthquake exhibits some of the greatest variety in both form and decoration in the ware's history. Many of these forms, though, were short-lived and relatively rare, particularly in regions beyond the northern Levant. Additionally, there is little evidence for the production and circulation of those forms that adorned tables in the years just before the earthquake. Together, this suggests producers were experimenting in the face of new trends and growing competition. At the same time, they maintained a core set of coordinating vessels that were rather plain, a deliberate rejection of the fussier forms inspired by western sigillatas and a revival, of sorts, of the aesthetic preferred during the peak of ESA production in the late Hellenistic/early Roman periods. It is these bowls, cups, and plates that were most popular and that circulated most widely, and it is this aesthetic that was carried forward into the last years of ESA production.

9D. Intangible Cultural Heritage: Bridging the Past and the Present I (Waldorf)

Chair(s): Yaroub Al Obaidi, Duquesne University; Jessica R. Robkin, University of Central Florida

A Living Archive: The Hurufiya Movement and the Preservation of Arabic Visual Language

Emma Laraby (Independent Researcher)

*Virtual

This paper presents an artist book that examines the Hurufiya movement as intangible cultural heritage through archival research and design practice. Developed during and beyond my graduate studies at ArtCenter College of Design, the project is informed by my position as an Iraqi-born artist working in the United States diaspora and addresses the absence of

Middle Eastern representation within Western-centered design frameworks. The publication documents the Hurufiya movement, drawing on materials, narrative interpretation, and engagement with artists. It compiles contributions from forty-six practitioners across local, regional, and diasporic contexts, tracing the movement's evolution from the twentieth century to the present and examining its transformation of Arabic calligraphy into a modern visual language, foregrounding visual and linguistic forms as carriers of cultural narratives and collective memory. The study demonstrates that the Hurufiya movement operates as a living archive, preserving and transmitting intangible heritage through the visual and linguistic properties of Arabic script. Through the book's design, historical and cultural material is translated into a contemporary visual system that reflects continuity and fragmentation within diasporic experience, emphasizing accessibility and the communication of cultural identity across audiences and contexts. The publication has been acquired by notable collections, including the archive of Dia al-Azzawi, the Barjeel Art Foundation, and the Ibrahimi Collection (Iraqi Art Section, Jordan), supporting its role as a research outcome and cultural document. This work argues that graphic design actively preserves, mediates, and reinterprets intangible cultural heritage across diverse contexts in contemporary global practice today.

China's Archaeology in the Middle East and the Emergence of New Grand Historical Narratives

Christian Langer (The University of Georgia)

China's overseas archaeology has expanded rapidly over the past decade. The Middle East, home to some of the world's oldest civilizations, is no exception: archaeologists from China work in Egypt, Iran and Saudi Arabia. With scholarship focusing on China's Belt and Road Initiative as a finance and infrastructure project, the role of archaeology and the past is often overlooked. This talk will discuss the role of archaeology in the Belt and Road Initiative and embed it within the historical context of Chinese cultural diplomacy in the MENA region. The present developments come on the back of 160 years of Chinese engagement with especially Egyptian heritage, from China's first envoys to Europe to Cold War art diplomacy to the intensifying South-South cooperation in the early twenty-first century. China's involvement in a field linked to European colonialism, the ideological legitimation of Western civilisation and the conflicted ancient Egyptian heritage is significant. Chinese archaeology in Iran and Saudi Arabia revolves around historical Chinese ties to the region to support the narrative of longstanding bilateral ties that got lost over the past few centuries but are to experience a timely revitalization. The talk connects the dots of archaeological practice, the recent expansion of BRICS into the region as well as the emergence of new grand historical narratives surrounding resurgent Silk Road connectivity.

Between Memory and Place: Oral Narratives and the Intangible Heritage of Baghdad's Historic Houses

Bashar S. Al Khafaji (University of Technology - IRAQ), Dhirgham Alobaydi (Al-Bayan Univerity - Iraq)

This paper examines the role of oral narratives in revealing and sustaining the intangible heritage embedded within Baghdad's historic houses. While conservation practices in the region have largely focused on the physical preservation of built fabric, the experiential and memory-based dimensions of heritage remain insufficiently addressed. This study argues that neglecting these intangible aspects limits both the cultural significance and public relevance of heritage preservation efforts. Using a qualitative research design, the study combines semi-structured interviews with residents, former inhabitants, and community members, alongside contextual observation of selected historic houses in Baghdad. The collected narratives are analyzed through an interpretive framework grounded in memory studies and place-based heritage theory, enabling the identification of recurring themes related to identity, attachment, and cultural meaning. The findings demonstrate that oral narratives actively construct the social significance of heritage sites, linking individual memory to collective identity and reinforcing place attachment. This process reveals heritage as a lived and dynamic practice rather than a static physical condition. The study concludes that integrating oral history into heritage practices enhances community engagement, supports intergenerational knowledge transfer, and offers a more inclusive and sustainable model for heritage management. It proposes a shift toward participatory, narrative-based approaches that position human experience at the center of conservation discourse in the Middle East.

The Future of the Past: Using AI to Document AlUla's Historical Narrative Memory

Aljohara Almudarra (The Royal Commission for AlUla), Lobna Mustafa (Master Expert, ICON Spaces Laboratory, Riyadh)

Al-Ula, located in northwest Saudi Arabia, represents a unique cultural landscape, where rich archaeological heritage intersects with oral traditions and collective memory, reflecting the region's historical and sociocultural identity. Preserving this intangible heritage poses significant challenges.This paper introduces an innovative methodology using AI tools to digitally document Al-Ula's storytelling traditions, enabling enrichment through multimedia and creating immersive experiences that connect past and present. Adopting a multi-method approach, which combines traditional documentation with creative AI techniques, classifying narratives by theme and historical period, analysing, and visualizing them while respecting ethical and cultural authenticity. The study results in a comprehensive archive of historical narratives, enhancing community participation in heritage conservation, and developing innovative storytelling formats. These experiences have made the region's heritage globally accessible via exhibitions, educational resources, online platforms, leading to an increase in sustainable tourism and proper cultural management. Ultimately, the approach provided a pioneering model for safeguarding Saudi Arabia's cultural heritage and leveraging technology to preserve local collective memory.

Fish, Foodways, and Visual Culture in Southern Mesopotamia: Aquatic Consumption and Iconography in the Floodplain Civilization

Yaseen Wami (University Of Basrah)

This paper investigates fish consumption and its visual representation in southern Mesopotamia, focusing on the riverine and marshland environments of the Tigris–Euphrates floodplain. In this ecologically aquatic landscape, fish constituted a fundamental dietary resource, as attested in administrative tablets from temple and palace archives. Cuneiform evidence from the Old Babylonian period records multiple modes of fish preparation, including fresh distribution, sun-dried preservation, salted storage, and fish stews seasoned with coriander, cumin, leeks, and barley derivatives. These foodways reflect a structured economic and ritual system in which aquatic resources were carefully processed, allocated, and sometimes offered in temple contexts. Drawing on textual sources alongside visual materials—cylinder seals, votive plaques, and Neo-Assyrian reliefs—this study examines how fish moved from subsistence reality into visual codification. Through formal and iconographic analysis, the paper explores scale, stylization, repetition, and compositional framing of fish imagery, arguing that aquatic motifs in southern Mesopotamian art embody more than environmental documentation. Rather, they articulate an "aquatic worldview" shaped by the ecological centrality of rivers and marshes. The present study also highlights the importance of preserving culinary recipes and ensuring their continuity as an essential component of intangible cultural heritage. By situating fish within both culinary practice and artistic production, the paper proposes that southern Mesopotamian visual culture transforms dietary necessity into symbolic form, revealing how environment, foodways, and image-making intersected in one of the world's earliest urban civilizations.

9E. Archaeology of the Near East: Bronze and Iron Ages I (Marquette)

Chair(s): J. P. Dessel, University of Tennessee

Fit for a King? Cylinder Seals of the Uluburun Shipwreck

Katie Batagianis (Emerging scholar)

The Late Bronze Age ship that sank off the Uluburun coast of Turkey in c. 1300 BCE carried a tremendously wealthy cargo. Among its contents were substantial quantities of raw materials, including sufficient amounts of copper and tin to produce eleven tons of bronze, as well as such prestige goods and materials as logs of African blackwood, ivory cosmetic boxes, and ostrich eggshells. The cargo was so wealthy, in fact, that it has been interpreted as royal and linked to those gift exchanges between Egypt and Near Eastern powers that are recorded in the Amarna letters of the mid-fourteenth century BCE. Among the artifacts that could bolster this understanding of the Uluburun cargo are nine Near Eastern cylinder seals recovered from the wreckage. Though cylinder seals were originally developed as an administrative tool, by the Late Bronze Age, they had come to be used in myriad other ways, including as gifts exchanged between kings. A cache of Near Eastern cylinder seals discovered at the Mycenaean palace at Thebes indicates this practice, as does Amarna letter EA 16, which lists a lapis lazuli cylinder seal among the gifts sent from Assyria to Egypt. Despite such evidence, the Uluburun cylinder seals have never been studied from this perspective. It is the goal of this paper to assess the potential of these seals as royal gifts, thus filling a gap in the scholarship and possibly contributing further evidence for the interpretation of the Uluburun cargo as a royal cargo.

Living Like an Egyptian: A Preliminary Examination of Recent Small Finds at Khirbat Safra

Robert D. Bates (Institute of Archaeology, Andrews University)

Khirbat Safra is a small, 2.6-acre (1.07-hectare) triangular-shaped site with a commanding view of the Dead Sea and Jerusalem. Most of its structures date to the Early Iron Age I period (around the 11th/10th century BCE), including the surrounding casemate wall, a gate with stone benches inside, several long, narrow buildings, and possibly a central building for elite residents. The site experienced multiple phases, including two or three Iron I phases, one Iron II phase, and a Late Byzantine phase. Artifacts from its initial settlement, shortly after it was built, include several elite items that seem unusual for such a remote location. These include decorative jewelry such as carnelian and frit beads, cosmetic materials, tools, bronze and iron weapons, a signet ring, and a cult statue. These finds indicate that this small settlement was once a thriving community with links to a wider civilization. Why were there so many high-status items found in the initial occupation? Could the site have been situated along a trade route that introduced exotic goods to this small settlement? Or did the early settlers of Khirbat Safra bring jewelry, weapons, and other artifacts with them when establishing the town? Can the artifacts of the first occupation offer clues about the origins of Khirbat Safra's inhabitants? This paper will analyze recent small finds from Khirbat Safra and consider whether its early residents might have been connected to, or originated from, ancient Egypt.

Yotvata Fortress in Its Semi-Nomadic Edomite Context: A Reassessment in Light of Recent Excavations

Erez Ben-Yosef (Tel Aviv University), Mark Cavanagh (Tel Aviv University), Willie Ondricek (Tel Aviv University), Yotam Asscher (University of Haifa)

The final report of Zeev Meshel's 1970s excavations at the Yotvata Fortress—a casemate-wall enclosure on a hill overlooking the oasis of Yotvata ('Ain Ghadian)—was recently published by Lily Singer-Avitz, who dated the site to the early Iron I and interpreted it as evidence for the sedentarization of local nomadic groups and the need to protect an important water source following the destabilization of the region after the Egyptian withdrawal from the Timna copper mines. We argue instead that the Yotvata fortress represents a short-lived defensive installation within a fundamentally nomadic Edomite political landscape rather than evidence for sedentarization. Renewed excavations conducted in 2020 employed radiocarbon dating and microarchaeological methods to refine both the chronology and interpretation of the site. The results indicate that the main occupation of the fortress dates primarily to the 10th century BCE. While we accept the interpretation of the site's defensive function, we propose that it reflects a temporary response to regional security concerns rather than a shift toward sedentary lifeways, similarly to the contemporaneous fortifications at Timna Sites 30 and 34 and the fortress at Khirbat en-Nahas in Faynan, which were also short-lived. Finally, we examine the relationship between Yotvata and the Iron Age sites of the Negev Highlands, which exhibit comparable architectural features and have likewise been interpreted as task-specific installations associated with the Edomite polity. Taken together, these sites suggest that the polity remained fundamentally nomadic both before and after the brief appearance of such stone-built installations, which are best understood in the context of the flourishing copper industry of the Arabah.

Dolmen Orientation: Case Study from the Upper Galilee Megalithic Survey

Uri Berger (Israel Antiquity Authority and Ben Gurion University of the Negev)

Researchers worldwide analyze the geographic orientation of dolmens to interpret their religious and ritual significance. In the Levant, the over 10,000 dolmens and megalithic structures documented from southern Jordan to southern Turkey comprise a significant database for deepening this analysis. Here, we present the results of a recent archaeological survey in the Upper Galilee documenting and analyzing 136 dolmens, many of which were identified for the first time. Specifically, the orientation data derived from the Upper Galilee dolmens provides new insights into the decision-making processes of this local, ancient megalithic building culture. The results indicate that construction and topographic factors primarily influenced chamber orientation, rather than religious, ritual, or modern astronomical principles. Dolmen orientation was not dictated by the positions of celestial bodies or prominent landmark mountains. The primary motivation suggested is the desire of the ancient builders and engineers to build burial monuments that would endure for the long-term if not for eternity. Hence, alignment with the topography and the terrain was their primary consideration, witness to a relationship with the Levantine landscape that reformed it for thousands of years to come.

Highland Transitions in Iron Age West Jordan: Communities, Landscapes, and Political Change

Andrew J. Danielson (Harvard University)

The semi-arid highlands of west-central Jordan preserve a remarkably rich archaeological record spanning millennia. This talk focusses on a subset of a larger research initiative that explores lifeways in multiple periods, and in relation to the major transitions that define them. Specifically, this talk engages with questions concerning social organization in the context of the emerging political hierarchies of the first millennium BCE, here explored in the Madaba Plateau region, that became a part of the kingdom of Moab. This analysis draws together the results of recent archaeological surveys, excavation, and legacy data, to create a nuanced picture of settlement patterns and their diachronic trajectory. From this baseline, the sites within the Madaba Plateau region are explored through more nuanced means, identifying major nodal sites, strategically constructed outposts, and the inter-site interactions that characterize the broader regional system. Integrating contemporary royal inscriptions, and re-evaluations of historical geography, the kingdom of Moab is ultimately presented as a tenuous political experiment; the result of a negotiated process woven into a long-lived regional settlement system.

9F. Approaches to Dress and the Body (Williford A)

Chair(s): Krystal Pierce, Brigham Young University; Sarah Costello, University of Houston – Clear Lake

The Cap Crown of Nefertiti: Material, Design, and Sensory Experience

Su Jackson (The University of North Texas)

Nefertiti's modius demonstrates the capacities of dress, drawing attention with its materials and structure to engage the senses. Nefertiti's adornments created more than a vibrant jeweled spectacle; her crown is instead a sensorial structure that enthralled and captivated viewers through the deliberate engagement of multiple senses to generate a notion of queenship that permeates both wearer and viewer. Its height along with radiant gold and colored gemstones engaged the visual sense. The weight and form of the offset cap crown highlight Nefertiti's comportment, while simultaneously trapping heat that would generate sweat that would herald the wearer's presence. But how far does the reflection of gold travel? How heavy might a modius actually become? How does its weight press against the head and the neck? How does the design of such a headdress help to generate and support an effective performance of queenship? This paper will consider the materiality, construction method, and visual and olfactory responses that defined the sensorial impact of the crown of Nefertiti, turning to making as a methodology to consider potential experiences. Through consideration of potential designs and the analysis of resources required to fabricate such a headdress, I have forged a proposed substructure for the modius, reverse set stones within decorative bands, cast metal attachments, and modeled a superstructure to generate a wearable replica of Nefertiti's modius. Such an interpretational device offers an opportunity to consider more fully the sensorial impact of this dress, while also underscoring the utility of making as a mode of analysis.

Unrealized Fertility in the Fayum: A Study of Social Performance and Bead Deposition

Cheyenne Strickland (Florida State University)

Bead assemblages, fertility, and social performance have long been associated in the study of Roman Egypt. Assemblages were passed down through the female line and treasured, as attested by the age of and the repairs made to the heirloom pieces found in some female graves. Bead assemblages have been associated with the Fayum portraits since their discovery, as nearly every female portrait discovered was interred alongside an assemblage of some kind, though there is a paucity of scholarship centered on the importance of the depiction of beads in the Fayum portraits themselves. Young girls are depicted wearing multiple beaded accessories within the portraits, while women of a fertile age wear only one or two pieces. Women who appear to be middle-aged typically wear no jewelry within their portraits, though assemblages were often interred with these women in reality. Through systematic examination and quantification of the appearance, style, and placement of beaded accessories within known Roman period portraits, consideration of the apparent age of the subject, and through comparison with preserved grave assemblages, this paper will assert that the relationship between assemblages, fertility, and social performance extended to the portraits themselves. Further, this study will demonstrate that it is possible to extrapolate information about family ties and inheritance habits by closely examining assemblage composition and interment context in conjunction with a thorough study of the Fayum portraits.

Dressed for Access: The Stately Female Captives in the Throneroom of the Northwest Palace

Megan Cifarelli (Manhattanville University)

As visitors approached the throneroom of Ashurnasirpal's Northwest Palace at Nimrud, the narrative scenes they encountered over the heads of others—in the upper register across from the visitors' entrance—are the most violent in the palace. The larger-scale lower register images, visible within the room on a closely monitored itinerary that culminated in the virtual and physical presence of the Assyrian king, are affectively less frightful, even gentle in tone. At this more intimate viewing distance, where human visitors interact visually and corporeally with register-high human images, the large scale of depicted captive women allows visitors to discern patterns woven into their clothing. The stepped articulation of the fabric overlaying their lower bodies repeats the form of the crenellations on the gate of the besieged city to the right, both instances juxtaposing excluding elements and inviting penetrations. This motif is identical to that in skirts of Assyrian footsoldiers engaged in destruction of the city at right and appears on the robe of the king himself. In the known visual corpus from Ashurnasirpal's Northwest Palace, this stepped textile is found only in the Throneroom, and only in these scenes. Drawing upon dress theory and notions of embodiment, this paper argues that wrapping these women—who correlate loosely to royal Aramaean women described as captives in royal inscriptions—in stepped fabric plays with the tensions in Assyrian foreign relations between exclusion and inclusion, gates and gate-crashing, victims and guests. These stately, dressed bodies metonymically weave together what was destroyed in warfare, enfolding it into Assyria and perhaps paving the way for non-Assyrian queens of Assyria.

Embroideries as Cross-Referential Media: The Garments Depicted in Ashurnasirpal II's Northwest Palace Reliefs

Yu Song (New York University)

Ashurnasirpal II (883–859 BCE), the third ruler of the Neo-Assyrian Empire, is renowned for his military expansion, the founding of a new capital at Kalhu (modern Nimrud), and innovations in royal visual culture. The reliefs of his Northwest Palace depict figures whose garments bear faintly incised decorative motifs—subtle carved "embroideries" visible only at close range. Though relatively few in number, these details play a significant role in the visual program of the palace. This paper examines the carved embroideries as a form of cross-referential media that links body, dress, and imperial ideology. By closely analyzing their iconography and placement on the sculpted body, I argue that these textile simulations were not merely ornamental but functioned as layered visual statements. Situating the reliefs within the broader context of Neo-Assyrian expansion during a transitional period between the Late Bronze and Iron Ages, I show how dress operated as a site of imperial imagination. The incised motifs evoke images associated with frontier regions and conquered territories, embedding the empire's borderlands onto the king's body and that of his attendants. Through these carefully positioned decorative elements, the king's image-makers transformed garments into conceptual spaces, materializing political geography on the dressed body and articulating a vision of Assyrian kingship grounded in territorial control and cosmological order.

Analyzing the Feet/Footwear of the Greek Korai as Sites of Information about Ancient Greek Women

Rachel Polinsky (Adjunct Professor at Hartwick College and SUNY Oneonta)

Dress theory proposes that what one wears and how they present themselves to the world is a nonverbal mode of communication about the individual's identity in a particular social context. Using the Attic Greek korai—typically defined as standing, clothed statues of young women, primarily made of marble or terracotta, and are found in funerary and votive contexts throughout Greece during the Archaic Period (ca. 700-480BCE)—as a case study, I propose that the presence/absence and style of footwear can be used to gain greater insight into the women they adorn. Counter to what would be structurally ideal, all korai stand with their feet exposed and visually accessible to the viewer. This study proves that the korai's feet and footwear—something that typically goes unaddressed in relevant scholarship—provide key insights into not only the respective women, but also the societal expectations and norms for women of the time. The symbolic and iconographic significance of the feet/footwear is further informed through contextual specificity, indicating that footwear or the absence of it was understood as a complex visual construction of socio-cultural values and identity. This research and presentation originate from my doctoral dissertation in 2023, in which I pinpoint the korai's feet and footwear as intentionally stylistically distinctive from the rest of their body, suggesting that the feet/footwear were intended as visually and symbolically significant to the ancient Greeks. Additionally, it consists of the first comprehensive catalog of the feet and footwear of the Attic korai to date.

9G. Ancient Inscriptions III (Williford B)

Chair(s): Andrew Burlingame, Wheaton College; Jana Matuszak, University of Chicago

Double the Trouble? Double the Fun! Bi-scriptorial Stelae from Ptolemaic Memphis

Lingxin Zhang (Georgetown University)

This talk examines a group of funerary stelae from Ptolemaic Memphis (4th – 1st century BCE), which are inscribed in hieroglyphs and Demotic. Sometimes, the two sections overlap so much that one is considered the other's duplicate. Other times, the Demotic section is so abbreviated that it is called a "docket." Regardless, the question remains: Why did the deceased choose to write their funerary inscriptions in two scripts? While it was no surprise that the stelae were inscribed with hieroglyphs, which was the most prestigious script until the end of Egyptian antiquity. The same cannot be said of Demotic (6th century BCE -- 5th century CE), which was once considered a script suitable only for document-keeping. Recently, this idea has been partially revised in light of newly published papyrological evidence. However, much is still unclear about the use of Demotic in a monumental context. As such, the bi-scriptorial stelae from Ptolemaic Memphis formed a valuable corpus. My preliminary results indicate mutual influences between the hieroglyphic and Demotic scripts. Hieroglyphic texts were transcribed into Demotic, but, less expected, the process also took place the other way around. Over time, the scribe matched the Demotic section to the length and complexity of the hieroglyphic text, indicating, perhaps, a shift in how Demotic was socially viewed. To conclude, I offer possible explanations for the adoption of two scripts in this corpus, ranging from practical concerns and communication needs to personal tastes.

The Celestial Scorpion: A Renegade Constellation in Early Mesopotamia

Nicholas M. Gill (The University of Chicago)

Although the celestial bodies in ancient Mesopotamia are well attested in cuneiform documentation dating from the latter half of the second millennium BCE onwards, comparatively less is known about the constellations in earlier historical periods. While astronomical texts and compendia of celestial omens are scarce prior to the end of the Old Babylonian period (ca. 2003–1595 BCE), a group of early Sumerian incantations directed against scorpion sting offer a window into the constellation now known as Scorpio. Drawing upon new research carried out under the framework of the ASOR awarded Herbert Warren Mason Fellowship and made possible through its generous donors, this presentation will shed new light on this group of magical spells, discuss their contents, and offer a preliminary reconstruction of the myth of the celestial scorpion based on incantations from the third millennium BCE through to the end of the Old Babylonian period.

"He Sows Seashells"? A Reexamination of Sumerian subi (šuba) in Love Songs and Other Contexts

Anna Glenn (Harvard University)

The Sumerian term subi (šuba), conventionally understood to designate a type of stone, is well attested in both archival documents and in literary and liturgical texts, spanning the third to the first millennia BCE. Among Sumerian literary compositions, it is perhaps best known for its use the idiomatic description of the god Dumuzi "plowing/sowing subi-stones" for his lover Inana. Elsewhere in Sumerian texts, subi are regularly depicted as items of jewelry associated with goddesses and found among precious items in their temples. In recent years, a compelling argument for interpreting the term subi as a (type of) shell, rather than a stone, has gained traction among Sumerologists, though not without some objections. This paper explores the proposed reinterpretation in detail, with particular attention given to designations of subi in Ur III archival documents, designations of subi and its Akkadian loanword šubû in later lexical lists and ritual/medical texts, and the presence of ornamental shells in the Mesopotamian archaeological record. Finally, we will return to the use and significance of the term subi in Sumerian literary compositions.

The Identity Breakthrough of the Last En-Priestess of Nanna in 18th-Century BCE Mesopotamia

Jingying Dong (Fudan University)

*Virtual

From the Akkadian Dynasty to the Isin-Larsa Period (c. 2290–1763 BCE), Mesopotamian kings appointed royal princesses as en-priestesses of Nanna, the moon god and patron deity of Ur. The first-person royal inscription of Enanedu, Nanna's last en-priestess, describes her identity, duties, and achievements in restoring the outer walls of the sacred precinct and the priestesses' cemetery. This inscription stands out for its content, structure and length. Enanedu both continues the tradition of her predecessors and demonstrates unique qualities. Nevertheless, she has not received sufficient scholarly attention. This study examines Enanedu's role and identity breakthrough based on the original Sumerian text of this inscription. As she assumed the office of the supreme en-priestess, the princess Enanedu transcended traditional gender roles by adopting male titles that symbolized authority. By undertaking projects such as temple construction, which carried the symbolic significance of royal power, she went beyond the conventional bounds of priestly responsibilities and authority. Enanedu demonstrated remarkable power, status, and active engagement. Her authority was derived not only from her position as a sacred priestess, but also deeply rooted in the royal context of her time.

Beyond Nippur: Two Unpublished Lexical Tablets from Old Babylonian Meturan

Grégoire Nicolet (musée du Louvre)

This paper introduces two unpublished multi-column tablets from Old Babylonian Meturan (Tell es-Sib), now kept in the Baghdad Museum. As exact duplicates, they provide a rare opportunity to examine lexical scholarship in the Diyala Valley. The tradition reflected in these two tablets appears to be a local one, markedly different from the much better-known tradition of Nippur. It includes numerous entries not previously attested in either the Old Babylonian lexical corpus or later lexical traditions, while several terms were previously attested only in administrative texts of the late third millennium BCE. At the same time, some lexical paradigms find closer parallels in the material attested at Ugarit a few centuries later than in either Old Babylonian Nippur or the standardized first-millennium recension. Like the material from Mari's Chantier K, these two tablets highlight the diversity of lexical scholarship in the Old Babylonian period and provide further evidence for the existence of locally rooted forms of scholarly knowledge.

9H. Towards a Working Ancient Economy I (Williford C)

Chair(s): Andrew Deloucas, Harvard University; Taha Yurttas, Harvard University; Eric Aupperle, Harvard University

Babylonian Fiscal History

Eric Aupperle (Harvard University)

The documentary richness of government archives in Babylonia provides an opportunity to trace changes in fiscal policy over twenty-three centuries. That is, Babylonian fiscal history, although not continuously traceable, is characterized by a depth of written records unavailable for other regions of the world. The information on taxation is of particular historical significance, as New Fiscal Sociology holds that the most important structuring element in all political systems, whether ancient or modern, is taxation. A historical overview is provided of the different forms of taxation and financial systems that existed in Babylonia over the long term, from archaic Fara down to the Seleucid era, taking into account differences in investment strategies, infrastructure, government policies regarding debt, and privatization. Building on previous typologies of premodern fiscal regimes, a new model of fiscal history is proposed using Babylonia as a case study. In creating this new model, the objective is to provide a more nuanced account of ancient fiscal regimes that exhibit features of both "tax states" and "domain states". The existing typologies of fiscal systems—developed primarily with classical, medieval, or early modern states in mind—do not adequately capture the characteristics of the fiscal regimes that existed in the ancient Near East. The "CPFI" (credit, privatization, finance, investment) model proposed here is intended to remedy this

interpretational gap, providing both a descriptive history of fiscal regimes in ancient Babylonia, and a general framework that may be productively applied to describe the financial systems of other premodern states.

Palatial Management of Mobility and Resources: Economic Dimensions of Foreign Presence in 24th-Century BCE Ebla

Fiammetta Gori (ISAW (NYU))

This paper examines the economic and logistical strategies underpinning the management of foreign envoys, merchants, and mobile specialists at the Royal Palace of Ebla (Tell Mardikh, Syria) in the 24th century BCE. Administrative texts record rations, labor assignments, and the temporary housing of these actors within palace quarters, reflecting a structured system of resource allocation and labor organization. By integrating textual evidence with the architectural layout of Palace G, the study highlights how residential, diplomatic, and logistical infrastructures were coordinated to support trade, mobility, and controlled access. The palace emerges not only as a center of political and diplomatic activity but also as a hub of economic management, offering insight into the operational mechanisms of early complex economies.

Work Patterns in Ur III Accounts from Umma and Girsu

Andrew Pottorf (University of Cambridge)

*Virtual

The Ur III period is well regarded among specialists for its abundant administrative documentation, including accounts of work managed by royal, provincial, and temple households. These accounts are critical for understanding how conscription and slave labor as mandatory work and hiring as voluntary work were implemented to accomplish tasks relating to resource extraction, construction and manufacturing, transportation, and cultic activities. Whether and how much an individual performed mandatory or voluntary work depended on order, gender, and occupation. In terms of orders, individuals could be mainly citizens, UN-il2, or enslaved people. Except for female citizens typically, everyone was subjected to conscription or slave labor. For many occupations, male citizens were conscripted for half the year, which left them substantial time to hire themselves out, while male UN-il2 were conscripted for 90 percent of the year. Due to the high demands of cultivation, both male citizens and UN-il2 were conscripted for more time. Strangely, conscription rates for pottery are documented differently—these differences are probably seasonal. Meanwhile, female UN-il2 and slaves were always subjected to conscription and slave labor for a little more than 80 percent of the year. While these work patterns are evident in Umma accounts, they are not clear in Girsu accounts. Nevertheless, based on multiple inferences and other evidence, these patterns applied the same ways at both Umma and Girsu. As such, this presentation elucidates these patterns and demonstrates how Umma accounts can be used to understand Girsu accounts.

Fragility, Contagion, and the Late Bronze Age Collapse

Kenneth Ahern (University of Southern California)

For four centuries, Late Bronze Age polities sustained one of antiquity's most interconnected economic systems. Egypt, the Hittite Empire, Babylonia, Mycenaean Greece, and their trading partners exchanged copper, tin, grain, and luxury goods across dense overland and maritime routes. Diplomatic correspondence reveals a world of mutual obligation in which kings addressed one another as "brother" and formalized trade commitments through treaty alliances. Then, between roughly 1250 and 1150 BCE, this system collapsed — yet selectively. Some polities were destroyed; others survived diminished but functioning. Why did the same economic interconnections that sustained prosperity become channels of destruction? I apply a financial contagion model to this question. In the model, polities hold mutual trade obligations; drought shocks reduce a polity's capacity to meet those obligations, potentially triggering cascading defaults through the network. The central result is a phase transition: below a critical threshold the network absorbs shocks; above it, contagion propagates globally. The empirical foundation draws on a 14,000-site archaeological database, a 26-node gravity-anchored trade network constructed from twelve independent evidence sources — pottery provenance, copper ingot distributions, diplomatic correspondence, and shipwreck cargoes — and drought severity calibrated from 92 paleoclimate proxy records converted to precipitation anomalies. Archaeological outcomes are measured from 154 sites with destruction chronologies informed by recent reassessments. Without trade contagion, local drought correctly predicts 46% of collapse outcomes. With network transmission, accuracy rises to 85%. The 39-percentage-point improvement quantifies the contribution of economic interconnection to the Bronze Age Collapse.

Agricultural Sustainability and Imperial Collapse in Assyria: Modeling the Economy to Understand Mitigation Strategies

Ofelia Tychon (University College London)

*Virtual

The Neo-Assyrian Empire expanded from its heartland in northern Mesopotamia to reach from the Arabian Gulf to the Mediterranean before experiencing a relatively swift collapse in the late 7th century BCE. This scholarly consensus is that a combination of political, socioeconomic and environmental factors precipitated the decline. Recent research has sought to utilize paleoclimate proxy data to assess whether changes in climate, particularly those associated with the Assyrian heartland, can be temporally linked to the decline of the Empire. Yet, as the climatic conditions ostensibly deteriorated and compromised agricultural production, Assyria continued to be a powerful state for perhaps decades. While the Empire was geographically diverse, its ability to export excess grain to the heartland from its hinterlands would have been limited. It has recently been proposed that external grain supply from Urartu may have been a solution that the Assyrians employed. The lack of availability of detailed economic data has limited researchers from assessing the Assyrian economic structure. By using agent-based modeling to simulate the economy, this paper looks to overcome this lack of data and assess the Assyrian agrarian system's level of resilience to challenging conditions. It will consider what level of external supply would have been required to satisfy the demand and whether imports from Urartu were a realistic mitigation strategy. In analyzing the Neo-Assyrian Empire through this lens, this paper aims to contribute to the understanding of the impact of sustainability on the success and failure of complex human societies.

9I. History of Archaeology II (Astoria)

Chair(s): Leticia R. Rodriguez, University of Houston; Caitlin Clerkin, Harvard Art Museums

Archibald Henry Sayce and the Shift to Racial Theory in Victorian Biblical Archaeology

Peter Rohrbacher (Austrian Academy of Sciences)

*Virtual

Archibald Henry Sayce (1845–1933) was a prominent Assyriologist and Anglican apologist at Oxford University. He played a central role in linking Assyriology, Egyptology, and Near Eastern archaeology with biblical scholarship during debates over higher criticism. In works such as The "Higher Criticism" and the Verdict of the Monuments (1894), he drew upon inscriptions and archaeological finds to support the historical accuracy of the Old Testament. By doing so, Sayce popularized monumental evidence for a general readership and influenced subsequent apologetic argumentation. This article examines a decisive methodological shift in Sayce's thought. In 1887, he moved from philological and geographical approaches to elevate "race" and physical anthropology as supposedly more reliable instruments for classifying the peoples of the ancient Near East. This approach culminated in The Races of the Old Testament (1891), in which he classified the biblical Table of Nations into a hierarchical, Eurocentric racial schema. He developed a reinterpreted "Hamitic" construct, portraying several biblical populations—including the Hittites, Amorites, and Egyptians—as "Caucasian" or fair-haired. To support these theories, Sayce selectively drew on anthropological discussions, including mummy studies by Rudolf Virchow, and engaged with archaeologist Flinders Petrie. Sayce exemplifies the ambivalent intellectual landscape of early biblical archaeology: a pioneer in using material evidence to defend biblical historicity, while simultaneously reflecting the racial thought patterns that shaped late nineteenth-century scholarship. This case illustrates the complex interplay of knowledge production, theology, and ideology in the formative decades of biblical and Near Eastern archaeology.

From Orientalistik to "Near Eastern Studies" German-American Correspondence in the ISAC Archives, 1933-1945

Grace E. Clements (Harvard University)

When James Henry Breasted founded the Oriental Institute (now ISAC) at the University of Chicago in 1919, he modeled its mission after the German research institutions to whom he owed his doctoral education. In the early decades of the 20th century, the so-called orientalists at the University of Chicago maintained close professional and personal relationships with German-speaking colleagues. That is, until they couldn't. This paper foregrounds archaeology as a primary site of German-American methodological and political divergence, exploring a tense and devastating window of time (1933-1945). Tracing a shift from the shared positivism of the early 1930s to the politicization of archaeological work and of archaeologists' national and religious identities, this paper examines letters from the directors' correspondence in the ISAC archives and probes how, at the intersection of the personal, intellectual, and political, American scholars reacted to developments in Nazi Germany and prepared their institution to enter the future. Case studies include Ernst Herzfeld's precarious position as a German-Jewish Iranologist employed on the Oriental Institute's Persepolis excavations, exchanges with German archaeologists framing their work to align with Nazi sensibilities, and Chicago archaeologists' material contributions to the U.S. war effort. Ultimately, interrupted correspondence, emergency advocacy for fleeing Jewish scholars, and debates over departmental restructuring together gave way to the emergence of a newly autonomous American discipline on the brink of the post-1945 world.

Conserving the Past: Archaeological Policy and Heritage Management under the British Mandate in Palestine

Shelley-Anne Peleg (University of Haifa)

*Virtual

This paper examines the development of archaeological conservation and heritage management policies under the British Mandate in Palestine through the activities of the Mandate's Department of Antiquities. Drawing on unpublished material from the Department's archaeological archives—including correspondence, reports, and conservation records—the study explores how imperial administrative frameworks translated into practical strategies for the protection, management, and presentation of antiquities. The city of Akko serves as the primary case study. As one of the most complex historic urban landscapes in Palestine, Akko posed particular challenges for Mandate officials tasked with balancing excavation, conservation, urban development, and the protection of medieval and earlier remains. Archival documentation reveals the decision-making processes behind conservation interventions, the prioritization of specific monuments, and the negotiation between archaeological research and the needs of a living city. Additional examples from other sites in Palestine provide comparative context, illustrating broader patterns in Mandate-era heritage policy. These include the formulation of conservation guidelines, the role of professional expertise within the Department of Antiquities, and the ways in which archaeological preservation was integrated into colonial governance and emerging tourism infrastructure. By foregrounding archival evidence, this study highlights how conservation policy was implemented on the ground and how Mandate authorities conceptualized the management of the country's archaeological landscape. The paper contributes to current discussions on the historical roots of heritage management in the region and the lasting institutional legacy of Mandate-era archaeological policy.

From Display to Discipline: The *Search for Alexander* Travel Exhibition as a Catalyst for Archaeological Knowledge

Yusi Liu (Bryn Mawr College)

Exhibitions are often understood as the final stage in the presentation of archaeological research and findings, and existing scholarship and reviews on exhibitions tend to focus on display strategies, didactic styles, and the accuracy of interpretation. However, far less attention has been paid to the ways exhibitions can function as catalysts for research and intellectual inquiry. Adopting a museological and archaeological historiographical approach, my paper examines exhibitions as active agents in shaping the discipline of archaeology. In this paper, I investigate the roles of exhibitions by examining *The Search for Alexander*, an international traveling exhibition sponsored by the Greek government that followed the groundbreaking discovery of Vergina in Northern Greece in 1977. The exhibition travelled to seven museums across the United States and Canada between 1980 and 1983. Drawing on archaeological archives in various museums and governmental institutions in North America and Greece, I examine how this traveling exhibition stimulated the development of subsequent museum exhibitions and academic programming across North America, including at the then Oriental Institute (now ISAC) in Chicago, and fostered space for scholarship engagement with Alexander the Great and the Hellenistic period across the Mediterranean and Asia. The traveling exhibition also attracted global interest, extending beyond the Euro-American sphere to inspire international engagement, including Japanese museums as well as the documentary *The Silk Road*, produced by the Japan Broadcasting Corporation in collaboration with China. Ultimately, this case study illustrates how exhibitions continuously shape archaeological knowledge for both the academic community and the broader global public.

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 21, 2026

10:40am – 12:45pm (CST)

10A. Africa in the Ancient World II (Continental A)

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

Embodied Identity at Ancient Kerma: Population Affinity, Physiological Stress, and Social Differentiation in the Kerma Necropolis (1750-1550 BCE)

Sarah Schrader (Leiden Univeristy), Katilyn Sanders (Peabody Museum, Yale University), Rachael Hall (Leiden University), Aida Tadesse (Leiden University), Michele Buzon (Purdue University)

*Virtual

The Kerma necropolis represents one of the most significant mortuary landscapes of ancient Kush, yet the biological diversity within its population and its implications for identity remain underexplored. Excavated by George Reisner in the early twentieth century, with an estimated 20,000-40,000 inhumations, the cemetery has long been interpreted as reflecting a powerful and expansive state. This scale raises critical questions about who was buried at Kerma and how identity was constituted within this mortuary context. This study examines identity as both biologically embodied and socially mediated by integrating population affinity data with skeletal indicators of physiological stress from individuals dating to the Kerma Classique period. Using multivariate statistical approaches, including clustering of mixed data types, it evaluates whether the cemetery population reflects a biologically homogeneous group or a heterogeneous community shaped by mobility, migration, and sociopolitical incorporation. By comparing cranial morphology and health profiles across burial types, including elite (chief) and sacrificial interments, it assesses whether social distinctions were materially and biologically embodied. Rather than treating burial categories as purely symbolic, this approach explores whether they correspond to divergent life experiences and patterned forms of inequality. By centering identity as a dynamic intersection of biology, health, and mortuary practice, this study reframes the Kerma necropolis as a space where social difference was not only expressed but lived. In doing so, it contributes to broader debates on population affinity, mobility, and the embodied nature of identity in ancient Kushite societies.

The Price of Pastoralism: Brucellosis in Ancient Nubian Societies (3000-1077 BCE)

Rachael Hall (Laboratory for Human Osteoarchaeology, Faculty of Archaeology, Leiden University), Aida Tadesse (Leiden University), Gretchen Zoeller (University of Pittsburgh), Michele Buzon (Purdue University), Stuart Tyson Smith (University of California, Santa Barbara), Sarah Schrader (Leiden Univeristy)

Sheep, goats, and cattle were central to ancient Nubian cultures, appearing frequently as burial offerings. Cattle were especially significant, both mythologically (rock art, grave displays) and economically (major trade role). Pastoralism was a central pillar of ancient Nubian society, a relationship which persists in modern Sudan, where livestock remain essential to individual livelihoods and the economy. However, while significant research has discussed the importance of livestock and their sociopolitical implications throughout ancient Nubia, little attention has been paid to the consequences for the humans herding them. Close human–animal interactions inevitably carry health risks. Brucellosis, a highly contagious zoonotic disease, is among the most widespread zoonoses globally, and disproportionately affects pastoralists, and livestock workers. While its modern impact is well understood, brucellosis as a disease of the past is unclear, and remains an unexplored consequence of the environmental and cultural drivers in ancient Nubian societies. This study investigates brucellosis in ancient Nubia through examining skeletal remains from Kerma, Abu Fatima (c. 3000–1550 BCE) and Tombos (c. 1550–1077 BCE) to assess disease prevalence and evaluate how cultural, and environmental changes throughout time influenced infection risk. By reassessing brucellosis, this research examines the embodied consequences of human–livestock relationships in ancient Nubian societies. It also contributes to broader One-Health studies offering deeper insight into how these interactions shaped daily life, and whether changes in the human-animal interaction impacted the likelihood of brucellosis infection throughout time.

Identity, Activity, and Community at Tombos: Analysis of Vertebral Conditions

Roselyn A. Campbell (Purdue University), Michele Buzon (Purdue University), Ruhaan Bajpai (Purdue University)

Previous studies of the human remains from the town of Tombos in Nubia have suggested that Egyptians and Nubians lived and worked closely during Egyptian colonial control of the administrative center from c. 1400-650 BCE. Although Egyptian and Nubian burial patterns can be discerned in some cases, markers of physical activity suggest that the socio-economic structure of the community was complex, with low- and high-status individuals buried alongside each other and a range in socio-economic status for both Nubians and Egyptians. While an earlier study (Schrader et al 2025) explored entheseal changes to joints in the human remains, this study considers evidence for pathological conditions in the vertebrae of individuals excavated from Tombos between 2000 and 2020. Conditions such as vertebral osteophytosis and Schmorl's nodes may be indicators of repetitive heavy lifting and labor. Evidence for these conditions is considered alongside activity markers and burial evidence for socio-economic status. This study suggests that levels of physical activity were not necessarily tied to an identity as Nubian or Egyptian, nor to one's status as local or non-local, but may have been related to differing roles in the community. Drawing on earlier studies by Schrader et al (2025) as well as our analysis of vertebral pathology, this paper considers the intersection of community role with lived experiences of labor and identity in Tombos during its time as a New Kingdom Egyptian administrative colony and beyond.

Kidding around in Ancient Egypt and Nubia: Incorporating Preadults into a Community Perspective

Brenda Baker (Arizona State University), Mindy Pitre (St. Lawrence University), Madeleine Mant (University of Toronto Mississauga)

Preadults are neglected frequently in Nile Valley archaeology and bioarchaeology even though they were a vital component of their communities and may comprise a substantial proportion of the dead in some cemeteries. Moreover, scholarly attention in the region has been limited by assumptions concerning preservation that are unwarranted. Using a "womb to tomb" approach, we consider three avenues for integrating preadults into ancient Egyptian and Nubian research programs—the mother-infant nexus, changing roles of children over their growth, and the funerary nexus. Through the mother-infant nexus, we examine the significance of motherhood, problematic pregnancies and deliveries (dystocia), breastfeeding, and weaning. Children's social roles alter through different growth stages of infancy, childhood, and adolescence, including personhood. These changes over the early life course are integral to understanding factors affecting frequently high mortality and its impact on communities. Analysis of the funerary nexus, including burial location, treatment of the body, and accompanying material items, reveals age-related and regional variability. Through exploration of these themes, children are centered within their communities, and the social and cultural significance of their lives and deaths is amplified. Moving forward, to mitigate lack of attention to preadults, we advocate for more careful excavation, the inclusion of experienced bioarcheologists in research programs (including fieldwork), and the integration of new perspectives—such as a life course approach—to gain a fuller understanding of the contributions of these often forgotten members of communities in the ancient Nile Valley.

10B. Archaeology of Arabia II (Continental B)

Chair(s): Jennifer Swerida, University of Pennsylvania

Indus Pottery from HD1, Oman: A Comparative Analysis with Sites in Oman and the Indus Region, 2800-1900 BCE

Jonathan Mark M. Kenoyer (University of Wisconsin, Madison), Maurizio Cattani (University of Bologna, Italy), Dennys Frenez (University of Bologna, Italy)

Indus pottery from the site of HD1, Ras al-Hadd, Oman has been documented and analyzed using multiple methods that provide new insight into the range of vessel types being used at the site and the origin of the clay used to make them. Morphological analysis and surface modifications indicate a limited range of vessel types being used that can help to interpret the range of activities being carried out at the site that involved Indus ceramics between 2800-1900 BCE. Comparisons between the Indus pottery types found at HD1 will be made with Indus pottery reported from other sites in Oman and UAE to better understand the potential uses and relevance of these ceramics in the context of Indus-Gulf interactions. Instrumental Neutron Activation Analysis (INAA) on a large sample of pottery from HD1 and other related sites in Oman and the Indus will be presented. The most likely sources for the clay used to produce the Indus ceramics will be discussed and compared with data from other sites in Oman, the southern Indus River Valley and Gujarat. Comparing the possible ceramic networks with other networks defined by the study of carnelian beads, lithics and copper reveal a multilayered pattern of interaction that linked HD1 with the Indus and other sites in eastern Arabia.

Silver Ornament Technology in Oman and the Indus Valley Regions during the 3rd millennium BCE: Stylistic and Technological Comparisons

Lucas Wirick (University of Wisconsin-Madison), Randall W. Law (University of Wisconsin-Madison), Dennys Frenez (University of Bologna, Italy), Kimberly Williams (Temple University), Jonathan Mark Kenoyer (University of Wisconsin-Madison)

Excavations at the Harappan site of Allahdino, Pakistan and the Umm an-Nar site of Dahwa, Oman have revealed multiple silver artifacts dating to the mid-3rd millennium BCE. These artifacts include ornaments such as rings, beads, necklaces, and pieces of recycled metal. A comparison of the stylistic and technological features of these two assemblages is presented to identify the range of various fabrication techniques of the individual artifacts. Fabrication includes hammering, drawing, and other types of mechanical deformation, as well as casting and joining. To better understand the implications of different techniques, selected objects, such as beads and rings, were replicated with the assistance of silversmiths in

Karachi, Pakistan using traditional techniques. The ethno-experimental study of silver crafting was used to develop a more objective method of describing and differentiating different aspects of production technology. Preliminary results of the comparative study suggest that most of the ornaments were produced using regionally distinct silver smithing technologies that probably reflect separate workshop traditions in the Indus, Oman and possibly Mesopotamia. However, the presence of a signet ring with an Indus style short horned bull motif from Dahwa suggests that there may be some stylistic overlap between the two assemblages. The stylistic and technological analysis will be compared with preliminary results from lead isotope studies of the silver from both sites to determine the source areas for the silver itself. This study of ornament style and technology provides a new way to investigate possible interaction between specialized craftspeople of these adjacent regions.

New Perspectives on Trade, Technology, and Geological Sourcing in Early Iron Age Yemen: Reassessing the Stone Beads of Hajar ar-Rayhani in the Wadi al-Jubah

Geoffrey E. Ludvik (Holy Apostles College and Seminary), Jonathan Mark Kenoyer (University of Wisconsin-Madison), Randall W. Law (University of Wisconsin-Madison)

The site of Hajar ar-Rayhani was identified during the American Foundation for the Study of Man's expedition to the Wadi al-Jubah, Yemen from 1985 to 1987. Excavations revealed a fortified town located in the heartland of Iron Age Saba (1000-100 BCE). Among the objects recovered from deep soundings along the city wall were 83 stone beads. One additional bead was recovered in survey. In 2015 a preliminary study was undertaken. In 2026, the beads were re-examined and re-analyzed in light of discoveries elsewhere in the Near Eastern world. New morphometric measurements were taken from each bead alongside examination of silicone drill hole impressions, which were measured under a digital microscope and analyzed using a scanning electron microscope (SEM). Our 2015 proposals of mineralogical origins using laser ablation inductively-coupled plasma mass spectrometry (LA-ICP-MS) have been re-assessed based on a new database featuring more varied geological samples. These new results highlight the presence of beads from multiple regional workshop traditions and geological deposits, including a local Sabataean industry. Products with links to workshop traditions in northern Arabia, the Levant, Iran, and India were likewise documented. It is now clear that beads sharing workshop traditions of origin with those from Hajar ar-Rayhani were in circulation more widely in South Arabia, documented along the coast of southwestern Oman and beyond. In all, the beads of Hajar ar-Rayhani testify to the long-distance connectivity of the inhabitants of ancient Wadi al-Jubah, likely a factor of the region's involvement in the trade of aromatics along Arabia's celebrated Incense Road.

The Thaj Mask and Mycenaean Masks: Connectivity, Symbolic Meanings, and Cultural Interaction in the Ancient World

Raghad Alqahtani (Royal Commission for Alula)

* Virtual

Masks function as powerful elements of material culture in the ancient world, mediating identity, ritual practice, and symbolic expression across different societies. This paper examines the Thaj golden mask from Arabian Peninsula, dating to the first millennium (1000 BCE), in comparison with Mycenaean golden masks from Greece, primarily associated with the late bronze age (1700-1600 BCE). Rather than assuming chronological contemporaneity or direct cultural contact, this study adopts a comparative and contextual approach the understands connectivity as a long-term process through which symbolic concepts and visual languages circulated across regions and periods. Through an analysis of materiality, iconography, and contextual use, the paper explores how masks in both contexts articulated concepts of authority, transformation, and social identity. By placing the Thaj mask in dialogue with Mycenaean examples, this research highlights broader patterns of cultural interaction that extend beyond the Mediterranean core and incorporate Eastern Arabia into discussions of ancient connectivity. The study argues that similarities in symbolic expression do not necessarily imply direct transmission but rather reflect shared and reinterpreted cultural vocabularies within long-distance networks of interaction across the ancient world. This paper contributes to current debates on interaction, mobility, and connectivity by demonstrating how material culture specifically masks can reveal complex, non-linear patterns of cultural exchange over extended temporal frameworks.

Frankincense Trade Networks in the Hellenistic and Roman Red Seas

Michelle Heeman (Stanford University)

This paper examines the trade of frankincense to evaluate the effect of political change on maritime and overland trade routes. Frankincense is a fragrant gum-resin made from the sap of Boswellia trees, which grow in southern Arabia and the Horn of Africa. It was a highly valued, long-distance trade commodity in the ancient Mediterranean world. The trade of frankincense reached its height during the Roman period, when it was used in perfumes, rituals and funerary rites. Strabo reports that the trade in frankincense was so lucrative that in 26 BCE Augustus ordered a military expedition to Arabia to find its source, in an effort to bypass Arab intermediaries (Strabo, Geography, XVI.4.22-24). Scholars have hypothesized that the annexation of Egypt in 30 BCE, which resulted in Roman control of the Red Sea ports of Myos Hormos and Berenike, placed the frankincense trade firmly under imperial control. This paper examines the textual and archaeological sources for the trade and use of frankincense to evaluate the effects of political change on the incense trade. In doing so, it considers the actors – including polities and mercantile communities – involved in the procurement and transport of frankincense and assesses the effect of the advent of Roman control in the Red Sea. Through periods of dynamic political change, the demand for frankincense and other aromatics throughout the Mediterranean world supported a resilient network of mercantile communities who facilitated the trade of goods from the Red Sea-Indian Ocean into the Mediterranean and beyond.

10C. Ancient Mesopotamia – A Social History. Methods for Reconstructing Lived Worlds I (Continental C)

Chair(s): Steven Garfinkle, Western Washington University; Jana Mynářová, Charles University

Across the Archive: Reconstructing Debt Relations and Default in Old Assyrian Trade

Taha Yurttas (Harvard University)

*Virtual

Old Assyrian loan contracts provide detailed evidence for the formal and quantifiable dimensions of credit, recording sums, interest rates, and individuals involved in credit transactions. Yet these documents alone offer only a partial view of debt relations. Defaults—failures to meet repayment obligations—are difficult to identify when loan contracts are studied in isolation. This paper explores how a broader social history of debt and default can be reconstructed by combining loan contracts with references found in letters and other legal documents preserved in the private archives from Kaneš (ca. 1900–1840 BCE). While contracts outline formal obligations, correspondence often reveals the negotiations, explanations, and disputes that emerged when payments were delayed or promises were broken, highlighting the intricate web of relationships linking creditors, debtors, and other participants in credit operations. Reading these genres together allows debt relations to be traced across archival contexts and makes visible networks of obligation linking merchants, agents, and households. At the same time, the paper reflects on how scribal practices, archival organization, and uneven documentation shape both the possibilities and the limits of reconstructing these relations within the Old Assyrian trading community.

Actors behind Agency: Chasing Identities in Real Estate Texts from Eshnunna (Tell Asmar)

Clemens D. Reichel (University of Toronto)

The challenge of identifying distinct identities behind homonyms remains a well-known challenge in the field of ancient Near Eastern social history. The frequent recurrence of common names within archives, whether inter or extra-familial, often makes it hard to identify distinct individuals and

their actions in cuneiform text. Those challenges are mostly due to the limited control that we have over the compositional nature of the corpus of texts that we are studying as scholars. In all-too-many cases, these texts were retrieved through less-than-systematic excavations that resulted in their dissemination into collections across the world. This textual diaspora, and the lack of control over attrition (notably the discard of damaged or broken tablets that were considered to be "unworthy" of being a tradable commodity) often makes it hard to build meaningful onomastics based on the rudimentary archival data. The systematic excavations of the Palace of the Rulers at the site of Tell Asmar (ancient Eshnunna) by the University of Chicago during the 1930s have resulted in a comprehensive recovery of textual data that includes many fragmentary tablets that would have been discarded during non-systematic excavations. Based on a real estate archive from the Palace that extents from the late Ur III to the early Old Babylonian Period (2030 – 1850 BC) I hope to show how a careful onomastic evaluations of onomastic data (buyers, sellers, surveyors, witnesses) found in secure archaeological context can help to provide a framework for identifying distinct individuals behind homonyms that could be applied to other, less secure, archival contexts.

Palatial Lives: A Social-Historical Approach to Middle Bronze Age Palaces in Mesopotamia

Kristina B. Donnally (University of Pennsylvania)

This paper develops a methodological approach for reconstructing the social systems within the Middle Bronze Age palaces of Mari and Tell Rimah. Mesopotamian palaces were far more than the residences of kings. These institutions were also densely inhabited social environments—complex ecosystems in which hundreds of individuals of different socioeconomic statuses, genders, ages, and professional roles lived, worked, and interacted on a daily basis. This paper seeks to understand the social history of these palaces, integrating textual and archaeological data together in order to investigate the organization of social groups and labor systems within these contexts. The results of my analyses demonstrate how role functioned as the primary factor in determining organization and daily life. Drawing on methods from anthropology, historic archaeology, and social history, this paper will primarily focus on the textual corpora—namely administrative documents, such as ration lists, and letters—and the network analysis of those textual datasets. I treat cuneiform tablets as both texts and artifacts, analyzing their findspots, relationship to other archaeological materials, and contents to provide a layered approach to the reconstruction of the social systems of the palaces. The textual and network data will then be considered within the spatial context of the palaces themselves, demonstrating that socio-spatial analysis can serve as a complement to the analysis of textual archives. This paper will conclude by discussing how the integration of textual and archaeological data with new theoretical frameworks and interdisciplinary methodologies can better address social histories from incomplete or biased datasets.

The Chief Dirge Singer's Web of Credit. Mapping Debt Networks in Old Babylonian Sippar

Katrien De Graef (Ghent University)

This paper presents a methodological framework for reconstructing the socio-economic texture of Old Babylonian Sippar-Amnānum by combining Social Network Analysis (SNA) with a micro-historical reading of cuneiform economic records. I focus on ~350 loan documents from the archive of the Chief Dirge Singer of the Annunītum temple—an urban elite actor whose activities illuminate the overlap between temple affiliation, private entrepreneurship, and credit relations. Methodologically, I model lending relationships as a debtor–creditor network and use witness lists and role attributions to move beyond individual transactions towards the wider social infrastructure that enabled them. I integrate cliometric variables (debtor identities, commodities, loan terms, and the presence and function of depositories, financial clerks, and witnesses) to identify recurring clusters, key intermediaries, and institutional "contact zones" where transactions were negotiated, guaranteed, and enforced. By mapping how credit was embedded in social ties and procedural routines, the paper offers a social-history account of private lending as a form of patronage, clientelism, and risk management in a debt-connected city. More broadly, it demonstrates how network-based approaches can bridge qualitative prosopography and quantitative economic history, and how they can extract historically meaningful patterns.

Seal Use and Social Categories among the Clergy of Dūr-Abiešuḫ

Anne T. Goddeeris (Ghent University)

The seal impressions on documentary texts from Dūr-Abiešuḫ constitute an excellent source for examining the social categories present in the newly founded city. They display several notable characteristics: a number contain a line with the title lu šude lugal; many list several cultic professions on a single seal; and, despite the small size of the sample, several individuals appear to have used more than one seal during the course of their careers. The corpus also includes seals bearing prayer legends as well as seals with distinctive iconographic elements. When these features are considered in relation to the different groups of social actors represented in the dossier, distinct patterns emerge. In this paper, I relate these patterns to the social categories of Dūr-Abiešuḫ. Through a prosopographical study establishing family ties and professional relationships between individuals, combined with an investigation of diplomatics and archival practices, I connect the seals to the social groups active in Enlil-manšum's dossier and associate particular seal characteristics with these groups. In this context, seals can be understood as attributes that helped individuals position themselves within social groups and may also have played a role in processes of social mobility. On the one hand, this inquiry sheds light on factors influencing the choice of seals: which titles are mentioned or omitted in seal legends, who includes prayer legends, and why certain individuals might choose more coarsely carved seals. On the other hand, it contributes to a better understanding of the social composition of the newly founded city of Dūr-Abiešuḫ.

10D. Intangible Cultural Heritage: Bridging the Past and the Present II (Waldorf)

Chair(s): Yaroub Al Obaidi, Duquesne University; Jessica R. Robkin, University of Central Florida

Cultural Reactivation in the Wake of the Yezidi Genocide: The Sersal Project

Marc Marin Webb (University of Pennsylvania)

This paper explores the Sersal Project, a digital photographic and oral history initiative documenting Yezidi communities in Iraq after the 2014 Islamic State's (IS) genocide. IS targeted both people and places, including shrines and everyday religious spaces, profoundly disrupting practices of visitation, pilgrimage, and commemoration, and rendering the intangible dimensions of Yezidi religion especially vulnerable. In response, the Sersal Project focuses on fragile, often overlooked records of ritual and memory (such as family photographs, mobile phone images, and personal albums) as key sites where sacred landscapes, ceremonial processions, and cultural practices remain encoded. The presentation will situate the Sersal Project within current debates on cultural heritage and its preservation under conditions of protracted violence and displacement. Through fieldwork in Iraq and the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, the project adopts a post-custodial archival model that digitizes these materials while retaining physical custody with families, religious authorities, and local institutions, foregrounding community agency, collective memory, and identity narratives. In parallel, research in European and North American institutional archives surveys historical photographs of Yezidi communities for digital return, thereby reconnecting dispersed visual records within contemporary post-conflict heritage reactivation processes. By tracing how visual archives, oral testimony, and community-defined metadata operate together, the paper argues that the Sersal Project reframes heritage work as a collaborative practice in its own right.

A Survey of Traditional Tattooing in Iraq: History, Symbols, and Social Functions

Ammar Al-Taee (State Board of Antiquities and Heritage (SBAH) and TARII), Angham Salim Mohammed (Mustaqbel University), Dhu Al-Fiqar Hatem (State Board of Antiquities and Heritage), Mohammad Qasim Al-Mimar (TARII)

*Virtual

Traditional tattooing in Iraq represents an important form of cultural heritage deeply rooted in the social history of Iraqi society. Its practices can be traced back to prehistoric periods, where tattoos were associated with a wide range of spiritual, social, aesthetic, and sometimes even therapeutic meanings. Throughout history, tattooing reflected both individual identity and collective belonging within an integrated symbolic system that flourished particularly in rural and Bedouin environments. This knowledge was transmitted across generations as part of a shared cultural tradition. However, with rapid social transformations, globalization, and the spread of modern lifestyles, this cultural practice has gradually declined and is now threatened. This situation highlights the urgent need to document and study traditional tattooing as part of the collective memory and local knowledge that have played a significant role in shaping Iraqi cultural identity. This paper examines traditional tattooing as a cultural practice with symbolic and social dimensions that extend beyond mere aesthetic decoration, as observed and documented in the team's multi-year field study. Field observations indicate that tattoos were commonly placed on various parts of the body including the eyebrows, cheeks, chest, and abdomen—where they functioned simultaneously as aesthetic and symbolic markers, giving the body a cultural dimension that transcends its purely biological presence.

Festival of Sailors' Songs: Heritage in the Arabian Gulf

Yaroub Al Obaidi (Duquesne University)

The world of the seas is a realm full of magic, excitement, and mystery. It spans vast expanses, offering endless opportunities for discovery and adventure. In this realm, seafarers place their trust in the sea, hoping to reap its riches. The elements of trust, determination, and the hope of finding pearls are central to maritime heritage around the world. This heritage is tied to a combination of tangible heritage such as boats, fishing and diving equipment and intangible heritage, such as traditional songs and prayers that sailors and fishermen use to invoke a safe return. These practices vary from one country to another and are shaped by the specific seas, bays, and oceans they call home. Each country has its own unique approach to performing these songs, from the language and traditional musical instruments to the melodies and performance techniques. The goal of the Festival of Sailors' Songs is to gather the marine musical intangible heritage of various cultures in one place, showcasing the diversity and richness of maritime traditions. Through this festival, we aim to build bridges of communication between different regions, sending the message that what unites us as humans is far greater than what divides us. By highlighting these activities, the festival aims to celebrate the Arabian Gulf heritage of the sea and its profound influence on cultures around the region.

Development of Traditional Industries in Iraq

Mahmad Al-hilo (Middle Technical University)

The palm tree has long been revered as a sacred symbol in ancient Iraq, particularly in the civilizations of Sumer, Akkad, and Babylon. Frequently depicted in archaeological artifacts, it represented fertility, growth, and strength, and was closely associated with the goddess Ishtar, where it was known as Gishimmaru. Iraq was considered the original homeland of the date palm and ranked among the world's leading producers. The tree was deeply embedded in daily life, with people relying on its fibers, trunks, and fronds for a wide range of uses. Furniture such as chairs, tables, and beds (takhts) was commonly made from palm frond ribs, while the fronds themselves were used to create mats and household items. The use of date palm materials carries important environmental, economic, and social benefits. As a natural and biodegradable resource, every part of the tree is eco-friendly and returns safely to the environment at the end of its lifecycle. Economically, the date palm holds strong potential, especially if innovative furniture designs continue to evolve. Prioritizing the date palm today means encouraging designers to develop new ideas while engaging skilled artisans in production. In doing so, this traditional resource can continue to support sustainable development and reinforce cultural identity.

Fading Heritage in Baghdad: The Interlinked Loss of Architecture and Craft Traditions

Dhirgham Alobaydi (University of Baghdad- IRAQ), Bashar Alkhafaji (University of Technology - IRAQ)

This paper examines the interconnected decline of tangible architectural heritage and intangible craft traditions in Baghdad's historic urban fabric, arguing that their simultaneous loss reflects a critical rupture in cultural continuity and urban identity. Adopting a qualitative research approach, the study combines field observation of selected historic neighborhoods with semi-structured interviews involving local craftsmen (ustatt), residents, and practitioners in the building sector. The analysis is guided by an interpretive framework linking material heritage to intangible cultural practices, emphasizing the relationship between built form and traditional knowledge systems. Evidence from field-based research indicates that the disappearance of traditional architectural elements—such as brick ornamentation, arches, and domes—is closely associated with the decline of skilled craftsmanship and the lack of intergenerational knowledge transfer. Modern construction practices, driven by economic and regulatory pressures, further accelerate this process. The findings demonstrate that the loss of craftsmanship undermines both the technical and cultural foundations of Baghdad's historic environment. This paper concludes that effective heritage preservation requires integrated strategies that address both architectural conservation and the transmission of traditional craft knowledge.

10E. Archaeology of the Near East: Bronze and Iron Ages II (Marquette)

Chair(s): J. P. Dessel, University of Tennessee

Modeling Late Bronze Age Power and Exchange: A Social Network Analysis of Imported Materials in Canaan

Emily Hale (Mississippi State University)

Reconstructing the structural dynamics of trade and exchange in the Late Bronze Age is essential to understanding how economic disparities and political power were organized across the ancient Near East and Mediterranean basin. This study applies social networks to archaeological datasets of imported materials to identify structural patterns across Canaan and the broader Mediterranean basin. While artifact distribution and textual evidence document Canaan's participation in trade and exchange, this methodology will enable modeling and qualification of these relationships. The dataset for this study includes imported artifacts from six Canaanite sites, Gezer, Megiddo, Dan, and Hazor along the Via Maris, and Halif, and Lachish as examples of inland down-the-line exchange. A bipartite network linking these sites and artifact-origin regions was constructed and projected into unipartite networks to examine relationships among these Canaanite sites and regions. This study takes a multiscalar approach to understanding these relationships. Analysis of these networks reveals strong connectivity between Canaan, Cyprus, Egypt, and the Aegean, reflecting the importance of the maritime exchange networks linking the southern Levant to the wider Mediterranean. At a regional scale, centrality measures remain relatively low and evenly distributed among Canaanite settlements, suggesting that no single polity monopolized access to imported goods. Interpreted through World Systems Analysis, Communities of Practice, and Actor-Network Theory, the results suggest that Canaan operated as an economically connected negotiated periphery within the Late Bronze Age Mediterranean world system.

The Late Bronze Age Collapse, Reconsidered

Doug Hartman (University of Texas Austin)

The "Late Bronze Age collapse" is famous in the field because many well-developed civilizations from the Mycenaean polities in ancient Greece to

the kingdom of Babylon in the east collapsed at nearly the same historical moment. Scholars have posited numerous theories to explain this phenomenon, including environmental factors like climate change, widespread earthquakes, mass migration events, disease, and more. This paper is a reconsideration of the human factors which contributed to the collapse of the LBA international order. Using evidence drawn from archaeology, iconography, and textual sources, I build on recent scholarship identifying the "Sea Peoples" with piracy. The sea-based raiders proved to be a substantial challenge to the great powers like Hattu and Egypt and to smaller polities in the Levant in part because of the technological innovations of the period related to long-distance sea-based trade. Using modern insights from the study of international relations and military strategy, I will also explore human factors from the perspective of the Great Powers, the asymmetric nature of the threat the "Sea Peoples" posed to the Great Powers, and the effects of these raids on their relationships. I will argue that negligence, corruption, and failed political policy contributed to their ineffective responses in changing circumstances and ultimately contributed to the downfall of the greater system.

Discovery, Excavation and Documentation of Soil-Cut Shaft Tombs: A Geoarchaeological Insight from Newe Efrayim, Israel

Gilad Itach (Israel Antiquities Authority), Nimrod Wieler (Israel Antiquities Authority), Yossi Elisha (Israel Antiquities Authority), Yaniv Agmon (Israel Antiquities Authority)

In recent years, an extensive burial ground was uncovered at Newe Efrayim, north of the Ayalon Valley, where more than 1,300 sealed Intermediate Bronze Age tombs were excavated. Unlike the well-known rock-cut shaft tombs, which are relatively easy to detect, these burials were cut directly into the soil. Their subtle archaeological signatures make them difficult to identify, and they are often discovered only during modern construction activities. Based on three years of fieldwork, this talk presents an applied geoarchaeological methodology that integrates meticulous excavation practices, detailed sediment characterization, and site formation analysis. Given the vulnerability of such burial grounds to ongoing development, the tools developed at Newe Efrayim represent a significant advance in the systematic identification, investigation, and documentation of soil-cut shaft tombs.

The Border Between Egypt and Mittani and the Chronology of the Amarna Letters

Francesco Ignazio De Magistris (University of Lausanne)

The location of the border between Egypt and Mittani remains a persistent problem in the study of the Late Bronze Age Levant. While the Orontes valley is often invoked as the general zone of contact, the precise extent of each kingdom's political reach is still poorly defined. This presentation will argue that the chronology of the Late-18th Dynasty – as reflected in the Amarna letters and in the archive of Idanda of Qatna – provides three indicators capable of refining the political geography of the region. First, the early-Amarna Mittanian campaign against Amurru presupposes direct Mittanian access to the Lebanon mountains, placing the frontier at least as far south as Amurru. Second, the Idanda correspondence shows that Qatna only entered the Egyptian sphere relatively late, implying Mittanian authority there until the First Syrian War of Suppiluliuma of Hatti. Third, letters from cities in the Beqaa Valley indicate Egyptian control already in the reign of Amenhotep III, suggesting a northern boundary for Egyptian influence within the valley. Taken together, these lines of evidence point to a frontier located south of Qatna and to the likelihood that the Beqaa was integrated into the Egyptian territory. More broadly, the study highlights how chronological synchronisation across archives can resolve long-standing debates on imperial borders.

At the Crossroads of the Shephelah: Northern and Coastal Ceramic Influences in Stratum 7 at Tel Gezer

Charissa Wilson (The Lanier Center for Archaeology, Lipscomb University)

This paper presents a contextual and quantitative analysis of the ceramic assemblage from Stratum 7 at Tel Gezer, examining the presence and distribution of northern and coastal ceramic influences within the domestic material culture of the Iron IIA (late tenth–early ninth century B.C.E.). Drawing on the assemblage from Household Unit D and related contexts within the stratum's destruction horizon, the study integrates updated ceramic plates, statistical analysis of diagnostic sherds, and spatial distribution mapping of vessel types by room to reconstruct patterns of household consumption and interaction. Quantitative analysis of ceramic forms demonstrates the prevalence of vessels typical of the Iron IIA Shephelah, including a high number of vessels characterized by red-slipped and primarily hand-burnished surfaces. Within this predominantly Judahite repertoire, several forms and morphological traits exhibit clear parallels with assemblages known from the northern valleys and coastal sites. The distribution of these vessels across domestic rooms suggests their integration into routine household activities rather than elite or specialized contexts. The relative scarcity of imported vessels and finewares further confirms the non-elite character of the assemblage as opposed to the elite nature of the preceding Stratum 8. Situated within the Shephelah's zone of continuous interaction, the Stratum 7 ceramic corpus illustrates the coexistence of local traditions with ongoing selective northern and coastal influences circulating through regional networks during the Iron IIA.

10F. What's Up With That?: Museum Objects that Defy Interpretation (Workshop) (Williford A)

Chair(s): Carl Walsh, New York University; Ashley Arico, Art Institute of Chicago; Jen Thum, Harvard Art Museums

The Real Thing: The Curious Case of an Incense Burner in the Menil Collection

Leticia R. Rodriguez (University of Houston)

An incense burner in the Menil Collection (Houston, Texas), identified as Achaemenid Persian (dated 550-331 BCE), is one of numerous ancient objects acquired by John and Dominique de Menil between the 1960s and 1970s. The object is of the kind that would have been at home in the Achaemenid Persian court, gifted to Persian imperial officials, or brought by these officials to the satrapies where they were replicated in local workshops. Included in a 1978 exhibit titled "Art Survey: The Real Thing," (unpublished) at Rice University, the object has drawn attention from scholars who have argued both for and against its authenticity. This paper explores how such a work, which was once associated with the ruling elite and whose circulation had the potential power to resignify or alter established forms of expression, now exists in stasis, its networks of movement frozen, and proposes a reevaluation of the object that reintegrates it into its archaeological and art historical context.

An Enigmatic Middle Bronze Age Incised Clay Object from Kurd Qaburstan (Kurdistan Region of Iraq)

Tiffany Earley-Spadoni (University of Central Florida)

Unlike many of the objects considered in this workshop, this piece's provenance and provenience are not mysterious. Excavated in 2025 from the southern administrative sector of the destroyed Lower Town East palace at Kurd Qaburstan, likely ancient Qabra, the object is now housed in the Erbil Civilization Museum in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. The hand-fashioned, air-dried clay object is nearly flat, approximately 10 cm wide, with a curved lower edge, and a break along its upper edge. Its obverse preserves the lower half of two net-skirted individuals, an incised scene depicting them facing one another. Although the imagery is familiar in Mesopotamian visual culture, the object itself resists classification within known categories of incised clay objects from the period. In keeping with the aims of the workshop, the presentation will outline the archaeological context of the find and provide detailed images, inviting participants to draw on their collective expertise to help situate this charming yet perplexing artifact within the broader landscape of Mesopotamian material culture.

What's Up with Votive Reuse?

Georgia H. Vance (Johns Hopkins University)

This paper considers an enigmatic case of votive reuse from Early Dynastic Mesopotamia. A broken stone vessel, museum no. CBS15608, was recovered at Tell al 'Ubaid by Leonard Woolley in the 1920's. The object originally contained a 10–12-line cuneiform inscription, which was partially cut down and obscured when the vessel was reworked during its "second life". The content of the inscription, though poorly preserved, suggests the vessel originally functioned as an ex-voto dedication by King A-Ane-Pada. Yet, the uninscribed pieces of the vessel exhibit different patina and surface treatment from the inscribed fragment, prompting questions about multiple stages of reuse or intentional breakage. As several scholars have noted, such cases of reuse problematize the permanence a votive dedication was supposed to offer, as do practices that damage the integrity of the inscription. While the exact conditions of dedication remain unattainable, this vessel provides the opportunity to explore the interpretive problems posed by objects with many lives, especially when material recycling or intentional fragmentation may be involved. This short discussion will be contextualized with other cases of votive reuse in Mesopotamia, and may stimulate cross-cultural comparisons, such as the phenomenon of spolia.

A Possible (but Perhaps Unlikely) Metal Mold from Khirbet et-Tannur

Sarah E. Wenner (American Center of Research)

Nelson Glueck and team excavated Khirbet et-Tannur in 1937. Among the objects he brought back with him to the US and soon sold to the Cincinnati Art Museum was a rectangular, sandstone object (33.5 x 12.1 x 10.6 cm) with a star shaped cut into one end. The cavities themselves are irregular, and there are traces of burning around the cuts. The publication of the Khirbet et-Tannur material in 2013 suggests that the object may have been a metal mold, but there is no evidence of metal working on the site, and it remains unclear what sort of object it could have produced. A maker's mark has also been suggested, but the deep, uneven carvings do not appear like other recovered Khirbet et-Tannur inscriptions. Consultation with scholars specializing in the Nabataeans, Jordan, or metal working have failed to identify any parallels or suggestions. The object almost went on display when CAM reinstalled the temple, but ultimately it was excluded from the reinstalled gallery because its purpose what unclear. What's up with this?

Rediscovered but Resistant to Identification…

Annie Caubet (Emerita Louvre Museum)

A Descriptive Atlas of the Cesnola Collection of Cypriote Antiquities in the Metropolitan Museum of Art; II, plateLXXVIII,703-6, Cesnola presents "a remarkable vase and stand in the form of a hermaphrodite Aphrodite and her chair." Myres' Handbook of The Cesnola Collection of Antiquities from Cyprus (1914, p. 337) states that "the throne is not now in the Collection." Without having seen the objects, in 1993, Vassos Karageorghis published the back view from the CesnolaAtlas in The Coroplastic Art of Ancient Cyprus, II, p.53. In 2009, curators from the then Department of the Arts of Africa, Oceania, and the Americas at The Metropolitan Museum brought the two pieces to the attention of Joan R. Mertens, curator in the Department of Greek and Roman Art. They were transferred to the Greek and Roman Department, as 74.51.6715a.b, and published in The Cesnola Collection of Cypriot Art: Terracottas (MMA, online publication, 1st revised edition, 2018, pp.284-291). Annie Caubet has identified the chair as a characteristic example of Late Cypriot III, Proto-White Painted Ware, ca. 1200-1050 BC. The seated figure shows none of the well known characteristics of Cypriote coroplasty. It cannot be ancient Cypriot for stylistic and archaeometric reasons, and Caubet and Mertens found no parallels in the culture of America, the Near East and ancient Europe. Further investigation into archaeological activity in Cyprus, trade in antiquities, the production of forgeries, the vagaries of objects in museums, and scholars' sensitivities during the 19th century.

Unmasking a Coffin Face at the Art Institute of Chicago

Luiza Osorio G. Silva (University of California, Irvine), Ashley Arico (Art Institute of Chicago)

The Art Institute of Chicago's ancient Egyptian collection includes a large (approximately 41 x 38 cm) so-called "mask" that appears to come from a wooden anthropoid coffin. The face, which is painted red, is topped with a black-and-white striped headdress and an unusual feature: a line of small black marks below the headdress seemingly meant to represent natural hair. Though anthropoid coffins (and therefore also coffin faces) were quite common after the Middle Kingdom (ca. 1650 BCE), this rare feature does not represent a major trend in coffin decoration. Our research, which has been complicated by a lack of comparable objects, has led us to suggest that the "mask" may date to the Late Period (perhaps the Twenty-Sixth Dynasty, ca. 664–525 BCE) and originate in the northern Nile Valley. In this workshop, we seek further comparanda for this uncommon representation of natural hair, as well as for the coffin fragment's large scale, which might help us narrow down its dating and provenance. We would also welcome a discussion of the ways in which fragmentary coffin faces are treated in museum collections: is the term "mask" applicable or useful, or merely confusing?

An Unusual Figural Ostracon from Tell el-Amarna

Jacquelyn Williamson (George Mason University), Fabien Balestra (Amarna Project), Delphine Driaux (Amarna Project; Austrian Archaeological Institute - Austrian Academy of Sciences), Anna Stevens (Amarna Project, McDonald Institute for Archaeological Research, University of Cambridge)

During the 2025 excavation season at the Great Aten Temple, the team unearthed an unusual ostracon (object number 46000). It was discovered at the rear of the temple and the find spot suggests it was deposited there in the 12th-13rd year of Akhenaten's reign. The ostracon was originally one-third of a small pottery bowl, hastily made and poorly finished. Mud encrustation on the exterior suggests that the bowl originally covered the neck of a vessel, below a mud seal. On the inner face is a black-painted image of a face in profile, most likely Akhenaten, added after the bowl was broken. A series of six lines radiate from a single point near the base of the 'hair' to the edges of the sherd and encompass the face and neck. Another line projects from the base of the skull. An arc runs between the edge of the potsherd to a point near (but not at) the center of the line, then intersects the chin and continues beyond the corner of the mouth. It is difficult to determine whether these lines were drawn before or after the face. Most of these lines and arcs do not obviously intersect key points of the design but together may form a radiating type of artist's grid we have not observed previously at Amarna. We hope the workshop will shed light on this arcing/radiating grid to contextualize the ostracon not only in Amarna art, but in Egyptian art in general.

Snakes on a Plaque: Game, Ritual Device, or None of the Above?

Carl R. Walsh (New York University)

In 1991 the University of Geneva Archaeological Mission in Sudan found a curious terracotta plaque amongst a ritual deposit near a Middle Kerma tumulus tomb at Kerma, Sudan. Since then, this object has been kept at the Museum of Art and History in Geneva (027996), and has remained an enigmatic object without a firm identification. Its circular shape and molded spiral pattern seem to allude to the shape of a snake, but it has no direct parallels anywhere else at the site. Could it be a game board or some kind, perhaps related to the Egyptian board game Mehen? Could its findspot amongst a funerary ritual deposit suggest a religious function? Or could it be something else entirely? Help me to gain some further insight on this object!

10G. Ancient Languages and Linguistics I (Williford B)

Chair(s): Brendan Hainline, The Metropolitan Museum of Art

Borrowing Judgements: The Case of Biblical Hebrew שְׁפָטִים and the East vs. West Semitic Development of √θPṬ

Tommaso Bacci (The University of Chicago)

The plural noun שְׁפָטִים, attested in Biblical Hebrew only in its plural form and reconstructed by the lexica as a *qitl noun (שֶׁפֶט*) in the traditional lexica, occurs almost exclusively in the so-called corpus of Priestly texts and in the book of Ezekiel (Exod 6:6; 7:4; 12:12; Num 33:4; Ezek 5:10, 15; 11:9; 14:21; 16:41; 25:11; 28:22, 26; 30:14, 19; Prov 19:29; 2 Chr 24:24), underscoring a clear corpus-specific usage of this term given the established lexical relationship between these corpora. Within NWS, this nominal form is securely attested only in Ugaritic (ṯpṭ), while the rest of the attestations of this root in the NWS branch are characterized by verbal and deverbal (participial and m-preformative) forms and the absence of simple nominal forms, with the exception of the aforementioned instances of שְׁפָטִים. Conversely, the Akkadian evidence highlights a predominance of the nominal cognate form šipṭu, while verbal forms are rarer and restricted to OB and Mari Akkadian. In this paper, I argue that the shared PS root underwent two distinct developments in the East and West Semitic branches, with the former primarily developing nominal forms and the latter developing verbal and deverbal forms. The instances of שְׁפָטִים in BH should be explained by language contact with 1st-Millennium Akkadian and by phenomena of literary reuse and reanalysis within the Priestly work literary strata and the Ezekiel texts.

The Shape of Language in Ancient Egypt: Semiotics Beyond "Just Text" in the Book of Kemyt

Aurore Motte (University of Liège)

In this paper, I examine the Book of Kemyt as a material and semiotic artefact, exploring how scribal forms shape and are shaped by social, political, and cultural factors. Rather than treating language as immaterial, I foreground hands and scripts as ever-present formalizations of ancient Egyptian language. Just as printed texts are shaped by typefaces, manuscript texts are shaped by hands: they materialize language in ways that are never neutral but always socially and ideologically inflected. Although textual language is often experienced as "just text," it is embedded within a stratigraphy of material and formal features (e.g., writing medium, orthography, graphic layout, discourse genre) that structure interpretation. Building on scholarship that rematerializes writing, including recent 'fontroversies' (mediated controversies over fonts), I argue that the Kemyt hand is not merely a stylistic variant of a more cursive script. Instead, it constitutes a critical site of metadiscursive reflection in its own right. The Kemyt hand participates in projects of iconicity, indexicality, and symbolism, and is subject to ideologies of appropriateness that demand a semiotic alignment between script and genre. In this paper, I show how a combination of semiotic and material approaches reveals hands and script as complicit in the political and cultural dimensions of ancient Egyptian social life. Ultimately, this work challenges dichotomies between language and materiality and emphasize that text is always socially situated and materially embodied within a dynamic course of action.

Contact at the Court: Hattian Cultural Domination but Hittite Linguistic Domination

Petra M. Goedegebuure (ISAC, University of Chicago)

When the Hittites took control of Central Anatolia, they encountered a Hattian speaking population. Though Hittite became the language of the administration, the new rulers borrowed Hattian words belonging to government, architecture, administration, religion, but also names and gods. Was Hattian therefore the language of prestige? If so, it left no trace in the grammar of Hittite. There is however one unique text that shows "Hattianized" Hittite, an Old Hittite oracle inquiry performed by a Wise Woman from Hattusa. Soysal (2000) convincingly argued that her "un-Hittite" phonetics showed that she was a native speaker of Hattian. Examination of the case endings now provides additional evidence of Hattian interference. Hittite must have been a foreign language for the Wise Woman. She had to speak it to communicate at the court in Hittite. This supports diglossia in the Old Hittite period, with Hittite as the language of prestige and Hattian as the vernacular (Archi 2015). Through Hattian did not become the language of prestige, the adoption at the court of local culture implies acculturated elite dominance: speakers of Hittite ruled over a large indigenous population and therefore needed to adapt to local culture to legitimize their rule.

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"When One Word Means Its Own Opposite: The Enantiosemy of Ancient Egyptian ḫwi and Its Typological Implications"

Fernando Gael Papola (L'École pratique des hautes études (EPHE), Paris AOROC)

*Virtual

Enantiosemy — the co-existence within a single lexeme of semantically opposed meanings — presents an stimulating theoretically productive challenge in historical lexicology. This study examines a particularly complex case in the ancient Egyptian lexicon: the root ḫwi, which simultaneously encodes meanings of forceful outward dispersal ('to beat,' 'to throw,' 'to thresh flax') and of convergent collection ('to gather the harvest'; sḫwi, 'to collect, to assemble'), before extending into the hydrometeorological domain ('to surge,' 'to flood,' 'to rain'). Through morphosyntactic analysis of collocational patterns across textual genres from the Old Kingdom to the Late Period, this study potentially demonstrates that the enantiosemous shift in ḫwi is semantically motivated by its physical and agricultural scenario — the threshing of grain — in which the same physical action simultaneously scatters chaff and concentrates yield. The s-prefix form sḫwi is argued to function as a possible enantiosemy marker, generating the antithetic 'gathering' meaning from a 'dispersal' base, paralleling the Arabic IV-form causative (ʾafʿala) in its ṣalb ('privation') function, where the prefix generates a contrary sense (e.g., ʾašakā 'to cure of illness' from šakā 'to complain of illness'). Following Polis and Grossman's polycentric model of Egyptian polysemy, the paper resists reducing ḫwi's network to a single Grundbedeutung, proposing instead two major attractor senses — IMPACT and SELF-MOTION/EMISSION — whose interplay licenses the extension from 'to throw itself' to 'to overflow' to 'to rain.' This analysis ultimately explores how ancient Egyptian speakers conceptually organized lived experience through lexical ambivalence, encoding in a single root the full dialectic of dispersal and reunion that characterized their agrarian world.

Hittite in Contact: Examining a Tri-Literate Scribal Tradition

Georgia Ramadanovic (University of New Hampshire)

Hittite is written using three different orthographic systems—Hittite, Sumerian, and Akkadian. This paper explores the motivations for its implementation of foreign words and phrases through scholarship on Hittite itself, current linguistic scholarship, and analyses of tablets to connect disparate research. I am working with texts CTH 1 (The Anitta Text), CTH 61 (Annals of Muršili II), CTH 261 (Instructions for Border Guards), and CTH 324 (Telipinu Myth), which comprise a spread across time and genre. Current evidence suggests the use of Sumerograms varied based on these two dimensions, with New Hittite texts, ritual texts, and omen texts having the highest volume compared to older texts and those of other genres. These borrowings are sometimes accompanied by a phonetic complement indicating the underlying Hittite word. Hittite scribes often change word order phrase-specifically depending on the language, inserting Sumerian words into Hittite order when using phonetic complements or preserving Sumerian word order and leaving the words uncomplemented, aligning with modern sociolinguistic theories around borrowing and code-switching. Specific categories of words and noun phrases (NPs) borrowed are of particular interest, as Hittite's usage of Sumerian script follows the hierarchy of grammatical borrowability with the highest-frequency borrowings bearing greater lexical (word-meaning) weight, most often nouns or adverbs. Conversely, Hittite borrows Akkadian non-lexical words from closed grammatical classes most frequently, even borrowing prepositions, which Hittite lacks, contradicting conventional borrowability

scales and pointing toward ERIC (Essentially Rooted In Conversation) loans rather than the chiefly shorthand Sumerian borrowings.

10H. Towards a Working Ancient Economy II (Williford C)

Chair(s): Andrew Deloucas, Harvard University; Taha Yurttas, Harvard University; Eric Aupperle, Harvard University

Financial Penalties in Old Babylonian Laws and Judgments

Pavla Rosenstein (Yale)

An approximate one quarter of the 282 šumma clauses in the Laws of Hammurabi (LH) outline financial penalties, which can be categorized further into 40 talionic fines that seek to replace like with like, and 21 poena multiplicata fines that seek to compensate the victim at a rate of 2-30x the claim of the case. The two penalty types address different categories of wrongdoing. Talionic fines cluster around physical injury and professional negligence through the imposition of monetary compensation. They reflect the status of the victim and offer a means through which to settle claims. Multiplicata fines are reserved for cases of legal corruption, contractual breaches and theft. They reflect institutional hierarchy and appear to function as a deterrent for the most serious of material cases that are not subject to physical or capital punishment but nevertheless have the potential to bring the perpetrator to financial ruin. A comparative review of these financial penalties in LH together with those in the Laws of Lipit-Ishtar (LL), the Laws of Eshnunna (LE) and across Old Babylonian court records demonstrates that talionic fines were frequent, while multiplicata fines were rare, offering an insight into the practicability of the economic principles underpinning the laws in a court setting.

Collective Action Theory and Debt Remission Decrees

Eva von Dassow (University of Minnesota)

Collective action theory explains the practice of decreeing andurāru, "restoration," annulling subjects' debts to the state as well as non-commercial debts to non-state creditors. Collective action theory, as described by Blanton and Fargher (2008), models the state in a simplified schema comprising "rulers" and "taxpayers," composite parties that stand in a bargaining relationship with each other. Rulers must obtain taxpayers' compliance with demands for revenue, while taxpayers must constrain rulers to operate in their interest. Taxpayers' bargaining position is weakened insofar as their rulers rely on external resources or exercise direct control of internal resources. Conversely, it is strengthened insofar as it is their own surplus and force of arms that rulers rely on. When rulers depend on taxpayers' contributions, they enact policies to promote compliance with revenue demands and develop systems to regulate matters to their subjects' satisfaction. The patterns of decreeing "restoration" accord with the predictions of this model. Restoration decrees were routinely issued during the Old Babylonian period, which features the elaboration of regulatory infrastructure to manage revenue collection, adjudicate disputes, and provide remedies for indebted taxpayers. The requisite infrastructure first developed late in the Early Dynastic period, when "restoration" decrees are attested under the Sumerian term amargi. By contrast, no such decrees are known for the Akkad or Ur III Dynasties, which sought to maximize internal resources under their direct control and acquisition of external resources through military campaigns. Rather than being measures to address economic crises, "restoration" decrees index popular restraint on ruling authority.

Date Cultivation and Commercial Investment in Late Achaemenid Babylonia

Ryan Hart (Harvard University)

The Late Achaemenid period in Babylonia (484-331 BCE) is far less well documented than the preceding century and a half. The Babylonian cuneiform record from the Long Sixth Century is extraordinarily rich, and this period is marked by high levels of commercialization and monetization in Babylonia. However, evidence from the subsequent Late Achaemenid period is far more limited, making it difficult to trace the long term consequences of the emergence of high levels of commercialization and monetization in the Babylonian economy. This paper examines two agricultural lease contracts from the late 5th century related to the planting of new date orchards. It argues that these texts reveal the existence of long term commercial investments in land improvement being made by partnerships of Persian landholders and Babylonian businessmen. These two case studies suggest that the economy of Late Achaemenid Babylonia may have been more commercially active than is often assumed, and that rather than being absentee landlords, Persian landholders may have played an important role in Babylonian commerce during this period.

Engraved Connections: Intaglios, Craft Mobility, and Mediterranean Interaction in Early South India

Sangeetha Raja (Haifa Center for Mediterranean History (HCMH), Gil Gambash (Haifa Center for Mediterranean History (HCMH), University of Haifa, Israel), David Friesem (Haifa Center for Mediterranean History (HCMH), University of Haifa, Israel), Marxia Gandhi (Tamil Nadu State Department of Archaeology (TNSDA), Chennai)

* Virtual

Mediterranean artifacts in early historic South India are often interpreted as markers of long-distance commerce or elite consumption. Engraved gemstone intaglios, however, offer a more precise lens for examining the social and technological dimensions of Indo-Mediterranean interaction. This paper analyzes the distribution, iconography, raw materials, and engraving techniques of intaglios (ca. 400 BCE–100 CE) from coastal ports such as Pattinam and Arikamedu, as well as inland centers including Keeladi and Kodumanal. Rather than treating these objects solely as imported luxuries, this study situates them within networks of craft transmission and identity signaling. Comparison with Mediterranean glyptic traditions—considering stylistic conventions and engraving practices—suggests that some specimens reflect not only the circulation of finished objects but also the movement of technical knowledge and itinerant craftsmen. Their presence beyond littoral ports, including inland production landscapes, indicates that Mediterranean-linked interactions were embedded within regional economic systems rather than confined to coastal enclaves. By foregrounding small, highly mobile artifacts, this paper shifts attention from bulk commodities to craft mobility and embedded exchange networks. It argues that intaglios functioned as portable markers of affiliation and participation in trans-regional communities, demonstrating how technological knowledge and social identities circulated alongside goods in early Indian Ocean exchange systems.

10I. Archaeology of the Black Sea and the Caucasus (Astoria)

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

Feeding the Frontier: Supplying the Army on the Northeastern Edge of the Empire

Paulina Komar (University of Warsaw), Edyta Marzec (University of Warsaw), Maciej Sierakowski (UKSW)

How was the Roman army supplied at the far edges of empire? This presentation will explore this question through a study of amphoras from the Roman fort at Apsaros, in the region of ancient Colchis on the northeastern Black Sea coast (today's Gonio, Georgia). Drawing on both typological assessment and quantifications of the material as well as archaeometric analyses of provenance and contents, it will reveal the long-distance movement of commodities such as wine, olive oil and garum into this peripheral military zone. These data illuminate not only supply mechanisms but also the rhythms of consumption and the integration of Colchis into wider imperial economic networks. By foregrounding material evidence from amphoras, this study offers a new perspective on the logistics of frontier life and demonstrates how archaeometric approaches can refine our understanding of connectivity, resilience, and daily practice at the margins of the Roman world.

Highland Horizons: Reassessing Kura-Araxes Settlement and Adaptation at Tsaghkasar-1, Armenia

James Fraser (American Center of Research, Jordan), Sona Hovsepyan (Institute of Archaeology of Armenia)

The Tsaghkasar Archaeological Project (TAP) is a joint Armenian–U.S. initiative of the Institute of Archaeology of the Armenian Academy of Sciences and the W. F. Albright Institute of Archaeological Research. The project investigates Tsaghkasar-1, a substantial Kura-Araxes I (KA I) settlement dating to c. 2900 cal BCE, situated at approximately 2100 m asl on the volcanic slopes of Mt. Aragats. The KA phenomenon is increasingly understood not as a homogeneous cultural package but as a constellation of regionally articulated communities extending across the South Caucasus, eastern Anatolia, and the Levant. Yet high-altitude settlements remain underrepresented in discussions of KA chronology, regional variability, and economic organization. Tsaghkasar-1 provides a rare opportunity to examine how early KA communities structured life in sub-alpine environments. This paper presents the results of a 2026 pilot survey, which combined pedestrian survey, differential GPS, drone-based remote sensing, and GIS analysis to: establish the full spatial extent of the settlement and its associated mortuary landscape; document architectural patterning and ceramic distributions; and quantify areas already impacted by an encroaching sand mine and intensified agricultural activity. By defining site boundaries, identifying zones of architectural integrity, and assessing differential disturbance across the slope, the survey provides the first comprehensive geospatial framework for Tsaghkasar, revising earlier estimates of settlement extent and spatial organization. These results establish the foundation for a multi-year excavation program aimed at refining internal KA chronology, clarifying regional variability, and reassessing highland economic strategies within the broader Caucasus–Anatolia interaction sphere.

New Findings on Major Holocene Environmental Shifts in the Javakheti Highland and Their Influence on Bronze Age Megalithic Culture

Mikheili Lobjanidze (Ilia State University, Georgia), Levan Navrozashvili (Ilia State University, Georgia), Nino Ustiashvili (Ilia State University, Georgia), Felix Reize (University of Cologne, Germany), Hannes Laermanns (University of Cologne, Germany), Alfred Vespremeanu Stroe (University of Bucharest, Romania), Mikheil Elashvili (Ilia State University, Georgia; Bridgewater State University)

*Virtual

This study focuses on the Javakheti Volcanic Highland in southern Georgia, a high-altitude region characterized by a semi-arid climate and fragile mountain ecosystems. Archaeological evidence from the area suggests substantial shifts in climate and environmental conditions since the Bronze Age: megalithic settlements and fortifications are frequently located above 2000 m, reaching elevations of 2500–2600 m (conditions that are largely unsuitable for modern habitation), with some burial mounds (kurgans) located within lakes. High-mountain lakes and wetlands, characteristic for the area, are highly sensitive to environmental change and serve as valuable geoarchives. Previous studies indicate that during the early third millennium BC, forests were widespread, and the upper forest limit extended to 2500–2600m. Sediment core data from Lake Paravani further suggest substantial fluctuations in lake levels, potentially submerging archaeological sites and confirming earlier fragmentary observations. These findings point to a significantly milder and more humid climate compared to present-day conditions. This research expands the spatial coverage of paleoenvironmental records by analyzing sediment cores from Lake Khanchali and a paleolake near Lake Tabatskuri. Cores were analyzed through high resolution XRF scanning, magnetic susceptibility, total organic carbon (TOC), carbon and nitrogen content, and grain size distribution. The resulting stratigraphic profiles were merged with existing regional datasets to construct an integrated reconstruction of major environmental shifts during the Holocene. Results were compared with the spatial and temporal distribution of archaeological sites, providing new insights into the environmental context of megalithic cultures and contributes to a better understanding of past human–environment interactions.

Pastoralism, Mobility, and the Search for Raw Materials in the South Caucasus: Insights from Archaeozoology and Isotopic Analysis in Late Prehistory

Adeline Vautrin (Ruhr-Universität Bochum, Bochum, Germany), Irina Gambashidze (Georgian National Museum, Tbilisi, Georgia), Delphine Bosch (Université de Montpellier), Catherine Chauvel (Université de Paris), Giorgi Gogochuri (Georgian National Museum, Tbilisi, Georgia), Gia Chilingarashvili (Georgian National Museum, Tbilisi, Georgia), Svend Hansen (German Archaeological Institute), Marjan Mashkour (Muséum national d'Histoire naturelle), Rémi Berthon (Muséum national d'Histoire naturelle), Thomas Stöllner (Ruhr-Universität Bochum, Bochum, Germany)

Mountains define the main territory of the South Caucasus. Rich in natural resources and exploited for both their minerals and vegetation, occupation of this elevated area is attested as early as the Palaeolithic. The introduction of the Neolithic way of life at the end of the seventh millennium BCE, however, brought new strategies of occupation in its challenging environments, especially pertaining to the survival of livestock in harsh winter months. This contribution will present new results obtained from archaeological sites of the Greater Caucasus range and the Javakheti Plateau in Georgia. Through the application of classical archaeozoology methods and isotopic analysis on carbonate (δ18O, δ13C and 87Sr/86Sr) of the teeth of domestic bovids, this presentation will address the exploitation of raw materials in the South Caucasus and shed light upon pastoral mobilities, the season of occupation of the sites, and zootechnical knowledge like foddering and season of birth during the Chalcolithic and the Early Bronze Age.

Preliminary Results from the Kakavadzor Archaeological Project

Antonietta Catanzariti (Smithsonian Institution), Shannon Martino (Morton College, Illinois), Terri Tanaka (University of California, Berkeley)

Just one hour west of Yerevan lies the village of Kakavadzor, where the site of Kakavaberd was identified by Boris Gasparyan's team in the early 2010s. Preliminary investigations of the area have revealed the presence of rock paintings and petroglyphs dating to the Chalcolithic period, as well as occupation layers from the Iron Age, Bronze Age and Chalcolithic period on the lower slope of the Kakavaberd butte. However, no systematic archaeological excavation of the area has been conducted. In 2024, the Kakavadzor Archaeological Project (KAP) team carried out a preliminary investigation of the entire area (5 km2) and mapped the main archaeological features visible on the surface. This survey has led the team to understand the area as an archaeological complex with areas that played different functions over time. In 2025, the team began an excavation on the butte and identified a retaining wall and several levels of occupation datable to the Iron Age as well as mixed materials from the Early Bronze Age onward. This presentation will outline the preliminary investigations conducted in the area and highlight some of the results from the 2026 field season.

11A. Africa in the Ancient World III (Continental A)

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

Slag at the Crossroads: Mapping Metallurgy as Evidence of Exchange at Jebel Lahdid

Bailey Stephenson (Mississippi State University)

The mountain Jebel Lahdid, home to the famous early human site Bizmune Cave, also possesses slag tied to early iron production. Mississippi State University in conjunction with the University of Arizona and the Institut National des Sciences de l'Archéologie et du Patrimoine (INSAP) has collected survey data in the area from 2022-2025 to investigate other archaeological activity. Large piles of slag, the remnant of the iron smelting process, were among the diverse range of materials found on the surveys. The nearby island of Mogodor, near the modern-day city of Essouria, has evidence of both Phoenician and Roman occupations (including iron slag) and represents a peripheral outpost of both ancient empires. While Mogodor is not currently accessible to conduct archaeology, Jebel Lahdid is much more accessible and is the nearest and most obvious iron source to the island. This paper will outline the results of these pedestrian surveys and more intensive examinations of individual slag piles as a first step towards a temporal association. It will also examine the piles through the lens of frontier and borderland theory to understand their places in the broader archaeological landscape of Western Morocco.

Coins and Coin Use in Northeast Africa

Tasha Vorderstrasse (University of Chicago)

Narratives surrounding the economies of Northeast Africa have long discounted coin use amongst the populations who lived there. Archaeological evidence points to the presence of coins in all these places in the Roman-early Medieval periods, but the study of actual coin circulation has tended to downplay the presence of these coins and their significance to the communities who used them. In Nubia, it has been suggested that coins were not used at all, despite archaeological and textual evidence to the contrary. Coine were minted In the Aksumite Empire, but scholars have largely stated that these coins were produced in response to Aksum's desire to conduct international trade. The archaeological evidence, which has largely been ignored, shows that coins could and did circulate in both cities and the countryside in the Aksumite Empire. While coinage may be rare in the Fezzan and Libya, by the 11th century CE the city of Zuwila in the Fezzan in Libya was producing its own coinage. While coinage has been well studied in Egypt in contrast to the other parts of Northeast Africa, gaps still remain. The importance of coins produced beyond the mint of Alexandria has largely not been considered. This particularly includes the coins that are likely to have been minted in the city of Panopolis/Akhmim, for instance. This paper will compare and contrast the different regions to one another in order to come to a better appreciation of coin use in this region in the first millennium CE.

Across an Askut Gaming Board: Theories of Cultural Transmission and Entanglement

Stuart Tyson T. Smith (University of California, Santa Barbara), Anne Dunn-Vaturi (The Metropolitan Museum of Art), Alex de Vogt (Drew University)

We engage both the quantitative and qualitative aspects of cultural transmission and cultural entanglement between Egypt, Nubia (Sudan) and the Levant taking as our point of departure a recently rediscovered game board fragment excavated at Askut, Sudan, during the Aswan High Dam Salvage Campaign. This fragmentary unbaked clay board for the game of 58 holes provides an opportunity to combine the study of gaming with an examination of intercultural interactions between Nubia, Egypt, and the Mediterranean world through a reconsideration of the game's chronology and social milieu. An overview of sixteen known examples of this type places the Askut find in a broader comparative context that helps to date and situate the boards in their respective regions. The unique archaeological context makes it possible to contrast the insights gleaned from the formal elements of game boards, as shown in a previous quantitative analysis using cultural transmission theory, and their design and decorative aspects using a model of intercultural consumption transcending social and political boundaries. Cultural entanglement and more specifically the Late Bronze Age International Style are generally framed as phenomena connected to an overarching elite culture. However, the modest material of boards found in Nubia, fired and unfired clay, contrasts with boards from Egypt and the southern Levant made of valuable materials like ebony and ivory. This patterning adds detail to the understanding of this game within cultural transmission theory, suggesting that in the context of empire intercultural interaction reached down the social ladder into the everyday.

Jewelry from Tombos Cemetery: An Analysis of Burial Goods from Third Cataract Sudan (1450-750 BCE)

Melanie Kreutz (Purdue University), Michele Buzon (Purdue University), Stuart Tyson Smith (University of California, Santa Barbara), El Hassan Ahmed Mohamed (National Corporation for Antiquities and Museums)

The cemetery at Tombos, an Egyptian colonial community founded ca. 1450 BCE on the east bank of the Nile at the Third Cataract in Sudanese Nubia, provides a valuable context for examining identity formation during and after the New Kingdom period. The cemetery was continuously used from the New Kingdom into the Napatan period (ca. 1450-750 BCE). The cemetery is organized into three primary areas: the Northern cemetery of middle-class chamber tombs, the Eastern cemetery of tumulus graves, and the Western cemetery of pyramid, shaft, and chapel tombs. This paper presents an inventory and contextual analysis of jewelry excavated from burials across these three cemetery areas between 2000 and 2020. The assemblage includes jasper penannular earrings, faience and glass beads, Bes amulets, Nerita shell beads, and pendants shaped as fish, hearts, and lotus seeds. Artifacts are analyzed in relation to cemetery area, tomb type, time period, age, sex of the associated deceased, other grave goods, and strontium isotope indication of geographic origin, where available. Patterns in material and style illuminate how individuals at Tombos combined and integrated Egyptian and Nubian forms of adornment. By examining personal adornment as a form of material expression, this paper explores how identity was built and expressed within a colonial and postcolonial context. In doing so, it contributes to broader discussions of cultural entanglement by showing how jewelry functioned as a medium through which individuals expressed identity.

The Fourth Cataract and Egyptian Records

Bruce B. Williams (ISAC, The University of Chicago)

The construction of the Merawi Dam at the Fourth Cataract initiated major projects to salvage archaeology in the region. Considerable remains from all phases of antiquity were recovered, but the materials from major phases of Second and First Millennia BCE were difficult to identify. Although initially identified with the Kerma and Napatan Cultures respectively, it has become clear that objects and practices differed significantly from these known entities. In the earlier Second Millennium, Egyptian records included Lower Nubia, Wawat, which they occupied, Medjay, in the Eastern Desert (Atbai), and Kush with its center and capital at Kerma. In execration texts, a bit later, Kush was joined by Shaat, Sai Island, in the valley and there were two entities, Awshek and Webat-Sepet, populated by Medjay. Near the end of the Second Intermediat Period, two new entities appear mentioned in a painted inscription added to the tomb of Sebek-Nakht at el-Kab which records an attack led by Kush that included forces from Kush, Wawat, the Isles of Khenthennefer, Punt, and the Meday. Still later, the soldier Ahmose, son of Ebana referred to campaigning in Upper Nubia, mentioning the "bad water," presumably rapids, of Khenthennefer. Thus, Khenthennefer, with islands and rapids, distinguished from Kush, would probably be the Fourth Cataract, reinforced by a mention much later of "gold of Khenthennefer," and there is evidence of intensive gold recovery in the region.

11B. Archaeology of Iran (Continental B)

Chair(s): Lara Fabian, University of California, Los Angeles

The Fairservis Afghan Survey: Retracing the Search for the Indo-Iranian Borderlands

Mitchell Allen (University of California Berkeley)

In 1949 and 1951, Walter Fairservis conducted extensive surveys of the southwest corner of Afghanistan as part of a larger project to define the Indo-Iranian borderlands. Fighting fierce weather, illness, lawlessness, and transportation difficulties over a broad region largely unexplored by western scholars, Fairservis created the first detailed description of the Helmand River basin and Afghan Sistan region in a 1961 monograph. Twenty five years later, the Helmand Sistan Project (HSP) retraced Fairservis's route and extended the study through much of the rest of the Sistan region using methods unavailable to their predecessor. As almost no archaeological work has been done in this area since the Soviet invasion of 1979, the HSP work stands as the "current" study of the region. This presentation traces the foundational path created by Fairservis in the earliest days of western archaeology of Sistan and how it shaped the work of HSP, our current knowledge of this region, and its position in Indo-Iranian borderlands.

Godin Tepe's Place in Time and Space: Reassessing the Chronology, Regional Context, and Administrative Origins of Period VI:1

Rasha Elendari (Independent Archaeologist)

The interpretation of Godin Tepe Period VI:1 has long centered on the so-called 'Oval Compound', originally described as a fortified colony of southern Mesopotamian merchants based on the presence of Late Uruk/Susa II–style artifacts and administrative technologies. This emphasis on southern Mesopotamian influence has obscured local traditions and broader regional interactions. Drawing on a reanalysis of the 1970s excavation archive, associated artifacts, and radiocarbon samples—together with a newly reconstructed architectural layout of the 'Oval Compound'—this paper reassesses earlier interpretations of the site. The findings highlight diverse cultural influences at Godin and strong ties with other Iranian highland sites, particularly the Proto-Elamite cultural sphere, reflected in architecture, material culture, and administrative practices. The evidence indicates that Godin occupied a central position as a highland hub along major regional routes that facilitated the movement of people, materials, and administrative practices across interconnected landscapes and cultural zones. Rather than representing a single externally imposed colonial enclave, Godin VI:1 appears as an integrated highland community participating in dynamic interregional networks. The occupation also suggests overlap between Late Uruk/Susa II, Susa III, and Proto-Elamite traditions often treated as spatially and chronologically distinct. Finally, the results challenge rigid cultural periodizations and call for a reevaluation of existing chronologies and southern Mesopotamian-centric models of late fourth millennium BCE.

"Social Space" in the Achaemenid Palace: the "Harem" building at Persepolis Recontextualised

Charlotte Howley (UCLA)

"Surrounded by the guardrooms of the watchful eunuchs was a tier of six apartments to house the royal ladies. Each tier consisted of a tiny hall whose roof was upheld by only four columns, and a bedroom so minute that even with a single occupant the atmosphere must have been stifling…" So said A.T. Olmstead (1948, 285) of the building identified by the archaeologists Herzfeld and Schmidt as "The Harem of Xerxes" at the Achaemenid palace of Persepolis, imposing onto it Orientalist views of secluded royal women. Recent approaches to the Achaemenid court have pushed back against this, but alternative interpretations for the function of these buildings rest on flimsy evidence, leaving scholarship in state of aporia (Wilber 1969, 73; Razmjou 2010, 243). Therefore, in this paper, I intend to apply a combined approach to Herzfeld and Schmidt's "Harem", using Henri Lefebvre's "Trialectic of Spatiality"; Hillier and Hanson's 'Space Syntax' (1984); Tringham's "Life History" (1994; 1995), and my GIS-referenced finds database, supported by philological and art-historical analyses of the relief and inscriptional program, to allow the archaeology of this palace to speak for itself, bringing in another source of evidence on the structure of the Achaemenid court, without relying on problematic textual sources. Together, these three strands of evidence will allow us to recontextualise the "Harem of Xerxes" leading to a more nuanced understanding of its function and placing discussions of the Achaemenid court back within the built space of the palace.

Claiming the Cosmos: Royal Titulature and Imperial Ideology in Early Sasanian Iran from Sāsān to Shāpur I

Homayoun Khosheghbal (University of Iowa)

Sasanian kings employed various royal titles. Drawing on royal inscriptions, coinage, and historical sources, this paper traces the development of Sasanian titulature from Sāsān to Shāpur I and argues that, contrary to assumptions, these titles do not always reflect historical realities. Rather, they function as strategies for projecting authority and advancing Sasanian political doctrine in three phases. According to Ṭabarī, Sāsān ruled a province in Fārs and headed the Anāhitā temple of Eṣṭaḵr. He appears in Shāpur I's ŠKZ inscription merely as lord, while his successor Pāpak is styled king. This transition from religious authority to political power in Fārs constitutes the first phase. The second phase occurs under Ardashīr I, who began his political career as argbed (castle lord) of Dārābgerd. Following the death of his brother, King Shāpur, he adopted the title King of Ērān on his coinage while the last Arsacid ruler was still in power, later assuming the title King of Kings of Ērān, likely after the Battle of Hormozdgān. Under Shāpur I, the empire entered a third phase of expansion aimed at universal domination. Through campaigns against the Roman Empire and ideological initiatives, such as his support for Mani, Shāpur projected Sasanian authority more broadly. He introduced the title King of Kings of Ērān and Anērān, attested in his inscriptions and on two newly discovered coins linked to his campaigns, a title retained by later Sasanian kings.

Antemortem Health Indicators and Burial Status of the Bronze, and Seleuco-Parthian Period Burials, Tepe Hasanlu

Sara Soltani (Boston University)

From 1956 through 1977, Archaeologist Robert H. Dyson, Jr., directed excavations at Tepe Hasanlu in West Azerbaijan, Iran. In 2019, 113 skeletal remains were analyzed, which are held at the Pennsylvania Museum and the Iranian National Museum, using bioarchaeological and archaeological methods. The study aimed to investigate the evolution of burial practices of Low and High Mounds at Hasanlu, as well as population health and economic conditions over time. This research is significant because it represents the first study to analyze the skeletal remains of Tepe Hasanlu with relation to their burial space. This research was submitted in 2020 to Boston University's Forensic Anthropology Program in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science and has not been presented publically. It was hypothesized that pathological conditions were correlated with biological sex and the perceived economic/social status of burials from the Bronze through Seleuco-Parthian period. The results revealed that individual pathological conditions correspond with burials categorized into different perceived economic levels (Level 0, 1, and 2). Burials classified under Levels 1 and 2 show markedly different rates of individual pathological conditions; however, the Level 0 group demonstrated the greatest variability. Juvenile and female burials contained the highest quantities of grave goods compared to male burials, suggesting the presence of a social hierarchy reflected in funerary practices and expressions of loss.

11C. Ancient Mesopotamia – A Social History. Methods for Reconstructing Lived Worlds II (Continental C)

Chair(s): Steven Garfinkle, Western Washington University; Jana Mynářová, Charles University

Household Dossiers in the Old Babylonian Period: What Survived, Why, and What Can Be Learned

Amanda Podany (California State Polytechnic University, Pomona)

Some early- to mid-second millennium BCE Mesopotamian towns and cities have yielded a plethora of cuneiform documents from private houses and other non-institutional contexts. Other domestic quarters have, however, proven to be almost devoid of cuneiform sources when excavated. This paper will look at a number of case studies in order to explore possible reasons for these wide variations in numbers and types of documents, beyond the extent of and access to literacy among the inhabitants. These include the contexts in which a house or neighborhood was abandoned or built over and the existence of burned buildings, along with the types of documents that were stored (and for how long), recycled, purposefully broken, thrown away, or even used in later construction. All these accidents and decisions have affected the source material available for the study of Mesopotamian social history at the household level, and the types of studies that are possible. But even given the recognition of all that we must be missing, the texts that do survive are invaluable, providing insights into the lives and concerns of the inhabitants and their communities, insights that are rarely possible for other regions and eras of ancient history due to the disintegration of such documents when written on organic materials. Not only can we learn from social historians in other fields, but we can explore new approaches that these particular Mesopotamian dossiers and their contexts make possible.

Actions Speak Louder Than Names: Economic Behavior as an Identifier in Kassite Administrative Archives

Susanne A. Paulus (University of Chicago)

Identifying individual actors in Kassite (LBA) administrative archives is challenging, since many people share the same name. The documents in which they appear are typically terse, often omitting distinguishing information such as patronymics and professions, and sometimes using shortened or nicknames. In addition, the texts frequently lack complete dates, limiting chronological approaches, while the complex archaeological history of the administrative documents, especially at Nippur, complicates archival reconstruction. This paper explores the possibilities and limits of using patterns of economic behavior as an additional identifying criterion. Drawing on several case studies, I argue that recurring patterns in transactions, institutional connections, and economic roles can help distinguish between homonymous individuals in administrative texts. In this way, behavioral analysis offers a useful complement to prosopographical and archival approaches and can contribute to the reconstruction of administrative relationships within Kassite archives.

Nippur's Neighborhood: a Prosopography of Areas TA and TB

Andrew Deloucas (Harvard University)

This talk presents the methodology and results of a prosopography study of the households attested in Nippur's Areas TA and TB between 2026 and 1700 BCE. Building on the foundational work of Kraus (1951) and subsequent studies by Stone (1987), Goddeeris (2016), and Meinhold (2015, 2020), it reassesses long-standing assumptions about the social and spatial separation of these two excavation areas. This analysis reveals that the communities of TA and TB were far more entangled than earlier, family-specific studies suggested. This work confronts three persistent challenges in Old Babylonian prosopography: the recurrence of personal names across generations, long professional lifespans, and dense kinship networks in which patronyms are frequently omitted. These features, rather than being obstacles, are diagnostic tools that allow for the identification and reconstruction of extended family strategies within Nippur's urban social landscape.

From Objects to Actors: Reconstructing Non-Royal Religious Networks in Ancient Mesopotamia through Social Network Analysis

Christina Tsouparopoulou (UKSW, Warsaw & Durham University), Alexander E. Sollee (Martin Luther University Halle-Wittenberg, Germany)

In this paper, we present a methodological framework for reconstructing non-royal social actors in ancient Mesopotamia using Social Network Analysis (SNA) applied to ca. 800 inscribed commemorative objects dedicated by private individuals to deities between 2900 and 539 BCE. Unlike administrative archives, which are the primary vehicle for prosopographical work, inscribed dedicatory objects are formulaic rather than procedural and frequently anonymous by design, each requiring explicit methodological choices that shape every result. We discuss the protocols we developed for handling these challenges: assigning unique IDs across identical names, distinguishing deliberate anonymity from textual damage, and managing cases where royal versus non-royal authorship cannot be confirmed. We argue these decisions are interpretive rather than merely technical, and that making them explicit is a prerequisite for results comparable across projects. Two findings illustrate what network structure reveals beyond frequency counts. Inana appears as a central node with many shallow connections, while networks around figures such as Shulgi show fewer but longer chains of interrelated agents, a difference invisible to textual analysis alone. Additionally, 67% of dedications name a ruler as beneficiary, raising questions about the relationship between non-royal actors and political authority. By the first millennium BCE, dedicants are predominantly governors and officials, suggesting the category of "non-royal dedicant" itself narrowed dramatically, a pattern that is itself historically meaningful.

Identifying Archives through the Network Analysis of Prosopography

Nathan Steinmeyer (Universität Würzburg)

* Virtual

Archives have long been a core component of the study of ancient Near Eastern societies, allowing scholars to identify individuals, trace narratives across multiple texts, and more. However, various circumstances – both pre- and post-depositional – can make the identification of archives challenging. While the use of prosopography is a frequent method for identifying archives, particularly when archaeological data is lacking, the rise of digital humanities provides new tools that make converting prosopography data into archival reconstructions quicker, more reproducible, and more effective than ever before. Network analysis is one such tool that can be utilized to analytically and/or graphically represent the interaction of people within and across texts, thereby linking discrete tablets within a corpus and enabling various algorithms to identify and separate archives. Such an approach benefits from following already established theories within Assyriology, while providing scholars with a tool to expedite, record, and add an analytical basis to their studies. This paper will present an easily learned (computer-programming-free) method for using network analysis to reconstruct ancient archives, illustrated through a case study of the Late Old Babylonian fortress of Dūr-Abiešuḫ. This relatively small corpus of slightly over 300 – primarily administrative and business – texts demonstrates the benefits and weaknesses of network analysis on a scale readily verifiable, thus establishing the validity of the method and hinting at its broader usefulness for even larger corpora.

11D. Provenance and Middle Eastern Collections I (Waldorf)

Chair(s): Sophia Slotwiner-Nie, Yale Babylonian Collection; Jana Matuszak , University of Chicago

Cylinder Seals and the Antiquities Trade: Testing the Limits of Provenance in the Online Marketplace

Oya Topçuoğlu (Northwestern University)

Collected in great numbers since the 19th century through colonial-era excavations and the antiquities trade, cylinder seals entered western museums and private collections long before modern provenance

standards existed. Prized for their aesthetic qualities, iconographic richness and historical depth, they are among the least scrutinized objects in museum collections and online marketplaces today. This paper examines provenance issues specific to cylinder seals, arguing that their physical characteristics and long collecting history have enabled systematic documentation gaps in their ownership history that persist in both institutional and commercial contexts. Drawing on case studies from museum acquisition records, repatriation cases, and active online sales platforms, the paper identifies three interconnected problems: the normalization of pre-1970 acquisition dates as a substitute for genuine provenance research; the exploitation of online marketplaces to launder objects through recycled auction appearances and fictitious ownership histories; and the scholarly community's continued engagement with unprovenanced seals in ways that inadvertently confer legitimacy. The paper concludes that cylinder seals, precisely because of their ubiquity and abundance, have escaped the level of critical scrutiny applied to higher-profile artifact categories. As a consequence, sustained demand for these small objects and their acquisition by collectors and museums under loosely interpreted and inconsistently enforced provenance standards continue to incentivize contemporary looting of archaeological sites.

The Wardrobe Staples: About Two Plaster Casts of Unpublished Neo-Assyria Reliefs Found at the Barcelona School of Architecture (Spain)

Agnes Garcia-Ventura (Universitat Autònoma de Barcelon), Fernando Albaladejo (UPC-ETSAB), Pedro Azara (UPC-ETSAB)

* Virtual

In 2025, the Barcelona School of Architecture, affiliated with the Polytechnic University of Catalonia, ordered the documentation of replicas of ancient works that were at its premises. These were almost always neglected copies molded from originals in the 18th and 19th centuries, in poor condition, sometimes victims of student parties, and lacking inventory. This scattered collection yielded, among predictable casts of Classical and Renaissance works, two unexpected casts of Neo-Assyrian reliefs from the northwest palace of Ashurnasirpal II in Nimrud. In this paper, we present these two copies to restore them to their place of merit, both within the context of their own collection and in the broader context of the success of replicas of Mesopotamian pieces at the end of the 19th century. First, we present their eventful history, from their purchase in the 1870s to their (re)discovery in 2025, full of transfers and changes of ownership and location of the collection. It explains why some pieces have been lost while others, such as these, have been preserved but without precise identification. Secondly, we contextualize their commission in London, alongside other copies of Mesopotamian pieces. Thirdly, we propose correspondence between copies and originals and present some hypotheses as to why they were chosen. Fourthly, we close with a reflection on the success of the circulation of such images, both in the form of originals and copies at the end of the 19th century, to demonstrate that the choice in Barcelona responded to local issues and transnational dynamics.

Finding Nemo: On the Application of Nemo dat non quod habet to Cultural Property Law and the Case of the Aramaic Incantation Bowls in the Schøyen Collection

Erin Braner (University of Chicago)

This paper investigates legal pluralism on a domestic and international scale through a cultural heritage perspective. It looks to the Laws of Hammurabi as the first codified expression of nemo dat non quod habet, a legal principle which has become the fundamental core of restitution. The principle appears in some form throughout almost every cultural property law, from international conventions to domestic constitutions. Looted antiquities thus enter a legally pluralistic arena, wherein varying laws on national and international scales address who may claim legal title to them. Contrary to the issue of conflict of laws that commonly arises in legally pluralistic sectors, this paper argues that all cultural property laws converge on the core principle of nemo dat and are thus in agreement. It is the minor procedural inconsistencies and small points of friction between each law where looters, dealers, and collectors find the loopholes and grey areas in which they operate. Further tensions, such as the responsibility of the "good faith buyer," can be exploited to benefit market actors. The paper investigates the 656 Aramaic incantation bowls in the Schøyen Collection as a case study of these frictions and suggests steps toward a more standardized future of law which better protects the cultural heritage of source nations. In looking to the Laws of Hammurabi as the foundation of nemo dat and highlighting postcolonial barriers embedded within modern international legal and political frameworks, this paper centers ancient and modern Iraq in its study of the challenges of restitution.

Reconstructing Ancient and Modern Contexts: Provenance and the Egypt Exploration Society

Sophia Slotwiner-Nie (Yale Babylonian Collection)

Provenance research often focuses on the modern history of an object - tracing an object's ownership history. However, in unique cases, provenance can be used to retrace archaeological contexts, reunite ancient object groups, and illuminate ancient historical and archaeological data. This is particularly true for the numerous objects excavated, distributed, and redistributed by the Egypt Exploration Society, formerly the Egypt Exploration Fund. Through a case study of selected objects acquired from the Egypt Exploration Fund by the Yale Peabody Museum, this paper illustrates the application of provenance research for understanding both the ancient and modern contexts of ancient Egyptian objects. The paper explores how provenance research can inform our understanding of excavation contexts, an object's relationship with other museum pieces, distribution of ancient Egyptian materials, and object ownership histories.

11E. The Archaeology of the Lands of Alalakh I (Marquette)

Chair(s): Murat Akar, Hatay Mustafa Kemal University; Müge Bulu, Ankara University; Tara Ingman, Koç University

Building over Legacy: Recent Discoveries and Research Trajectories in the Lands of Alalakh. An Introduction.

Murat Akar (Hatay Mustafa Kemal University)

Following decades of research focused on Alalakh, the capital of the Kingdom of Mukish in the Amuq Valley of Hatay (Türkiye), the current research trajectory has been shifted to explore human-environment interactions through a multi-proxy excavation model and state-of-the-art strategies. This model aims to provide fresh perspectives on Bronze Age dynamics, including climate change, population movements, and imperial urban strategies. While honoring the site's legacy, this talk will introduce new scholars, new datasets, and new insights generated over the past five years, addressing some of the most debated topics in Near Eastern archaeology from migration and re-urbanization to societal collapse and heritage preservation. In a region where political stress, warfare, climate change, and other catastrophes have profoundly impacted both past and present, these findings highlight the enduring significance of archaeological research for understanding human resilience and cultural heritage.

The First Continuous Paleoclimatic Record from the Amuq Valley: Holocene Drought Variability

Ulas Avsar (Middle East Technical University), Zeynep Bektaş (Middle East Technical University), Murat Akar (Hatay Mustafa Kemal University), Fatma Toksoy Köksal (Middle East Technical University), Nurdan Yavuz (General Directorate of Mineral Research and Exploration of Turkey), Evangelia Piskin (Middle East Technical University), Aurelia Hubert-Ferrari (University of Liege), Charlotte Pearson (University of Arizona)

*Virtual

Understanding long-term interactions between climate and human societies requires integrating paleoclimatic records with archaeological evidence. While paleoclimate archives document environmental fluctuations through time, archaeological datasets provide insight into how past societies responded to these changes. The Amuq Valley in the eastern Mediterranean provides an ideal setting for such investigations because of its extensive archaeological record and former lake basins preserving high-resolution sedimentary archives. This study presents a multi-proxy

sedimentary record of Holocene paleoclimatic variability from the Amuq Valley, derived from Amuq and Toprakhisar Lakes and adjacent floodplain deposits near Tell Atchana, Tell Tayinat, and Tell Kurdu. Sedimentological evidence of climatic variations was examined using 206.2 m of undisturbed sediment cores, 7–20 m long. Analyses were based on grain-size data, mineralogical and geochemical proxies from ITRAX micro-XRF scanning, ICP-MS/ICP-OES measurements, X-ray diffraction (XRD), and magnetic susceptibility (MS) measurements obtained using a Bartington MSE2 surface sensor. A robust chronological framework was established through radiocarbon dating of microcharcoal samples, enabling precise correlation of sedimentary sequences with major Holocene climatic events. The results identify sedimentary traces corresponding to major regional drought episodes, including the ~8.2 ka, ~5.2 ka, ~4.2 ka, and ~3.2 ka events. In addition, millimeter-scale stratigraphic correlation of eleven undisturbed sediment cores show the lake underwent substantial physical contraction during these drought intervals, indicating both hydrological sensitivity and hydrodynamic responses to climatic variability. These findings provide the first continuous sedimentary record of Holocene drought in the Amuq Valley and an important framework for assessing interactions between climatic stress and societal dynamics in the ancient Near East.

Climate, Environment and Resource Use at Tell Tayinat in the Third Millennium BCE

Lynn Welton (University of Toronto), Doğa Karakaya (Istanbul University), Brita Lorentzen (University of Georgia), Mariah Miller (University of Toronto), Sheldon Harmacy (University of Toronto)

The second half of the third millennium BCE in western Syria is critical for understanding not only the development of early palatial systems and inter-regional economies, but also for contextualizing the influence of environmental changes widely cited as having a significant impact on these economies (e.g. the 4.2K event). Modifications to land-use strategies, agricultural decision-making practices, and resource use were major avenues through which ancient societies could respond to changes in their environment, and which shaped economic systems during the Early Bronze Age. The Amuq Plain, located in the Hatay region of southern Turkey, has long been one of the key sequences for understanding the Early Bronze Age in both Anatolia and the Levantine world, and the site of Tell Tayinat can be securely identified as the primary site in the Amuq Plain during the late third millennium BCE (EBIVA-B). This paper will discuss the results of recent excavations of late third millennium levels at Tayinat, focusing particularly on the results of palaeobotanical, anthracological, zooarchaeological, and lithic analyses, and on how they can inform us about resource exploitation and food production practices during a period of profound social and cultural change.

Cultural Encounters in the Highlands of Alalakh: An Analysis of Ancient Foodways at Toprakhisar Höyük from the Late Third to the Early Second Millennium BC

Müge Bulu (Ankara University)

In the 3rd to early 2nd millennia BC, the Amuq Valley witnessed major transformative phases, from migratory movements of Early Transcaucasion Culture populations from the north to the formation of the earliest local state-kingdom in the region. The reflections of such major phenomena have often been inferred based on archaeological evidence from major centers located in the valley, which has remained somewhat limited, due to the fragmentary nature of available data that has been acquired from different settlements within the Amuq. The research-rescue excavations conducted at Toprakhisar Höyük by the Hatay Archaeological Museum in the last ten years have been providing answers for questions related to such transformative phases from the perspective of a rural settlement located in the highlands of the Lands of Alalakh. This paper addresses processes of both resistance to and adaptations of new practices seen within the ancient foodways and local traditions of Toprakhisar Höyük. Providing an uninterrupted sequence from the late 3rd to early 2nd millennia BC, the Toprakhisar data not only enables inferences about boundaries between and amalgamations of different traditions as a result of encounters among indigenous and migrant communities but also provides evidence regarding the continuities and changes reflected in food processing and consumption practices at the dawn of major socio-political changes in the broader Syro-Anatolian setting.

Cities and Their Hinterlands: Agricultural Production and Livestock Management in the Bronze Age Amuq Valley

Evangelia Piskin (Middle East Technical University), Ebru Gizem Ayten (Middle East Technical University), Ebrar Sinmez (Middle East Technical University), Zeineb Grissa (Middle East Technical University)

The development of urban centers in the Bronze Age Near East relied on agricultural and pastoral systems linking cities with their rural hinterlands. This paper presents new archaeobotanical and zooarchaeological evidence from Tell Atchana (ancient Alalakh), a major political center in the Amuq Valley, and the nearby rural settlement of Toprakhisar Höyük. By integrating plant and animal datasets from recent excavations, the study examines how agricultural production, livestock management, and environmental variability shaped regional provisioning systems and the political economy of the Amuq Valley. Archaeobotanical assemblages from both sites are dominated by cereals, particularly wheat and barley, accompanied by legumes and fruit crops such as grape and olive. Stable carbon isotope analysis of cereal grains provides insight into cultivation conditions and water availability, contributing to the reconstruction of agricultural responses to climatic variability in the region. Zooarchaeological evidence highlights differences in animal exploitation between the urban center and its rural hinterland. Middle Bronze Age assemblages from Tell Atchana are dominated by caprines, suggesting organized provisioning strategies supporting the urban population, while Toprakhisar exhibits a more diversified faunal profile including higher proportions of pigs and occasional wild taxa. Evidence from Late Bronze Age contexts at Tell Atchana further reveals significant spatial variation in pig exploitation with higher frequencies in militarized areas and lower representation near temple complexes, suggesting social distinctions in the use of pigs. Together, these datasets demonstrate how provisioning systems in the Amuq Valley operated while also reflecting social differentiation and responses to environmental constraints.

11F. Teaching with The Ancient Near East Today (Workshop) (Williford A)

Chair(s): Elise A. Friedland, George Washington University; Jessica Nitschke, The Ancient Near East Today Editor, ASOR

The Past, Present, and Future of ANE Today

Jessica L. Nitschke (Stellenbosch University)

The Ancient Near East Today (ANE Today) is ASOR's open-access digital platform for public scholarship. Founded in 2013, ANE Today has published over 600 articles along with regular newsletters. Free to everyone, ANE Today constitutes part of ASOR's mission to encourage public understanding of the cultures and history of the Near East from earliest times to the present day, and serves as an important resource for educators. To begin this workshop, I will briefly summarize the history and mission of ANE Today, provide data about content and usage, and share our ideas for the further development of the publication as an educational resource.

Using the Ancient Near East Today as a Teaching Tool for Undergraduates

Rachel S. Hallote (Purchase College SUNY)

Although teaching Near Eastern Studies is challenging on all levels, instructors of undergraduates face a unique set of issues. Students' reading habits and attention spans have declined recently, while their expectations have also changed, as they want more flexibility. Asking them to purchase expensive books is no longer effective, nor is expecting them to read complex academic articles. At the other extreme, sending them to Wikipedia or comparable websites is not acceptable pedagogically. This brief presentation will discuss why I have been increasingly assigning articles from The Ancient Near East Today to my undergraduates. As someone who's been teaching with it almost since its beginning, and who

has also written for it, I have found it especially effective. Most of my students are not majors in the field, so the articles in ANE Today are well suited to them. It is a web resource with no paywall, but unlike other such sites, it is written by well-respected scholars. More notably, when I need to teach a topic that is somewhat more obscure, I can often find an appropriate reading, and it also serves as a solid resource for students looking for term paper topics. As archaeology and related disciplines become ever more specialized, the need for accessible, good quality reading material will become more acute. Now that ANE Today has been around for over a decade, its usefulness in the classroom could conceivably expand, perhaps in terms of scaffolded articles to support both lower-level and upper-level undergraduate courses.

Teaching with ANE Today in Ancient Near East Survey Classes: Sample Assignments

Helen M. Dixon (East Carolina University)

This brief presentation will provide and explore several sample assignments used in undergraduate and graduate (MA) classrooms that center the Ancient Near East Today archives or newsletter. This free resource can be used to teach simple research skills, comparative research across the ancient Near East, use of online museum catalogues, research dissemination, and other information literacy outcomes.

Reading and Writing About the Ancient Near East Today

Amy R. Gansell (St. John's University)

I will report on using ANE Today in my Fall 2026 course “Ancient Egyptian and Mesopotamian Art” at St. John’s University. I will integrate ANE Today into two pairs of (four total) class meetings, designated as “Archaeology Journalism” days. The goal is to motivate students to read, and want to read more, about the ancient Near East, as well as to find models by which they, too, can write about it with enthusiasm and credibility. For our first "Archaeology Journalism" day, I will provide a broad selection of ANE Today articles relating to course content. Students will spend the beginning of class reading an article that interests them, noting what they learned, found most thought-provoking, and want to know more about. Students will then share these take-aways in small groups, which I will visit to guide conversations. For the remainder of class, we will critique what was effective writing-wise about the ANE Today articles. Students will then be presented with their midterm (on Egypt) or final (on Mesopotamia) writing project: to produce an ANE Today-style article on a topic of their choice. A follow-up day (for example, "Archaeology Journalism: Egypt, Part II") will be scheduled about two weeks later, at which point students should have conducted research on their topic. We will convene at our University Writing Center, where Student Writing Consultants will be prepped with ANE Today samples to assist my class in transforming their research into similar articles.

11G. Ancient Languages and Linguistics II (Williford B)

Chair(s): Brendan Hainline, The Metropolitan Museum of Art

Aramaic in Greek Curse Tablets: an Overview

Yang Han (University of Chicago)

This paper examines the presence of Northwest Semitic elements in Greek curse tablets of the Roman period. First, it presents several Aramaic words and sentences identified in a group of Greek curse tablets from Roman Cyprus currently being edited by the author. These passages, embedded within otherwise Greek texts, provide evidence for the use of Semitic linguistic material in magical contexts. Second, the paper gathers and analyzes Northwest Semitic words and phrases attested across the corpus of Greek curse tablets, including examples that remain unpublished or inadequately published. By assembling this material, the study offers the first systematic overview of Semitic lexical elements within this genre. Third, the paper attempts to identify the specific varieties of Northwest Semitic represented in these texts. Through analysis of phonological, morphological, and lexical features, it evaluates whether the material reflects Aramaic, other Northwest Semitic varieties, or “mixed” or “learned” forms. The study contributes to our understanding of language contact, multilingual practices, and the transmission of knowledge through Northwest Semitic within the magical texts of the Roman Mediterranean.

Inscribing Incantations on Bowls: The Materiality of Mesopotamian Magic Bowls

Eleonora Serra (Freie Universität)

Mesopotamian Aramaic magic bowls are clay vessels, comparable in shape to modern cereal bowls, used to inscribe incantations intended to protect households, harm enemies, and, more rarely, promote love magic or business success. Produced in Mesopotamia during the Sasanian period (fifth–late seventh centuries CE), these objects provide a unique opportunity to explore the interaction between materiality, writing, and ritual practice. While incantation bowls have often been studied primarily as textual artifacts, their material and visual dimensions have received comparatively less attention. This study argues that the bowls should not be understood merely as supports for written incantations but as ritual objects in their own right. It examines the physical characteristics of the vessels — such as shape, size, color, and surface treatment — together with the materiality of writing and the performative dimension of inscription. Through the act of inscription, the bowl itself becomes a magical object: the combination of vessel and written text contributes to activating the ritual efficacy of the incantation. By examining the relationship between the material features of the bowls and the types of incantations they bear, this study seeks to determine whether particular types of incantations were associated with specific types of vessels. Although preliminary, this approach represents an essential step toward a fuller understanding of these objects. More broadly, it invites a reconsideration of the relationship between text, object, and ritual practice in the magical traditions of Late Antique Mesopotamia.

The Function of Syllable Division in Coptic Manuscript P. Chester Beatty 2018: The Apocalypse of Elijah, Reading Aids, and Oral Performance in Coptic Egypt

So Miyagawa (The University of Tsukuba)

The Coptic (Sahidic) papyrus codex P. Chester Beatty 2018, dated palaeographically to the late fourth or early fifth century, is the most complete Sahidic witness to the Apocalypse of Elijah and is distinguished by one of the most unusual punctuation systems attested among known Coptic manuscripts. This presentation examines the manuscript's system of syllable-based text division, situates it within the landscape of Coptic reading aids and pedagogical practice, and argues that these devices served as performance scripts facilitating oral reading in monastic communities. The scribe of P. Chester Beatty 2018 employs raised dots at syllable boundaries and supralinear strokes to demarcate larger lexical units. Other Coptic manuscripts deploy similar yet distinct devices: supralinear strokes indicate syllabic nuclei over sonorant consonants functioning as syllable peaks, while apostrophe-like signs typically mark morpheme or word boundaries, aiding segmentation of scriptio continua at the grammatical level. This manuscript's system, by contrast, operates at the sub-lexical level, segmenting text syllable by syllable for phonological transparency rather than grammatical parsing. This scribal strategy finds a pedagogical parallel. Coptic school exercises on ostraca and wooden tablets attest that syllabification drills—combining consonants with vowels in grids—formed the second stage of literacy instruction after learning letters, a progression echoed in the Pachomian monastic rule. The punctuation of P. Chester Beatty 2018 transposes this pedagogical framework into a liturgical reading aid, enabling semi-literate lectors to deliver prophetic-apocalyptic texts such as the Apocalypse of Elijah as living literature before a monastic audience.

Voice to the Voiceless: How Muted Participants Contributed to the Making and Telling of Ancient Egyptian Fictional Stories

Nikolaos Lazaridis (California State University Sacramento)

* Virtual

Ancient Egyptian fictional narrative writing enjoyed a long-lasting life: its earliest manifestations date to approximately 2000s BCE and its latest to 300s CE. In the course of these 2300 years, Egyptian fictional stories sustained an intense relationship with Egypt’s elite class. As they

propagated (or playfully challenged) that class's evolving principles and values, these stories flirted on and off with various styles of literary and documentary writing, such as those used in tomb biographies and royal hymns, cherished the strong connections between written and oral cultures, and educated and entertained literati and illiterati who fell under the spell of storytelling. Most Egyptian fictional stories were populated with numerous nameless participants (like house or palace servants) whose identities, agency, and influence were obscured by passive voice or causative verb forms, or by unspecified nominal or pronominal references. In this paper, I examine the references to such story-participants in relation to the Egyptian storytellers' common strategies, such as to reserve names only for active characters with high social or story-status, or to mark a character's involvement in a plot by reporting her/his speech. Informed by recent advancements in the fields of stylistics and narratology, my close readings of Egyptian fictional stories primarily address three questions: "What were the linguistic cues for the muted presence of story-participants?", "How did such presences contribute to an Egyptian story's plotline and stylistic texture?", and "In what other Egyptian textual or visual contexts were the types of muted participant identified in the fictional stories also present?".

Syntactic Variation and Narrative Strategies in the Late Neo-Assyrian Royal Inscriptions

Joshua Jeffers (University of Pennsylvania)

The Assyrian Royal Inscriptions have been a trove of information for the history and culture of ancient Mesopotamia dating from the latter half of the second to mid-first millennium BCE. Scholars have mined the inscriptions for historical content, utilized them heavily for chronological reconstruction, and analyzed their overarching literary arrangement and evolution over the centuries, among numerous other studies. In order to explore the Assyrian inscriptions through a more nuanced grammatical perspective, the present paper will focus on particular syntactical structures that were employed in crafting the historical narratives of the late Neo-Assyrian kings. More specifically, the paper investigates patterns of verbal syntax in these kings' inscriptions in an effort to ascertain the relationship between different verbal syntactic configurations and their corresponding narrative functions. Building upon such previous work of mine regarding the lengthy "Prism A" inscription of Ashurbanipal (668–631 BCE), this paper examines the patterns of verbal syntax in the prism inscriptions of Sennacherib (704–681 BCE) and Esarhaddon (680–669 BCE) to determine if the same stylistic narrative features from Ashurbanipal's Prism A inscription appear in the texts of the two earlier Neo-Assyrian rulers or if there is an evolution of styles during the reigns of these three kings.

11H. Prehistoric Archaeology I (Williford C)

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

Architectural Ambiguity at Murayghat: Building 1 and the Problem of Domestic, Communal, and Ritual Space in Early Bronze Age IA Jordan

Maximilian Holmstrom (University of Notre Dame), Susanne Kerner (University of Copenhagen)

The Early Bronze Age IA was a period of social transformation, and Murayghat offers an important case through which to examine how such changes were negotiated in built space. In times of shifting socio-political organization, the boundaries between domestic, communal, and ritual space may not yet be fully formalized. This paper addresses that question through Building 1 at Murayghat, central Jordan, an Early Bronze Age IA structure whose architecture and assemblage resist straightforward classification. The building combines different construction methods and increasing internal subdivision, suggesting a space shaped by changing patterns of access and use. Its changing internal configuration suggests that its role was not static over the course of its use. Its material assemblage points to grain processing, storage, and the serving or distribution of food, while the absence of a hearth, benches, and sleeping platforms complicates interpretation of the structure as an ordinary dwelling. Rather than forcing Building 1 into a rigid category such as house, temple, or administrative building, I argue that it reflects the socially liminal conditions of EB IA, when communal coordination, food-related practice, and ceremonial activity could intersect within the same architectural setting. In the broader context of Murayghat as a gathering place in the Madaba Plains, Building 1 suggests that architectural differentiation did not always map neatly onto social practice in the southern Levant at the dawn of the Bronze Age.

Assessing Time Investments for Hunting Infrastructure: Experiments on Kite Wall Construction with the Kites in Context Project

Blair Heidkamp (University of Texas at Austin), Yorke M. Rowan (University of Chicago), Austin Chad Hill (University of Pennsylvania)

*Virtual

In the recent seasons of the Kites in Context Project, in the eastern Badia of Jordan, we have mapped and excavated various elements of these structures which stretch across the landscape. An important element in understanding humans' role in hunting during the Neolithic is the time investment required, in the case of the eastern edge of the Harra, this is evidenced by the construction of kites. Kites have a round catchment area at their end, typically with cells attached, but what can vary greatly from kite to kite is the extension of the two kite arms. The stacked stone walls in some cases can reach well over a kilometer in length across varied ground. A singular kite represents a collaborative effort requiring planning and many hours hauling and placing stones for its construction. Time investment is exponentially increased to take into account the large number of kites found across the badia. Some estimates have been proposed for the time requirements of building kites based on general work estimates or calorie requirements. To assess these estimates for ourselves, our team conducted an experiment to build our own section of kite wall. Our results reveal a significant difference from previous estimates for kite construction.

New OSL Dates and Chronological Perspectives on Desert Kites in Jordan

Yorke M. Rowan (University of Chicago), Austin Chad Hill (University of Pennsylvania), Sahar M. al Khasawneh (Yarmouk University)

In this study, we present the first systematic application of optically stimulated luminescence (OSL) dating to sediments associated with desert kites in the Harrat al-Sham (Black Desert) of eastern Jordan. As part of the Kites in Context Project, this new evidence provides a robust chronological framework for kite construction and use. Nineteen luminescence samples were collected from kite cells, enclosure fills, wall-adjacent sediments, and underlying natural deposits. Quartz OSL ages, validated through comparison with corrected feldspar IRSL ages, indicate well-bleached depositional histories and provide reliable age estimates. Luminescence ages indicate that the primary construction of the two kites sampled took place at different periods, with one initiated during the Late PPNB to Late Neolithic, while the other was more likely built during the beginning of the Chalcolithic to Early Bronze Age. Kite construction in eastern Jordan was initiated during the later phases of the Neolithic, but additional kites were built and operated in successive periods, providing new evidence of longer term and shifting use of kites.

New Palaeolithic Evidence from the Iraqi Western Desert

Ella Egberts (AMGC Research Group, Vrije Universiteit Brussel, Belgium), Andreas Nymark (Centre for the Archaeology of Human Origins, University of Southampton, United Kingdom), Philip van Peer (Centre for Archaeological Research of Landscapes, KULeuven, Belgium), Jaafar Jotheri (University of Al-Qadisiyah, Iraq)

Southwest Asia has been traversed by humans dispersing out of and back into Africa and across Eurasia since early in the Pleistocene (ca. 2.58 million–11,700 years ago). Climatic fluctuations during this period repeatedly transformed the now-arid region into wetter environments, shaping early human presence, dispersals, and interactions. Southwest Asia is therefore central to studies of human evolution and behavioral

adaptation, and Palaeolithic research in the Levant, the Arabian Peninsula, and the Zagros Mountains has significantly contributed to understanding global human history. The Iraqi Western Desert (IWD), despite its central location and recognised potential for Palaeolithic research (Field 1960, North Arabian desert archaeological survey, 1925-50. Cambridge, Mass. Peabody Museum), has remained largely overlooked. Finds from the region are poorly known and, lacking geomorphological and chronological context, have rarely been incorporated into regional or global palaeoanthropological syntheses. The Geomorphological and Palaeolithic Survey of the Western Desert of Iraq was initiated to assess Palaeolithic material, establish its geomorphological context, recontextualise known finds, and identify new sites. Desk-based geomorphological analysis combined with targeted field survey identified the Shbicha region (10 × 20 km) for intensive investigation. Initial survey recorded more than seven new Palaeolithic findspots, indicating repeated Pleistocene occupation. Subsequent fieldwork supported by the ASOR Mesopotamian Fellowship more than doubled this number. Surface assemblages show technological similarities with both southern and western regions. Particularly notable is a potential Initial Upper Palaeolithic site in a stratified context suitable for chronometric dating, which could provide the first absolute dates for the IWD Palaeolithic and highlight the region's significance for understanding human dispersal and behaviour across Southwest Asia.

Shifting Occupational Practices at Tell Kurdu (Turkey) during the Sixth-Fifth Millennia

Rana Özbal (Koç University), Fokke Gerritsen (Leiden University), Hannah Lau (Hamilton College), Rula Shafiq (Yeditepe University, Istanbul)

Settlement patterns in the northern Levant and southern Anatolia changed significantly during the Halaf-Ubaid transition in the sixth and fifth millennia BC. At Tell Kurdu, in Turkey's Hatay province, the sense of permanence presented by architecture changes between various periods at the site. While houses aligned along streets and alleyways were typical of the Amuq C phase of the second half of the sixth millennium, the subsequent Amuq D horizon appears to show minimal evidence for architecture. This phase is also marked by depositional contexts with abundant animal bones that may be evidence for collective feasts. More established architectural styles again aligned along streets and alleys reemerged during the following Amuq E period. The paper explores changes that may have had an effect on architectural styles, mobility, subsistence, and the way that the land was used. Using evidence from zooarchaeological studies including stable isotope analyses, this paper assesses how changes in animal husbandry and land use may have coincided with shifts in architecture and occupational practices at Tell Kurdu. The study examines how communities adapted their ways of living and social systems to evolving environmental and societal changes in the late sixth and fifth millennia BC by placing the site within wider regional developments such as Halaf-related, Halaf-Ubaid transitional, and Ubaid-related contexts.

11I. Archaeology of Religion in the Levant during the Second and First Millennia BCE II (Astoria)

Chair(s): Alice Mandell, Johns Hopkins University; Jeremy Smoak, University of California, Los Angeles

Don't Throw the Baby Out with the Cistern Water: The Tel Azekah Mass Grave Reconsidered

Kristine S. Garroway (Hebrew Union College), Helen Dixon (East Carolina University), Megan Perry (East Carolina University), Rachel Kalisher (UC San Diego)

Ancient Israelite household religion was concerned with the continuity of the household both in life and in death. Burials and mortuary rituals therefore comprise an important part of how Israelites cared for the dead. This paper revisits the recently published study of the Persian period infant and child burial assemblage from Tel Azekah, which documented the remains of 68–89 individuals, primarily infants and young children, interred within a repurposed cistern during the fifth century BCE (Lipschits et al 2026). Building on the work of Lipschits and colleagues, we introduce evidence from additional Iron II and Persian period Levantine sites containing infant and child burials, alongside relevant textual and ethnographic data concerning early childhood and weaning. These comparanda demonstrate that infants and children were commonly buried alongside adults and often received forms of care comparable to other members of society, making the Azekah cistern an exceptional case. We evaluate the proposal that weaning served as the primary criterion for burial differentiation and argue that isotope analysis along with additional social milestones and concepts of personhood should also be considered. Analysis of burial context, grave goods, and broader regional patterns suggests that the Azekah burials reflect a distinctive local mortuary tradition that intentionally grouped infants and young children apart from the wider community. Rather than providing a single explanation, this study highlights the complexity of childhood personhood, social incorporation, and funerary choice in the Persian period Southern Levant.

Priestly Divination: Where and Who?

Susan Ackerman (Dartmouth College)

Several biblical texts, from different authorial strands, attest that two critical roles of Israelite priests are altar service and divination (e.g., Leviticus 8–9; Deut 33:8–10; 1 Sam 2:28). But in multiple narratives from Judges and Samuel, priests, including the Micah's Levite, Eli and his many descendants, and also Eli's acolyte, Samuel, are described as performing only divination rites and not altar service. Moreover, while priests who perform altar service must necessarily be at a sanctuary setting where rituals of animal sacrifice take place, priests who exclusively undertake divination rites can be anywhere. This paper thus asks: do our data regarding priests who undertake only rites of divination, along with our observation that such priests need not be tied to sanctuary locations, allow us to theorize a more spatially dispersed priesthood in ancient Israel than scholars might typically imagine? I will consider in this regard the archaeological data from Level A1 at Abel Beth-Maʿacah: an Iron IIA structure with a small podium, atop of which was an amphora that held 406 astragali, arguably used for divination. I will also ask whether the biblical traditions associated with Abel Beth-Maʿacah in 2 Sam 20:14–22 allow us to theorize a model of priesthood more expansive than usually imagined in terms of gender: one that admits of female divinatory specialists who can deliver priest-like oracles, even if the evidence as we have it does not recognize them as having official priestly credentials or an official priestly designation.

The Economics of Pilgrimage in the Iron Age Levant

Timothy Hogue (University of Pennsylvania)

An increasing body of research has begun addressing the economic impacts and motivations of pilgrimage around the world. This study is a preliminary application of that research agenda to the Iron Age Levant. In particular, this paper analyzes some of the ways pilgrimage networks formed around economic networks. For the purposes of the argument, pilgrimage is reframed as a motivator for resource and labor mobility. Using case studies from both the northern and southern Levant (including sites like Tel Miqne and Karkemish), I analyze how and why pilgrimage was entangled with processes like resource extraction, craft production, exchange, and consumption. Finally, the paper explores how pilgrimage was used both to motivate long-range trade and to stimulate local economies.

The Smiting Motif: A Possible Intercultural Visual Symbol of Masculinity

Erika Roboz (Museum of Fine Arts, Budapest)

*Virtual

Since the characteristics associated with power—as well as rulers and their attributes—are generally regarded as masculine, the smiting motif may be a perfect candidate for the metaphorical visual representation of masculinity in ancient Near Eastern cultures. Traditionally derived from Egyptian royal iconography, the smiting motif served to express total victory and dominance of the Egyptian king over his enemies, which has a deeply rooted and continuous tradition in Egyptian imagery within its original context, but during the Bronze Age, due to intercultural connections, it can be identified in the visual repertoire of the ancient Near

Eastern cultures (Syria-Palestine, Anatolia, Mesopotamia), primarily in divine iconography. The aim of the recent presentation is to demonstrate, through a comparative iconographic analysis of related archaeological evidence, the development and adaptation of the smiting motif, as a remarkable element of the Egyptian royal symbolism in the Bronze Age divine imagery, especially focusing to Syria-Palestine in the Second Millennium BCE, examining the connection between the aspects visually represented by the motif and masculinity with special regard to the gender of the smiting figures in both the human and divine spheres, and to demonstrate that this specific symbol of power representing masculinity is not exclusively or primarily tied to the gender of the smiting figure in its new visual context, but rather to the role fulfilled by the figure.

Defining Ritual in the Context of Production: A Comparative Study of Iron Age Evidence

Vanessa A. Workman (University of Pennsylvania / Penn Museum), Erin Hall (University of California, Los Angeles)

With increasing frequency, excavations of southern Levantine Iron Age sites have revealed cult assemblages found in association with the remains of craft production and agricultural practices. These remains point to an interactive relationship between belief, ritual, and production. This paper investigates instances of these interactions in cases when they play out in the public sphere – the production of agricultural or material goods outside the household. By comparing evidence from Iron Age Israel, Philistia, and Judah, we explore the different ways communities connected transformative material processes with ritual practice. We consider the diversity of ritual expression in relation to craft production, particularly in light of political upheavals and shifting trade networks following the collapse of Late Bronze Age systems. We suggest that cultic paraphernalia and ritual spaces related to production reflect a broader reconceptualization of cult practices in the region; one that remains rooted in Bronze Age traditions while also exhibiting processes of evolution and hybridization that ultimately contributed to greater plurality.

I Will Make the Place of My Feet Glorious (Isaiah 60:13): Archaeological Manifestations of Deities' Feet at Iron Age Tel Dan and Elsewhere

David Ilan (Hebrew Union College)

The archaeology of the southern Levant and biblical research (the historiographical branch in particular) have entered a phase of methodological dialectic, wherein each informs the other—ideally without an idealizing prejudice. The archaeologist tends to ask questions of an anthropological or historical nature, applying the evidence of material culture to interpret that evidence. Textual sources (including the biblical text) are then consulted, if available or relevant. Conversely, the biblical scholar will ask questions of the text, using the evidence from within the biblical text itself, from other textual sources, and from the archaeological record, when relevant. This paper is written by an archaeologist, who begins by asking questions about an archaeological phenomenon (groups of five standing stones—masseboth) encountered at Iron Age Tel Dan. The phenomenon is described, and a hypothesis offered to explain their configurations and context: the groups of five masseboth represent the feet of Yahweh. Anthropomorphic descriptions of Yahweh in the biblical text provide a key to the formulation of this hypothesis. Following the presentation of the hypothesis I discuss other deity foot motifs in the archaeological record of the Levant. The archaeological evidence complements the presentation of Yahweh-Elohim as a corporeal being in the Hebrew Bible and in the conception of ancient Israelite religion.

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 21, 2026
4:25pm – 6:30pm (CST)

12A. Archaeology and History of Feasting and Foodways (Continental A)

Chair(s): Kara Larson, University of Michigan

Now We're Cooking! Neolithic Domestic Cooking vs. Large Scale Feasting in Cyprus

Andrew McCarthy (University of Edinburgh)

Prasteio Mesorotsos in Cyprus was first visited in the Epipaleolithic period and continued to be visited throughout the Neolithic, during which time a permanent settlement was established. The longevity of this site provides an opportunity to uncover the social habits of an emerging sedentary community and how they interacted with other groups in the landscape. Two cooking installations from the Neolithic period have been excavated at separate locations, each representing a different aspect of early sedentism. A large (3m diameter) pit oven found in a public area of the site would have been used for intercommunity feasts that likely served as a place of congregation in the region, at a time when negotiations of heterogeneity and territoriality were important new factors. A contemporary but much smaller (1m diameter) domed oven was found adjacent to a pit house structure, and likely represents domestic scale cooking for use by the local inhabitants. Experimental reconstructions of both of these ovens have been carried out, providing insights into the everyday habits of the first Neolithic residents of Cyprus, as well as how sedentary communities established connections to their neighbours in a newly emerging Neolithic landscape.

Urban Household Foodways at EB III Tell el-Hesi: Zooarchaeological and Isotopic Evidence

Kara M. Larson (University of Michigan)

Provisioning in early urban contexts of the Southern Levant is often framed through a binary distinction between direct and indirect systems, in which urban populations either managed their own livestock or relied on external producers. While useful as heuristic tools, these categories obscure the lived realities of households and communities that actively shaped foodways within early urban contexts. This paper proposes new, more nuanced provisioning models that move beyond the direct/indirect dichotomy by centering human agency and intra-site variation. Drawing on faunal, isotopic, and spatial data from Tell el-Hesi, an Early Bronze Age III urban locale, I examine how different intra-site contexts negotiated livestock herding, processing, and distribution in ways that do not map neatly onto existing provisioning models. Evidence, instead, points to households engaged directly in livestock management, processing, and consumption, shaping provisioning practices and foodways within Tell el-Hesi. By reframing provisioning as a dynamic process shaped by localized decisions and actor-based practices, this paper offers new models that foreground variability and agency, highlighting the active role of communities in shaping how early cities were fed along the edge of the Northern Negev Desert.

Subsistence and Sustenance in the MBA Southern Levant

Susan Cohen (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 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.

Culinary Communities of Practice? Bread in the New Kingdom Southern Levant (15th to 12th centuries BCE)

Jacob C. Damm (College of the Holy Cross, Department of Classics)

During the Egyptian New Kingdom's imperial occupation of the southern Levant, the creation of garrison sites throughout the region created numerous social entanglements between the local population and agents of the empire. Modern archaeological inquiry has often relied on simplified equations of material culture and ethnic identity to understand social relations within these garrisons, though scholars have recently begun to employ more nuanced, practice-based approaches to the question. Frameworks centering on communities of practice have proven especially productive in understanding the massive quantities of Egyptian-style ceramics recovered from such Levantine sites, especially in relation to how the production of these vessels, as well as their use in a culinary and dining capacity, might reflect social groupings and/or the localized expression of identities. This paper will expand on these analyses, using paleoethnobotanical, ceramic, and other culinary datapoints from garrison sites to reconstruct communities of practice centered on the production of bread—a dietary staple within both Levantine and Egyptian communities. The domain of consumption will also be explored under a rubric of sensory archaeology, such that both process and product might be integrated into how we see social communities within New Kingdom garrisons. As will be demonstrated, bread can be viewed as a sort of proxy evidence for the types of social entanglements that underlay the various communities that participated—willingly or unwillingly—in the Egyptian imperial project.

The Importance of the Ceramic Tumbler Cup in the Drinking Practices at Kastelli-Pediada, Crete, and in Larger Networks of Eastern Mediterranean Exchange

Lauren Wilson (Temple University)

*Virtual

Can cups lend insight on Bronze Age personalities? In this paper, the Minoan tumbler cup will be analyzed to discuss regional identity, social activity, and pottery production in the Pediada region in central Crete, an understudied area in Minoan studies, albeit the archaeological implications of its importance. Discovered during a 1991 rescue expedition, a Minoan building (ca.1900 – 1750 BCE) at the site of Kastelli-Pediada yielded a rich archaeological deposit where mounds of pottery vases, food remains, stone tools, a hearth, and ceremonial objects were unearthed. This building dates to the Pediada's economic peak, characterized by intense Minoan trade with Egypt and the Near East (namely for the acquisition of metals) and a rising elite Minoan class. The building's large quantity of locally made ceramic tumblers (approx. 1,000) speaks to the significance of drinking activities conducted at this site. Feasting and drinking ceremonies became elaborate social traditions as the landscape of elites became more competitive on Crete. During these ceremonies, pottery vessels were often used as status symbols such as varying cup sizes and high-quality Kastelli tumblers that mimic the look of precious metal. This paper presents results from the study of 226 ceramic cups from Kastelli along with the use of Bourdieu's Theory of Practice to further understand local identity at Kastelli and regional identity within the larger Pediada through multiple viewpoints: 1) the performative aspect of local drinking rituals, 2) the tumbler as a regional pottery shape of the Pediada, and 3) craft specialization in pottery production.

12B. Art, Archaeology, and History of Central Asia (Continental B)

Chair(s): Harrison Morin, University of Chicago; Mitchell Allen, University of California, Berkeley

Gandhāran Art: A Separation from Greekness and Buddhism

Louis M. Mainwaring Foster (Bryn Mawr College)

Gandhāran art is an iconographical style that develops in 1st and 2nd centuries CE in the Gandhāran region, parts of present-day Pakistan and Afghanistan, connected with the spread of Buddhism via a visual medium. This art style is also often connected with Greek influence due to iconographic and cultural elements of Greek and Hellenic art appearing in fusion with Buddhist religious elements. This paper focuses on analyzing the extent of Greek influence on Gandhāran art through an examination of material evidence from three case studies: the Greco-Bactrian site of Ai Khanoum in Northwest Afghanistan and two ancient settlement zones in Gandhāra: the Swat Valley and Taxila. The Ai Khanoum case study examines the iconographic elements at an existing Greek settlement to understand the scale of Greek influence on the settlement and surrounding region as a base line for comparison. The Swat Valley and Taxila case studies aim at trying to understand the extent of Greek influence on Gandhāran iconography after the decline of Hellenic presence in the region by tracking Greek elements in Gandharan art to understand the Greek legacy in the region. These case studies will show that Greek iconographic elements were being intentionally utilized by artistic workshops on Buddhist religious sites and on artifacts to appeal to the patronage based and learned elite of the area. Over time Greek and other foreign elements would be replaced by local motifs and ideas that were focused on Buddhist narratives.

Iterative Remote Sensing in Hyper-arid Landscapes: Relict Irrigation, Agriculture, and Pastoralism in the Southern Kyzylkum (Bukhara Oasis, Uzbekistan)

Zachary "Zach" Silvia (Stanford University)

This paper presents the methodological workflow and results from a multi-phase remote sensing project documenting ancient rural land use and irrigation in the southern Kyzylkum Desert outside of the Bukhara Oasis in Uzbekistan under the auspices of the Uzbek-American Expedition in Bukhara (ISAW and the Uzbek Academy of Sciences). In recent years, systematic remote sensing of relict agricultural field systems using UAV and terrestrial geophysics has greatly expanded our knowledge of Hellenistic through early Islamic period agricultural regimes, irrigation networks, and rural production activities around the immediate vicinity of the Bashtepa Group of sites. This talk focuses on the subsequent results of broader land use practices across the southern Kyzylkum using an integrated approach that utilizes seasonal multispectral imagery (PlanetScope; Quickbird), Synthetic Aperture Radar (ALOS-PALSAR; Sentinel-1), and historical reconnaissance imagery and maps (Corona; KH-9 Hexagon; Soviet Military Maps) to develop a regional composite of natural and anthropogenic hydrology, field systems, and settlement practices, much of which is revealed for the first time. In this context, and considering general trends towards machine-learning, the merits and drawbacks of such a "brute force" method of iterative, multi-phase remote sensing are discussed.

Silk Routes on the Ground: Ways to Central Asia

Xin Wu (Fudan University/Bryn Mawr College)

While extensive research has been dedicated to the Silk Road, little scholarship has addressed the physical materiality of these routes, specifically regarding their construction, appearance, and logistical management. Drawing on recent archaeological surveys in the desert between Dunhuang and Loulan in western China, this presentation illustrates the earliest phase of these roads as they formed in the first century BCE—detailing their spatial distribution and logistical frameworks. I argue that this infrastructure, an imperial project designed initially to secure the Han frontier and facilitate diplomacy, provided the essential foundation for the Silk Road. Much like the Achaemenid Persian Empire before it, the Han's logistical expansion west of Dunhuang was a catalyst for the trans-Eurasian highway, marking a transformative moment in the history of global connectivity.

The Pyrotechnologies of the BMAC

Teagan Wolter (Encyclopaedia Britannica)

Tools and adornments made of ceramic and metal are common in the Middle and Late Bronze Age throughout Bactria and Margiana, and workshops to create them are found at a number of sites. Both pottery production and metallurgy require familiarity with pyrotechnology and the ability to mitigate the inherent risks of such crafts. They are, however, very different industries when it comes to the materials each requires. While

clay is ubiquitous, metals must often be imported at great distance to be worked. In the Bactria-Margiana Archaeological Complex, this difference manifests in different processes in the manufacture of these goods and in differing social relationships between those who produce them and local elites. This presentation examines the nature of the metallurgical and pottery-producing industries of the BMAC before turning to a comparison of the mechanisms and extent of elite control over these two industries. It will examine cross-cultural parallels for these relationships.

A Remote Reassessment of the Cultural Landscape of Northern Afghanistan Post-August 2021

Harrison Morin (University of Chicago), Gil J. Stein (University of Chicago), Anthony J. Lauricella (University of Memphis), Andrew M. Wright (University of Chicago)

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 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 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.

12C. Ancient Mesopotamia – A Social History. Methods for Reconstructing Lived Worlds III (Continental C)

Chair(s): Steven Garfinkle, Western Washington University; Jana Mynářová, Charles University

Language of Communication as a Social Construct

Jana Mynářová (Institute of Ancient Near Eastern Studies, Charles University)

This paper proposes a methodological approach to lexical variation in cuneiform correspondence as evidence for social practice, scribal training, and administrative communication in the Late Bronze Age Levant. Rather than treating variation primarily as style, it asks how patterned vocabulary choices can be used to reconstruct relationships among scribes, local courts, and wider systems of political interaction. Using a comparative sample of Levantine letters from the Amarna archive, the paper applies a replicable quantitative workflow to analyze lexical distribution across subcorpora while controlling for text length, genre constraints, and formulaic sections. The analysis combines frequency-based measures, lexical diversity indicators, and low-frequency item profiling to distinguish routine epistolary convention from locally preferred habits of expression. It demonstrates how quantitative textual analysis can support more explicit and comparable inferences about social relations, institutional mediation, and documentation bias in a major cuneiform archive.

The Social Circulation of Institutional Language: Networked Constraints on Linguistic Register in Old Assyrian and Old Babylonian Letters

Adam Anderson (UC Berkeley)

This paper investigates the relationship between linguistic register and social structure in Old Babylonian and Old Assyrian epistolary corpora. Preliminary stylometric analysis conducted on letters from these traditions reveals a striking divergence in their registers of speech. Rather than attributing these differences solely to scribal tradition or archival convention, this study evaluates whether patterns of linguistic variation correspond to the social networks in which these texts circulated. The working hypothesis is that social structure conditions the range of linguistic choices observable in private correspondence. Institutional language, particularly professional phraseology, may diffuse through networks of actors whose roles connect administrative and personal spheres. To test this hypothesis, I combine stylometric measures of linguistic similarity with social network analysis across several large corpora, including Old Assyrian letters from the Cuneiform Digital Library Initiative (CDLI) and Old Assyrian Research Environment (OARE) databases, and Old Babylonian correspondence preserved in the CDLI and Archibab databases. By mapping relationships among authors, intermediaries, scribes, witnesses, and other actors, the study examines how linguistic features cluster within linked communities. Particular attention is given to whether certain actors function as carriers of profession-related registers into personal correspondence, while others maintain clearer boundaries between institutional and interactional language. By situating stylometric patterns within reconstructed social networks, this paper aims to demonstrate that variation in epistolary language reflects not only scribal practice but also the structure of the social environments in which texts were produced and transmitted.

Accessing Youth Experiences in the 1st Millennium Empires

Shana Zaia (Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam)

The lives of children and adolescents are notoriously difficult to access in the surviving cuneiform record. As a result, the life stages preceding adulthood are often underrepresented or missing from social histories of Mesopotamia. However, elucidating how youths were raised and prepared for adulthood is essential for understanding the inner workings of ancient societies, especially from an intergenerational perspective. This paper will explore methodological strategies for identifying children and adolescents in 1st millennium BCE archives and will address the session theme "From Archives to Actors" through case studies of youth experiences that shed light on how the childhood and adolescent life stages informed individuals' identity formation, agency in the household, and entrance into the workforce.

Competition Between Sectors in the Neo-Assyrian Administration

Christopher W. Jones (Union University)

The late Neo-Assyrian period has left behind an abundance of archives which attest to the inner workings of an ancient empire, including letters, legal documents, and administrative texts. These archives provide a window into internal power struggles which are not visible in other sources such as royal inscriptions. Through extensive use of prosopographic analysis coupled with close readings of letters, this paper will argue that different sectors of the Neo-Assyrian power structure, particularly the provincial governors, the palace administration, and the temples, all possessed institutional interests and were in competition with one another for influence, power, and resources. This paper will reconstruct the social world of Assyrian administration through three case studies: 1) The plot to murder Sennacherib and install his disinherited son Urad-Mullissu on the throne in 681 BC, which prosopography can show was supported by the provincial administration and professional military units in Nineveh; 2) frequent attempts by the palace administration, temples, and provincial governors to shift tax burdens onto each other through legal exemptions and simple refusal to pay; and 3) the massive growth of the palace administration over the course of the seventh century BC, which formed as a response to the incentives of competition and the tax exemption system.

The Dynamics of Changes in Pottery Circulation and Production in Second Millennium BCE Mesopotamia

Costanza Coppini (Université Paris 1 Pantheon Sorbonne)

*Virtual

The multifaceted dimensions of ancient Mesopotamian civilization are mirrored in the most common and widespread artifact across archaeological sites in ancient Iraq: pottery. A decennial history of research on Mesopotamian pottery has shown multiple differences in vessel shapes, decorations, and their diffusion across the vast geographic area of Mesopotamia, hinting at regionalizations in the distribution of certain vessel types during different historical periods. In the frame of the Marie Skłodowska-Curie project TECHNE, funded by the EU, the aim to address

the regionalization of ceramics in use in second millennium BCE Mesopotamia and challenge the distinction between northern and southern Mesopotamia as two different political and social worlds. The paper will display the research framework of TECHNE and its main research question, which concerns how the dynamics of changes in pottery circulation and production relate to the economic and political dynamics of second millennium BCE Mesopotamia, from the Amorite collective identity in the Middle Bronze Age to the Kassite and Assyrian cultural-political systems in the Late Bronze Age. Focusing its research on table vessels and storage containers selected based on their diffusion in Mesopotamia, the paper will illustrate the materials analyzed from six selected sites in southern (Larsa and Nippur), and northern Mesopotamia (Shemshara, Qala Shila, Tell Gomel, and Tell Billa) and will explore the interdisciplinary method combining anthropological approaches, natural sciences (petrography), and Digital Humanities analytical tools (Geographic Information Systems), constructed to bring together the available fragmentary evidence and analyze data synchronically and diachronically.

12D. Provenance and Middle Eastern Collections II (Waldorf)

Chair(s): Sophia Slotwiner-Nie, Yale Babylonian Collection; Jana Matuszak , University of Chicago

Confronting Erasures: The Case of the Antiquities Dealer Djemileh Benny and Cuneiform Collections in the British Museum

Nadia Ait Said-Ghanem (SOAS University of London)

*Virtual

In 2007, philosopher Miranda Fricker introduced the concept of epistemic injustice, defining it as a wrong done to someone specifically in their capacity as 'knower', a harm which not only targets credibility but also an individual's value within a knowledge community. When applied to the study of cuneiform collections in European and North American museums, a clear case of epistemic injustice emerges from the archive. The abundance of letters sent by antiquities dealers in Iraq to museum curators, preserved in archives, stands in sharp contrast to the absence of their names, stories, and contribution, in the history of disciplines invested in the study of archaeological artefacts from Western Asia. To contribute to studies on the history of cuneiform collections, this presentation proposes to redress a visible case of epistemic injustice by using provenance research and biography as a restorative act. To illustrate this approach, this discussion focuses on a case study: the purchase of a cuneiform collection by the British Museum in 1896 from "Binney & Co". By digging in the archive, this investigation will lead to the antiquities dealer Djemileh Hanna Benny, one of the few women in Baghdad who corresponded with the British Museum's department of Egyptian and Assyrian antiquities in the late 19th century. The reconstruction of her professional network and family relationships based on letters in the British Museum's central archive not only aims to give back visibility and dignity to local knowledge holders and specifically to women passionate about collecting cuneiform tablets, but also hopes to participate in reshaping the history of archaeology in Iraq and Assyriology.

"Unprovenanced" or "Looted:" A Case Study of the First Dynasty of the Sealand

Michael A. Chapin (Independent Researcher)

In 1936, Iraq passed Antiquities Law No. 59, which established state ownership of all antiquities (broadly defined). Although provisions in the law allowed for limited private sale and ownership of cultural property, this was strictly regulated. All cultural property in private possession was to be registered, and any and all unlicensed archaeological excavations were prohibited. Since 1936, any ancient Iraqi cultural property acquired through unlicensed excavations should be regarded as looted. Despite thorough documentation of widespread looting and traffic of cultural property originating from Iraq and surround areas, particularly from areas of conflict from 1980 onwards, the term "looted" rarely appears in the philological publications of cuneiform texts. Rather, politely vague terms such as "unprovenanced" are favored, or any mention of provenance is omitted entirely. This vagueness is used to provide an air of legitimacy that more explicit discussion and terminology would immediately dispel. This paper will look at the "unprovenanced" tablets from the First Dynasty of the Sealand as a case study of how vague provenance obscures tell-tale evidence of looted origins. Drawing on the published history of these tablets, the public legal record, and my doctoral research on the corpus, I argue that there is reasonable cause to believe all of these tablets were looted, not only the infamous "Gilgamesh Dream Tablet," seized by United States federal law enforcement in 2019 from the Museum of the Bible, but also the 474 tablets in the collection of Martin Schøyen, and known tablets in anonymous collections.

Deconstruction and Display: Revisiting the Northwest Palace of Ashurnasirpal II

Gina Konstantopoulos (University of California Los Angeles)

The palace of the Neo-Assyrian ruler Ashurnasirpal II (r. 883-859) at Kalhu was a stunning achievement, a massive building that was extensively decorated with intricate stone reliefs featuring a number of different narrative programs. This paper examines how the Northwest Palace, once constructed, was subjected to a number of 'deconstructions.' This process begins as early as the ruler Esarhaddon's own removal and reuse of several sculptures two centuries later and stretches into—and past—the palace's modern archaeological excavations and subsequent display. This paper will focus in particular on the palace's modern history, considering how and where the palace reliefs are currently found, broadly dispersed across museum worldwide, with many other lost to more modern examples of destruction. As detailed by the Nimrud Project, the excavated palace reliefs may now be found in dozens of institutions that span across three continents. This paper investigates several key histories amidst this dispersal, and in doing so examines how a visitor may view the palace reliefs and engage with this fragmented history.

From Provenance to Provenience: Reconstructing Findspots through Archival Research

Jana Matuszak (University of Chicago)

This paper presents two case studies in which provenance research in collection archives revealed information on the findspots of two groups of cuneiform manuscripts. In both instances, correspondence with antiquities dealers, notes in acquisition registers, and annual collection reports enabled not only a reconstruction of how the objects reached the collections that now house them, but also a reconstruction of where they were illicitly excavated: namely, in the southern Iraqi city of Larsa, which was heavily looted from the late 19th century onwards. As a result of these illicit excavations, hundreds of tablets were sold on the antiquities market in the late 19th and early 20th century (and likely beyond). Many of them were often suspected to come from Larsa, but only archival documents can corroborate these claims. This paper hence advocates for more comprehensive provenance research on cuneiform collections, as archival documentation - if preserved - can restore at least some information about the tablet's provenience.

12E. The Archaeology of the Lands of Alalakh II (Marquette)

Chair(s): Murat Akar, Hatay Mustafa Kemal University; Müge Bulu, Ankara University; Tara Ingman, Koç University

Aegean Pottery in the Lands of Alalakh: New Perspectives on Mycenaean Imports at Tell Atchana

Alice M. Crowe (Florida State University)

Hundreds of fragments of Aegean pottery dated to the mid to late 14th century BCE were recovered from Tell Atchana by the excavations of Woolley, and renewed campaigns at the site have increased this number, demonstrating that Alalakh was among the earliest and most prolific importers of Aegean pottery in the East Mediterranean. This paper reassesses the Aegean pottery recovered from the earlier excavation campaigns and offers preliminary observations on new material collected since 2015. Through the application of quantitative, qualitative, and spatial analyses, it tracks the number, forms, and surface treatments of the

Mycenaean pottery and maps their distribution and depositional contexts. It then relates the Aegean wares—their forms and uses—to other imports, and compares the Mycenaean vessels with locally produced ceramics, especially the pattern-painted Nuzi wares. Finally, it maps the distribution of Mycenaean pottery across the Amuq valley and juxtaposes Alalakh's Aegean repertoire with material recovered from other North Levantine sites. The paper argues that, in broad strokes, Alalakh's import pattern mirrors trends across the Northern Levant—painted kraters and narrow-necked containers designed to hold aromatics predominate—yet the Atchana repertoire stands out for its absences. Figurines, rhyta, and personal consumption vessels such as kylikes and cups, for instance, are rare at Alalakh but occur regularly at other sites in the region. The paper concludes by interrogating these anomalies and appraising the roles Mycenaean imports played in social and material practice at Alalakh.

The Gemstones of Alalakh

Magda Pieniazek (Institute for Pre- and Protohistory, University of Tübingen)

One of the most fascinating recent discoveries at Tell Atchana-Alalakh is that the site was a significant center for jewelry production. Numerous beads and other ornaments were found during Leonard Woolley's research, and hundreds of beads and other jewelry items have also been discovered during recent excavations, originating from both funerary and settlement contexts. Nevertheless, the traces of flourishing local production documented over the last 20 years are particularly significant. Several important Bronze Age sites in the Near East and eastern Mediterranean boast valuable jewelry finds made from precious stones, faience, glass and other materials. These impressive collections include many exotic items, but originate mainly from tombs. In this presentation, I will mainly discuss the gemstone jewelry from Alalakh in the context of regional and transregional communication, as well as local manufacture. The objects found at this site, which are made from carnelian, agate, onyx, amber and other stones, were exchanged in networks stretching from Central Asia to Europe. This applies not only to finished ornaments, but also to raw materials. Evidence of the processing of carnelian, agate and other gemstones includes fragments of raw materials, chips, semi-finished objects and broken beads, which illustrate important steps in the chaîne opératoire. The debitage is concentrated in certain areas, suggesting the existence of specialized production spaces or workshops.

A Preliminary Analysis of a New Corpus of Late Bronze Age Sealings and Seal Impressions from the Recent Excavations at Tell Atchana, Alalakh

Defne Güler Bilgili (Johns Hopkins University)

Recent excavations at Tell Atchana, Alalakh have expanded the corpus of clay sealings, and seal impressions associated with administrative activities at the site. This new collection builds on the corpus published by D. Collon, which was encountered during the C. L. Woolley and K. A. Yener excavations at the site. Taken together, this assemblage represents a significant group of sealings and seal impressions from a single site in the Near East. The exposure of a stratigraphically well-defined burnt context in the 2025 field season, contemporary with the 15th century BCE Level IV Palace, now allows this new group to be placed into contextual, functional, and stylistic analysis. The first part of the paper provides a statistical analysis of the sealings, including preservation conditions, typological distribution, and evidence for sealing practices. The second part addresses the iconographic groupings of the seal impressions, which are provisionally categorized into thematic groups. This approach allows for a better understanding of the administrative functions and the iconographic traditions reflected in the sealing assemblage at Late Bronze Age Alalakh.

Connecting Excavations and Rethinking Contexts: A New Cuneiform Tablet from the 2025 Excavation Season and Its Woolley-Era Counterparts

Jacob Lauinger (Johns Hopkins University), Zeynep Türker (Johns Hopkins University)

The 2025 excavation season at Tell Atchana was particularly noteworthy for the discovery of over twenty cuneiform tablets from a secure stratigraphic context in Square 32.64. We begin this paper by providing an overview of these tablets before moving on to discuss one tablet in detail. Specifically, we show how the subject matter of this tablet connects it to a dossier of cuneiform tablets excavated by Sir Leonard Woolley in the original excavations at Tell Atchana. We explore the chronological and historical implications of these connections and conclude by considering some of the ways in which the newly excavated cuneiform tablets from Square 32.64 are already leading to important new understandings of the archaeology and history of the Alalakh, Tell Atchana, and the wider region of the Amuq Valley.

Hittite Imperial Administration at Karkemish in the 13th Century BCE: New Results from the Excavations and Epigraphic Studies

Hasan Peker (İstanbul University), Nicolò Marchetti (University of Bologna)

Between the 2017 and 2023 excavation campaigns, the Turco-Italian Archaeological Expedition at Karkemish discovered around 700 clay sealings dating from the middle of the 13th century BCE in the core public district of this capital city. Of them, 547 sealings and a cylinder seal were retrieved from the deposit below the floors of a building in the eastern sector of area C (phase A). A total of 153 sealings were instead found in the fills above the floors of that building (phase B). The sealings pertain to the management of the local "Seal-house" (a name attested in one of those sealings), or treasury, managed by the top officials of the Karkemish royal court: it was a pivotal node in a network of institutions that were at the core of the political economy of the Hittite state.

12F. Archaeology of the Late Antique and Byzantine Near East (Williford A)

Chair(s): Mark Schuler, Concordia University

The Baptistery in the Byzantine/ Umayyad Pilgrimage Complex of Abila at Quwayliba, Jordan.

Robert W. "Bob" Smith (Mid-Atlantic Christian University)

The tripartite structure under excavation in the Pilgrimage Complex of Abila preserves architectural spaces for baptismal activities described in manuals of Church Order such as the Didascalia Apostolorum and texts from the Byzantine Diocese of the East. Its flanking rooms and central audience hall with a marble-clad, tri-lobate pool located in an apse, flanked by statuary niches was accessed by surrounding mosaic-carpeted passages. While water installations for ritual immersion are frequently found in ecclesiastical structures excavated in modern Jordan, Israel and Syria, function specific rooms are rare. Since baptismal services for catechumens were primarily conducted on the celebrations of Epiphany and Resurrection most churches must have economized either using auxiliary rooms for related disrobing, exorcism, immersion, anointing and rerobing or those activities must have all been conducted immediately around typical water installations. The closest excavated baptistery to Abila that preserves all of the specialized architectural elements is the Pilgrimage Complex at Gerasa. It provides a parallel in form and context. The pilgrimage complexes of Abila and Gerasa were supplied by aqueducts with abundant water and were associated with miracles which attracted people seeking proximity to the divine and healing from afflictions into the Umayyad Period. Since rebaptisms were proscribed as a capital offense by the Theodosian Code, the hypothesis emerges that the ritual bathing facilities at pilgrimage sites like Abila and Gerasa served for more than the one-time enlightenment/ regeneration of sinners that occurred at baptism.

Hippos Cathedral and its Photisteria – Archaeological Evidence for Baptismal Space in Early Byzantine Churches

Michael Eisenberg (The Zinman Intitute of Archaeology, University of Haifa), Arleta M. Kowalewska (The Zinman Intitute of Archaeology, University of Haifa)

Hippos (Sussita) of the Decapolis, located 2 km east of the Sea of Galilee, was the only Christian polis around the lake during the Byzantine period. The cathedral was the largest among its seven churches. It has recently been further excavated by the Hippos Excavations Project on behalf of the

Zinman Institute of Archaeology at the University of Haifa, following its initial unearthing in the 1950s, with only a couple of cursory publications of these earlier excavations. One of the points was digging a series of probes through the cathedral complex. It allowed the construction of a new chronological frame for the building's initial phase and destruction. The most significant result of the recent works was the identification of the previously unknown southern wing of the complex, where another (southern) photisterion was partly exposed. It joins the northern photisterion, the largest in Byzantine Palestine, and together they constitute a unique example of two independent spaces dedicated to baptism within a single building complex. Moreover, a set of liturgical implements was found in the southern photisterion, the most intriguing item among them being a marble block with three hemispheric cavities. It may represent a three-fold anointing ceremony as part of baptismal rights, so far unattested. This paper is the first presentation to focus on the architecture and liturgical implements of the southern photisterion, some of which are unique in the Byzantine ecclesiastical world, and its relationship with the larger, northern photisterion of the Hippos cathedral complex.

The Remains of a House for the Elderly at Hippos of the Decapolis and the Urban Changes Within Its Insula

Arleta M. Kowalewska (The Zinman Intitute of Archaeology, University of Haifa), Michael Eisenberg (The Zinman Intitute of Archaeology, University of Haifa)

The recent excavations at Hippos, a Graeco-Roman city above the eastern shores of the Sea of Galilee, revealed curious urban changes in one of the more central insulae within the city walls. The barely preserved Roman-period remains were found covered by two distinct layers of construction dated to the Byzantine period. The early phase, dated at the latest to the end of the 4th–beginning of the 5th century CE, includes remains of a quality mosaic floor with Christian motifs, a short Greek inscription, and a series of floral and faunal depictions. The inscription, reading "Peace be with the elders", suggests that these may be remains of a gerokomaion, a Byzantine house for the elderly, as previously known only from literary and epigraphic sources. The later phase, dated to the 6th century CE, included two spaces interconnected through a window-wall. The western space included well-preserved remains of an industrial facility, consisting of shallow plastered basins, for which no parallels have been identified so far. The eastern space was perhaps a fisherman's house, as interpreted by the artifacts recovered there – over 160 lead net sinkers and various iron tools. This later-phase building may have been a fish-related industry complex. This presentation introduces the excavated remains and their possible interpretations, and contextualizes the finds in the regional context and historic realities, proposing to see it as the first signs of the gradual decline of the city from a polis to an industrial town that it became in the Early Islamic period.

Monastic Institutions on the Byzantine Frontier: Economy, Administration, and Society in the Negev

Rachel Bernstein (University of Haifa, School of Archaeology and Maritime Civilizations)

* Virtual

Scholarship has emphasized the range of monastic institutions across the Late Antique and Byzantine Near East, while models of Palestinian monasticism remain heavily shaped by the well-known landscapes of the Judean Desert, Gaza, and Egypt—regions associated with ascetic withdrawal, pilgrimage economies, and prominent founders. The monastic communities of the Negev Highlands in Palaestina Tertia, situated along the empire's southern periphery, render an opportunity to reconsider the institutional role of monasteries within society during the transitional centuries surrounding the seventh century. Focusing on the settlements of Shivta, Nessana, and Avdat, this paper combines archaeological evidence, architectural analysis, epigraphy, and documentary sources—especially the Nessana papyri—to examine the role of monasteries within the Byzantine Negev's settlement landscape. Archaeological remains demonstrate that monastic complexes were integrated into established settlements rather than spatially isolated. Epigraphic and documentary evidence further indicates monastic participation in agricultural systems that sustained settlement in this hyper-arid environment, including wine production, storage facilities, and terraced runoff agriculture. The Nessana papyri reveal monasteries as agents within local economic and administrative networks, where monks and abbots appear as landholders, creditors, and fiscal administrators. Taken together, these sources suggest that these monasteries functioned not as ascetic communities, but as institutional actors in frontier settlement and administration during the transformative centuries of the Late Antique and early Byzantine Near East. By examining the Negev as part of a borderline landscape, this study contributes to broader discussions of monastic economies, provincial administration, and institutional flexibility in the Byzantine world.

12G. Ancient Languages and Linguistics III (Williford B)

Chair(s): Brendan Hainline, The Metropolitan Museum of Art

The Temple Script: A Sociolinguistic Study of Paleo-Hebrew in the Hellenistic and Roman Periods

Harrison Fausey (Columbia International University)

This paper surveys the known examples of Paleo-Hebrew from the Hellenistic and Roman periods in Judea and Samaria and then compares these examples to known sociolinguistic models. The wide geographic distribution, broad use of writing domains, and types of inscriptions point to a user rather than use-based primary determiner of script choice. Certain groups of people continued to use Paleo-Hebrew throughout the second temple for a variety of purposes. This paper identifies these groups and the function Paleo-Hebrew played in the larger history and society of Second Temple period Judea and Samaria. In comparative sociolinguistics, we see many similar cases where certain minority groups of scribes used one special script to promote their place in society. Although Paleo-Hebrew script had become obsolete for most writing functions in the Second Temple period, the priesthoods used it to maintain their own authority and prestige. Several other scribal communities and rulers in Judea and Samaria used Paleo-Hebrew script to highlight their associations with the temples of Jerusalem and Mount Gerizim. This paper presents a reconstruction of the history of Paleo-Hebrew script that closely connects to these temples.

Words of Belonging: Lexemes Designating Social Groups in Early Egypt

Brendan Hainline (The Metropolitan Museum of Art)

Conceptions of group identity are culturally (and often chronologically) defined. Modern terms such as race, class, and ethnicity have limited application to the ancient world, and often do more harm than good when they are used to try and understand how people in the past identified and categorized themselves and others. While the concept of the "Nine Bows" illustrates that from early on Egyptians were dividing people into social categories, the flexible and changing roster of the nine members of the "Bows" illustrate that—like social identity and ideas of "otherness" today—these groups were fluid and defined differently over time. Studies often focus on the two most frequently referenced Egyptian social groups: the rḫjjt and the pʿt, often defined as the "commonfolk" and "patricians"—translated as a dichotomy based on a Classical and European medieval social structures. However, other groups are also known from early Egyptian sources, such as the ḥnmmt (the "sunfolk"), the mrt, and the knmwt. This talk will look at Egyptian social group names through in-depth lexical study of their usage in Old and Middle Kingdom textual source with a goal of establishing the emic conceptualizations of these terms. This includes examining titles that reference these groups, how contrasts between groups are structured, and what verbs take these group names as subjects or objects.

The Social Context of the Hebrew Infinitive Absolute

Larissa St. Clair (University of California, Los Angeles)

This paper examines the social meaning of the infinitive absolute when used to introduce commands or requests in Epigraphic and Biblical Hebrew. Using Linguistic Politeness Theory, I argue that variation in verbal forms reflects underlying social relationships between speakers and addressees by analyzing the evidence from the Arad and Lachish letters. In these letters,

the distribution of verbal forms alongside various politeness strategies suggests that the infinitive absolute functioned as an appropriate command form when a social superior addressed an inferior. This paper then compares the epigraphic data to the use of the infinitive absolute in Biblical Hebrew as part of a command. Likewise, the infinitive absolute verbal form in Biblical Hebrew occurs in contexts where a superior addresses an inferior and never alongside politeness strategies. Finally, a case study of the Decalogue demonstrates how the infinitive absolute contributes to the authoritative tone of the commandments. Thus, I argue that the infinitive absolute carried a social indexical meaning of authority in the context of giving a command.

12H. Prehistoric Archaeology II (Williford C)

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

Burial Cave from the Late Chalcolithic Period at Ben Shemen Site, Located on the Main Road to Jerusalem, Israel

Vered Eshed (Israel Antiquities Authority)

Archaeological excavation in the year 2024, on the west slopes of country site of Ben Shemen, on the main road from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem revealed a Late Chalcolithic burial cave. The area is built mainly of limestone rocks that underwent intensive weathering and created an abundance of natural caves. Many of them were excavated in the past and were found to be used as burial caves rich in finds, attesting to extensive human activity in the area during the Chalcolithic period. The cave, which was natural, was found to be damaged. The entrance to the cave was by means of a natural shaft in the cave's roof and consisted of a central room and a small eastern room. The main room had not been in use, but adjacent to its southern wall a unique burial pit of ritual vessels was found. Among the vessels were a small quarry, an intact pottery incense burner, and a number of fragments of decorated ossuary. The eastern room served for burial. In this room a concentration of human bones and teeth, that were interspersed with stones, pottery vessels and ossuary fragments. It seems that the ossuaries were not placed intact, only fragments of them were placed. The research will discuss the unique findings at the cave, the ritual use of the cave, and the burials and the human remains that were found, referring to other Chalcolithic burial caves found in this area.

Blades from the Valley: New Insights in the Production of Lithic Sickle Elements from the Amuq Valley Türkiye

Sheldon J. Harmacy (University of Toronto)

This paper seeks to expand the understanding of the chaîne opératoire of the 'Canaanean' Blade industry based on new finds from the Amuq Valley, Türkiye. Beginning in the Late Chalcolithic specialized prismatic lithic blade industries spread throughout the Ancient Near East. One such technology, the Canaanean Blade Industry, is found ubiquitously in parts of Anatolia, northern Mesopotamia, and the Levant in the form of rectilinear sickle segments. The chaîne opératoire of these tools has been variously explored through archaeological excavations of key sites like Titriş Hoyük and replicative experiments. Models derived from these studies have presented the production of these tools from raw material acquisition to the production of long blades. These studies: however, have done little to show how these long blades were further reduced into smaller segments for use as sickle segments, a step presumably done by the final consumer. The recent find of a Canaanean Blade Debitage at Tell Tayinat, abandoned during its reduction into smaller segments, has now provided insights into this final stage of production. The analysis of this find has displayed that the creation of segments followed a simple process of reduction where the backs and edges of segments were retouched individually and prior to truncation. This analysis has provided a unique snapshot into the final step in the production of Canaanean Sickle Segments and bookends the data and models provided by previous studies.

Persistent Memory at the Edge of Ubaid: Material Continuity and Selective Interaction at Early Chalcolithic Kendale Hecala (ca. 5200–4500 BCE), Upper Tigris Region

Şakir Can (Kocaeli University)

Kendale Hecala, located at the northernmost fringe of Mesopotamia along the Ambar Çay in the Upper Tigris Region, offers a rare window into Early Chalcolithic lifeways at the periphery of the Ubaid interaction sphere. Four seasons of excavation have revealed six architectural levels spanning approximately 700 years, documenting a settlement of remarkable cultural resilience: while neighboring sites in the Tigris Valley fully adopted Ubaid architectural schemes and ceramic traditions, Kendale Hecala maintained a strikingly different trajectory. This paper presents an integrated reading of the settlement's material record, including architecture, ceramics, small finds, and recently analyzed wooden remains, to argue that the inhabitants of Kendale Hecala practiced a form of deliberate cultural conservatism rooted in Late Neolithic memory. Architecturally, the settlement shows no adoption of Ubaid tripartite planning; instead, pisé-walled single- and multi-room buildings, grill-planned structures, and consistent rebuilding on the same orientations across multiple phases reflect a deeply entrenched local tradition. The ceramic assemblage, dominated by Grit Tempered Ware, Dark-Faced Burnished Ware, and Standard Ware, all of which have roots in the Late Neolithic, further substantiates this pattern. Ubaid Painted Ware constitutes only 3% of the assemblage and decreases from lower to upper levels, suggesting not adoption but sporadic contact, likely through exchange rather than cultural emulation. Small finds, mortuary practices, and lithic traditions reflect continuity across all levels. Critically, xylological analysis of mineralized and carbonized wooden remains, exceptionally rare for this period in the Upper Tigris, reveals a consistent 500-year tradition of riparian timber exploitation, with the same species used across identical architectural functions from the earliest to the latest levels.