

INTRODUCTION

APRIL 2021

Welcome back! We hope you enjoyed the Easter vac and are ready for Trinity Term.

We are happy to present and circulate the Oxford Assyriology Newsletter! Below you can read about upcoming lectures, news, people, funding deadlines and student activities, all related to Assyriology at The University of Oxford. This newsletter will be sent out termly.

Please send comments, news and any updates you think should be included to christie.carr@wolfson.ox.ac.uk



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EANES TUESDAY SEMINARS

Tue. 4th May (2nd week), 1:30 pm.

Gareth Brereton, London:

'The greatest king you've never heard of': exhibiting Ashurbanipal at the British Museum

Tue. 25th May (5th week), 1:30 pm.

Drahoslav Hulínek, Bratislava:

The latest knowledge about the history of the Sumerian city of Umma

Tue. 1st June (6th week), 1:30 pm.

Sebastian Rey, London:

New Excavations in Tello/Girsu: The Eninnu Temple

Tue. 8th June (7th week), 1:30 pm.

Susanne Paulus, Chicago:

Babylon, Sale Contracts, and Kassite History
via MS Teams



Middle Babylonian medical text, Assur
<https://cdli.ucla.edu/P281806>

ANCIENT MEDICINE SEMINAR

Green Templeton College
Alternative Wednesdays at 17:30pm

Weds 9th June (7th Week)-

Dr Troels Pank Arbøl (Linacre
College)

Epidemics in Ancient Mesopotamia

via Zoom. For further details and to
be added to the mailing list, please
contact robert.arnott@gtc.ox.ac.uk

ADAM HOWE

Wolfson College, DPhil (2021)

*Transgression and Curse in the
Mesopotamian Exorcist Corpus*

University of Würzburg,

Thurs 29th April (1st Week),

17.15pm-

<https://uni->

[wuerzburg.zoom.us/j/93960110](https://uni-wuerzburg.zoom.us/j/93960110960?)

[960?](https://uni-wuerzburg.zoom.us/j/93960110960?pwd=U2FpK0tkZW9nanJ2Y3pHOE5tSlpLUT09)
[pwd=U2FpK0tkZW9nanJ2Y3pHO](https://uni-wuerzburg.zoom.us/j/93960110960?pwd=U2FpK0tkZW9nanJ2Y3pHOE5tSlpLUT09)



EARLY TEXT CULTURES

Astronomy and Astrology in
Early Text Cultures

For more info:

[https://www.earlytextcultures.](https://www.earlytextcultures.org/events/upcoming-events)
[org/events/upcoming-events](https://www.earlytextcultures.org/events/upcoming-events)



PRIMARY TEXT LAB II: HAMMURABI

The BRANE Collective

Friday 7th May at 16:00 PM

The Primary Text Lab series brings together a panel
of scholars to examine closely a single text from
different perspectives, in an open conversation on
any aspect of its interpretation.

**Panel: Moudhy Al-Rashid, Andrew Alberto Nicolas
Deloucas, Seth L. Sanders, Pamela Barmash, Sophus
Helle, M. Willis Monroe**

To register:

[https://branecollective.org/2021/04/10/primary-](https://branecollective.org/2021/04/10/primary-text-lab-ii-hammurabi/)
[text-lab-ii-hammurabi/](https://branecollective.org/2021/04/10/primary-text-lab-ii-hammurabi/)



KRASIS

Talah Anderson (DPhil) will be participating in Krasis as an **Ashmolean Junior Teaching Fellow** with a symposium on Mesopotamian visual representation.

Krasis is a museum-based, interdisciplinary teaching and learning programme, which began life at the Ashmolean in 2017 and won a University of Oxford Humanities Division Teaching Excellence Award in 2018. Each term Krasis gathers eight early career researchers from the University of Oxford (the Ashmolean Junior Teaching Fellows) and sixteen current Oxford undergraduates and postgraduates (the Krasis Scholars) for a series of object-centred symposia, taught by the teaching fellows, who each address a shared theme from the standpoint of their own discipline and their own research.



OWNING THE PAST

The exhibit is now open until the **22nd August 2021** at the **Ashmolean Museum**

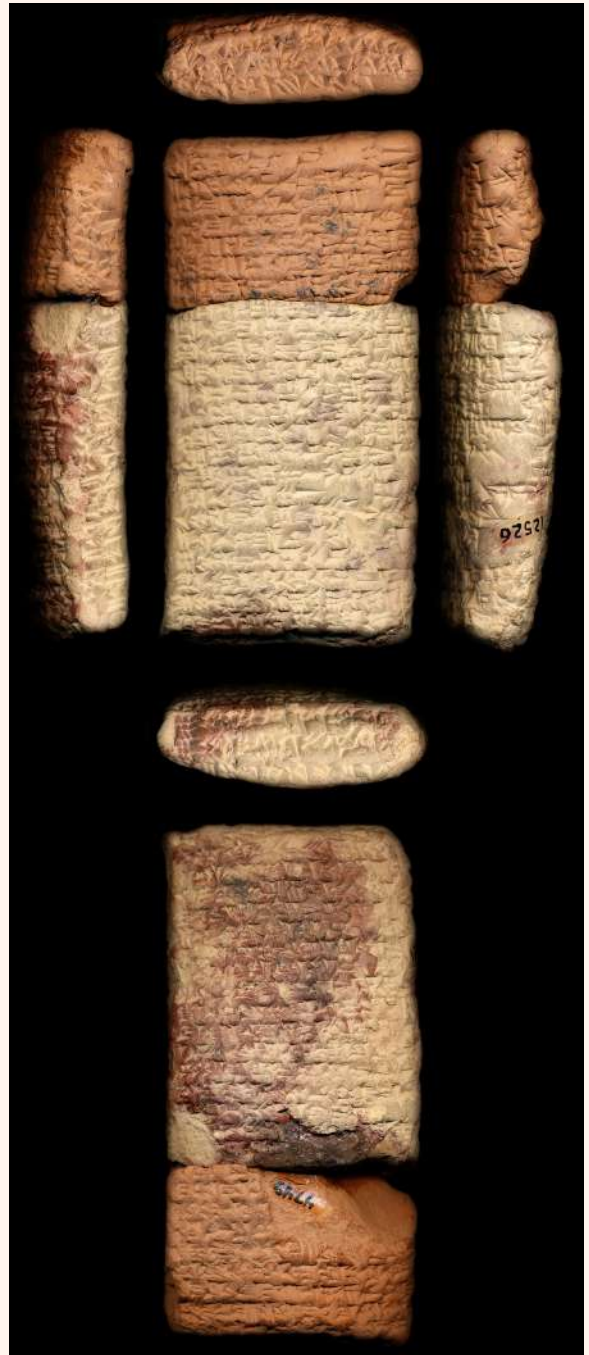
<https://www.ashmolean.org/event/owning-the-past#/>

BISI Webinar: Dr Paul Collins on Rethinking Mesopotamia in Oxford
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7KnoCwwU_D8

LYNN SALAMMBÔ-ZIMMERMAN

Wolfson College, DPhil (2021)

I have read for the DPhil in Oriental Studies at Wolfson College, Oxford, for four years, funded by the Oxford-Wolfson College Reginald Campbell Thompson Assyriology Graduate Scholarship of the University of Oxford, Wolfson College and established through the generous gift of an anonymous donor. In my DPhil thesis, entitled “Kassite letters: Communicating Orders and Networking within the Administration of Kassite Babylonia”, I analysed the language, style, structure, epistolary function and content of about half of the Kassite period letters from Nippur, to which I had access. Nippur yielded the largest number of Kassite period letters in comparison with other find-spots. As a substantial number of these letters is currently stored in the cuneiform collection of the “University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology” in Philadelphia, I went to Philadelphia to take RTI images of the cuneiform tablets (funded by the Santander Academic Travel Award, the Lorne Thyssen Research Fund for Ancient World Topics and the Travel Grant for Fieldwork from Wolfson College, Oxford). Apart from my analysis of the epistolary conventions and function of the Kassite letter corpus, I focused on the information which the letters provided us with about the provincial structure of the Kassite kingdom, and the tasks of the officials, who wrote and sent the Kassite period letters.



Middle Babylonian letter, Nippur
<https://cdli.ucla.edu/P261018>



Middle Babylonian letter, Nippur
<https://cdli.ucla.edu/P261326>

They show that Nippur's network reached south through Isin and the Sealand to Dilmun, and in the north to Bīt-Pere-Amurru. In the northeast, regular communication with Upī, Dēr and Akkade is attested. The involvement of Nippurean officials in distant provinces can be explained through the involvement of the governor of Nippur in the management of temple lands in different provinces. The Kassite letters do not only prove that the governor of Nippur had an elevated status, but also supra-regional influence. The governor of Nippur had the command over temples in Nippur.

He was involved in the collection of levies for the king, and in the supra-regional distribution of resources, which are tasks ascribed to the royal administration. Provincial officials, such as ḫazannus, from other provinces reported to the governor of Nippur. As the highest official under the king, the governor of Nippur was involved in the collection of levies for the royal administration. Further, the Kassite letters demonstrate the wide-reaching control of Nippur over surrounding areas, and that the province of Nippur stretched northeast up until Dūr-Enlilē.

The college system at the University of Oxford provides you with ideal conditions for writing a DPhil thesis. There is a great community of researchers and students at Wolfson College, leisure facilities, and opportunities to meet exciting people, so I am missing it already a great deal!

Assyriology at Oxford also offers you many opportunities to gain experience in the field. During my time in Oxford I have imaged cylinder seals in two collections, the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, and the Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris for a sub-project of the Cuneiform Digital Library Initiative (CDLI) led by Jacob Dahl entitled “Seals and their impressions in the ancient Near East” (SIANE).

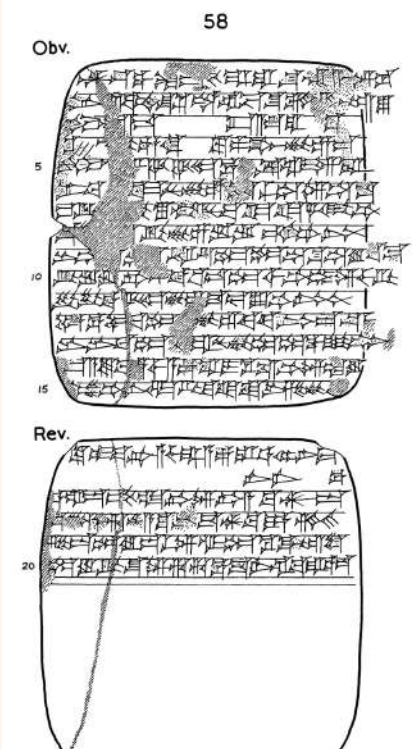
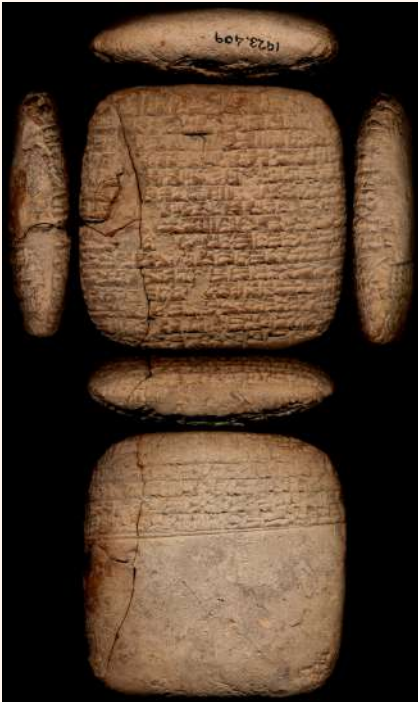
Working with the CDLI was one of the reasons I applied to Oxford in the first place and I have scanned cuneiform tablets with a desktop scanner and reflectance transformation imaging (RTI) with a camera dome in the Louvre Museum, Paris, and of the Kassite letters in the Babylonian Section of the Penn Museum, Philadelphia.

Having finished my DPhil in Oxford, I took a fellowship in Berlin at the German Research Foundation research project (DFG Kolleg-Forschungsgruppe) 2615 “Rethinking Oriental Despotism” working on economic theories regarding the palace business system in Old Babylonian Larsa. As a fellow of this project, I am currently finishing an article on women in governance during the Kassite period.

At the beginning of May I am going to begin my postdoc at the German Research Foundation Emmy Noether with a research project entitled “Philosophie in sumerischer narrativer Literatur” (“Philosophy in Sumerian narrative Literature”). The research project is going to address the connection between Old Babylonian literature, omen series’ and legal texts. A part of the project is going to be focused on the method of hyleme analysis, which is used to extract literary “Stoff” (narrative) variants and/or sequences from their concrete manifestations in a specific medium, and to make transmedial comparisons of “Stoffe” and their variants (see Zgoll’s “Tractatus mythologicus” 2019).

DR J. NICHOLAS REID

Wolfson College, DPhil (2014)



A copy of Nungal A, 'Decad no.9', OECT 5, 058
<https://cdli.ucla.edu/P345839>

In Assyriology, there is always something new to learn and discover. This intriguing aspect sets it apart from some disciplines that are more restricted by a very limited corpus or body of evidence. At Oxford, I learned to work with unpublished texts and researched social history, which set the trajectory for my research.

For primary text publication, I will mention one project here. Klaus Wagensonner and I are publishing a volume on letters from Old Babylonian Kish in the series Oxford Editions of Cuneiform Texts (OECT). While we could have short-circuited the publication process, we chose a more ambitious project, which included the reconstruction of an archive of 200 letters from Old Babylonian Kish. Until at least 1600 BC, the compiled archive represents the largest group of related letters from southern Mesopotamia. Although these letters moved into various museums through the antiquities market in the early 1900's, the vast majority remained unstudied and unpublished, despite consisting of many pristine examples of personal and professional correspondence. We offer an extensive introduction that touches on Old Babylonian epistolography and scribal hands. The insights gained from and the ability to observe scribal hands across museums has resulted in our embarking on a three-year study session on scribal hands in cuneiform texts as co-chairs for the annual meetings of ASOR (2020-2022).

With social history, my interest lies primarily in studying people on the margins of society, such as slaves and prisoners. I am finalizing a manuscript with Oxford University Press on prisons until the first fall of Babylon. I argue that corporal confinement arose largely out of the desire to control and gain access to labor.

The mechanisms for imprisonment, such as guards and other implements to control movement, were readily adaptable to meet a variety of social needs, resulting in a multifunctional, multi-contextual practice of imprisonment. Imprisonment had little intersection with crime, except when a person was being held as part of the judicial process or to coerce payment. But the practice of imprisonment came to have ideology attached to it that related to ritual purification through lament, as seen in the “Hymn to Nungal.” Through the attachment of ideology, the prison came to be utilized in later ritual texts, where the king would be ritually purified, just like the prisoner in the “Hymn to Nungal.” But literary and religious ideology must be disentangled from actual practice.

My interest in social history stems in part from my own experience growing up in Mississippi, where slavery and prisons play such tragic roles in our past and present. Topics of social history assist us in asking questions like how to organize a just society. Unlike one approach, the goal is not to find exemplary practices in ancient Mesopotamia. Rather, even as we discover tragedies of the past, it enables us to also explore our own assumptions and blind spots. For example, in the “Laws of Hammurapi” one’s status in society had a direct relationship to outcomes. By contrast, in the US, a classic picture of our judicial system is “Lady Justice,” who is blind as a symbol of impartial fairness. However, everyone knows that race and socio-economic background continue to play major roles in our justice system, producing unequal outcomes among society. “Lady Justice” represents an ideology that has to be disentangled from actual practice in the US.

The project of disentangling ideology from social-historical practice continues to be something that I am interested in pursuing.

This section includes news from our students working on projects for the Cuneiform Digital Library Initiative : <https://cdli.ucla.edu/>



GOOGLE SUMMER SCHOOL OF CODE

The CDLI has received the exciting news that the project will be taking part in the GSoC for the fourth year in a row!

GSoC is a global program focused on bringing more student developers into open source software development. Students work with an open source organisation on a 10 week programming project during their break from school.

Oxford GSoC org admin:
Émilie Pagé-Perron
Jacob Dahl

Oxford GSoC mentors:
Émilie Pagé-Perron
Jacob Dahl
Christie Carr (DPhil)
Joseph Barber (MPhil)



CDLI MATERIALS

Talah Anderson (DPhil)

"I have begun a task matching each of the materials listed on the CDLI with their equivalent entries in the Getty's Art & Architecture Thesaurus. This will enable greater standardisation between CDLI and Getty terminology and will help users of the CDLI to more easily access the comprehensive research materials provided by the Getty Vocabularies".

Benjamin Caspi (DPhil)

Ellen Ryan (MPhil)

"To reorganise the object type category on the CDLI website, we are creating a new typology of object types within the CDLI archive and tidying the current one which has many errors and entries with unique labels (often spelling mistakes or spelt in a different language). We are currently creating the typology and discussing where certain objects would best fit as items such as foundation deposits could be classified as a sculptural artefact or architectonic".

Ur III cylinder seal, Umma
<https://cdli.ucla.edu/P452212>



SCANDANAVIAN SEALS PROJECT

Ninhursag Tadaros was a student here at Oxford on the BA in Egyptology and ancient Near Eastern Studies (Akkadian and Sumerian) between 2015-2018. Nino is now doing a masters in Curating Art (and Heritage Studies) at Stockholm University.

Nino is working on a project for the CDLI to create a complete catalog of Scandinavian collections of cylinder (and if possible stamp) seals, as well as an improved online bibliography of seals collections.

The CDLI lists currently only 7868 physical seals, although we claim that as many as 50,000 exists in collections. For BM, for example, CDLI lists only c. 1,750 out of perhaps 7,500 seals in catalog. One way to arrive at a better coverage is to methodically catalog seals in different regions.

"Currently, I am trying to map out which collections in the Scandinavian countries have cylinder and stamp seals, and gather catalog data on the ones I find. It involves contacting/liaison with curators and researchers in different countries, and sometimes in that way informing them of CDLI's work. Simultaneously, I am gathering references for a bibliography. The deliverables of this project are an improved online bibliography of seals collections, and catalog data of Scandinavian collections of cylinder seals. If time permits the idea is to do similar work on a North American Collection".

GENERAL FUND FOR ASSYRIOLOGY

The General Fund for Assyriology supports research in the field of Assyriology in Oxford, and primarily at Wolfson College. Funding is available in support of:

- Conferences and lectures on topics of interest to Assyriologists,
- Oxford Assyriological publications,
- Small research projects by Oxford Assyriologists (for example by funding fieldwork, archival research, and conference presentations, with preference given to members of Wolfson College),
- And to invite colleagues from elsewhere for short stays in Oxford to carry out research of interest to Oxford Assyriologists.

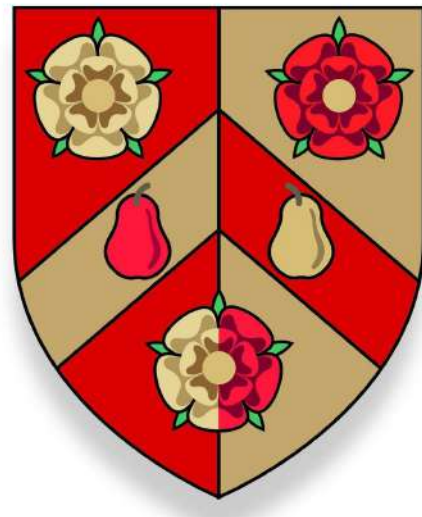
All research data generated from projects funded by the Fund is to be made publicly available, and major lectures shall likewise be recorded and put in the public domain.

The General Fund for Assyriology can also be used for general support for on-going research of Oxford Assyriologists, with preference given to members of Wolfson College.

To apply to the General Fund, please send applications (cover letter, CV, budget) to jacob.dahl@orinst.ox.ac.uk by **Weds 12th May (3rd week)**.

For more info:

<https://www.wolfson.ox.ac.uk/general-fund-assyriology>



ANCIENT WORLD RESEARCH CLUSTER

The fund supports the work of members of Wolfson College working on any aspect of the Ancient World.

Applications to the Lorne Thyssen Fund for Ancient World Topics should be submitted **by the end of 3rd week each term. For more info and how to apply:**

<https://www.wolfson.ox.ac.uk/lorne-thyssen-research-fund-ancient-world-topics>