# Workshops



**Workshop 1:** Akkadian Grammar and Lexicon

Together with Sumerian, Akkadian is the main written language in Ancient Mesopotamia. Due to the political and cultural spread of the language and its speakers, it had significant influence on languages across the Ancient Near East. In recent years there has been a surge of activity in Akkadian grammatical studies, with the publication of several descriptive grammars and linguistic analyses, as well as a number of ongoing projects devoted to Akkadian lexicon and morphology. Given the growing interest in the linguistics of the language, this session hopes to facilitate a conversation between scholars enriching the traditional philology that is the backbone of Assyriology with up-to-date linguistic tools and models. Papers are encouraged on topics ranging from phonology, morphology, and syntax to lexicon and etymology.
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**Workshop 2:** Chronoi as a Factor in Cultural Contact with(in) the Ancient Near East

In his book *Time and the Other*, Johannes Fabian (1983, ix) states that "time, much like language or money, is a carrier of significance, a form through which we define the content of relations between the self and the Other". Although there is no word for "time" in ancient Mesopotamia, this abstract notion nevertheless is a commodity as well as a means through which people understand themselves and distinguish themselves from others in sociocultural exchanges. Time can contribute to unification, for instance when calendars synchronizes society, but can also be a ground for conflict, incompatibility and identity formation, for instance when people of different cultures meet and need to negotiate their temporal practices. This workshop aims to identify different times, or *chronoi*, and temporal relations that were present in ancient Mesopotamia, and at the same time, analyze how these played a role in intra- and intercultural contact within the ancient Near East. How did individuals and groups share and communicate about their temporal identities, perceptions and experiences with others, without an equivalent of the English word "time"? How did they synchronize time in social and cultural contact? How did people move within and between different realms of time, within a society or culture and beyond? In what way does contact between different "temporal communities" influence people's perception or experience of time, and does this lead to symmetry (e.g. assimilation) and/or asymmetry (e.g. resilience)? How did time in daily life form identities (e.g. through work-time, cultic time, day- and night time)? And how does awareness of time, such as memory, play a role in the construction of a cultural identity that stands in contrast to others?
Another aspect of understanding these different roles of time in various forms of contact within the ancient Near East, is to consider the challenges faced by modern historians in researching time in the "other" remote culture we have come in contact with. To what extent are we mirroring our own subjective conceptions of time on our study objects? How can we avoid that

we are limited in analyzing time through simplistic binaries such as linear versus cyclical? Can we consider alternative shapes of time in our encounters with the ancient Near East?

As time as well as this topic can be approached in a multitude of ways, the workshop aspires to reflect a wide range of perspectives, and also is open to interdisciplinary and cross-cultural studies. The ultimate objective of the workshop is to increase our understanding of the different concepts of time as well as the social and cultural dynamics between individuals, groups and societies in the ancient Near East.

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**Workshop 3:** Cultures of Contact – Modes of Interaction within Ancient Communities

In our workshop on "Cultures of contact: modes of interaction within ancient communities" we will address questions of cultural contacts/cultures of contact on the level of individual interaction. Focusing on lived realities in village and city communities, we will investigate the framework and the encountered modes of person-to-person (and group) interactions in contexts of social and spatial mobility. What are the demographic community compositions, in which we encounter mobility-based person-to-person contact? How is this interaction reflected in the archaeological, iconographical, and textual sources? And which role do the different types of mobility play in these contacts?

Based on the exploration of individual cases, we will reflect on two major historiographical concerns regarding the topic: one within Ancient Near Eastern Studies, the other concerning the cross-over between ancient history and social sciences. 1) Can one identify patterns of contact or should such person-to-person interaction rather be researched as a series of individual cases, which are more dependent on the specific circumstances than the type of interaction? Is a lack of pattern intrinsic to mobility-related modes of interaction, which are rooted in highly personal life histories of the individuals involved? Or is it due to the state of preservation of the evidence or the current state of research? 2) Does the process of constructing generalities from individual cases differ in ancient history and social sciences? If yes, how and why? And how can Ancient Near Eastern Studies profit from a cross-over approach?

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**Workshop 4:** Digital Humanities Workshop

This session aims to bring together best practices in Digital Assyriology focussing on Digital Scholarly Editions of Cuneiform Texts. Topics of interest can be to present best practices in:
– Cuneiform 3D Data Capture and Processing
– Cuneiform Natural Language Processing
– Cuneiform Paleography
– Linked Open Data Dictionaries
– Metadata, Vocabularies and ontologies for the documentation of cuneiform artifacts and/or texts
– Issues on data format specifications for publishing cuneiform
– Digital philological research practices in Cuneiform Studies
– FAIR data and cuneiform studies
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**Workshop 5:** Loanwords and Language Contact in Ancient Anatolia

Loanwords and structural interferences in the context of the pre-classical Anatolian languages (both the Indo-European and the non-Indo-European ones), within and outside the proper geographical area of Anatolia, have been frequently discussed. Some contacts are well established and current research focuses on the details (e.g. Hittite vs. Luwian; Anatolian languages vs. Ugaritic), others are still heavily disputed (e.g. Anatolian languages vs. Greek, Hurrian, or Armenian), and new horizons keep opening (e.g. the role of the "minor" 1st millennium languages, such as Carian, Lycian, and Lydian). Recently, the rapid development in the understanding of the languages of ancient Anatolia allowed a fine-grained investigation of these linguistic contacts, with a far better philological and methodological foundation. This culminated in the Verona based ERC project Pre-Classical Anatolian Languages in Contact (PALaC) on the one hand, and in the Munich and Marburg based DFG project Digital Philological-Etymological Dictionary of the Minor Ancient Anatolian Corpus Languages (eDiAna) on the other hand, one of the foci of which is the Luwian loan and foreign words in Hittite.

The aim of this workshop is to create an opportunity for both the researchers of these projects and fellow researchers outside of these projects to present their latest results. We believe that the combination of different approaches and brand new results will be illuminating and will lead to focused discussions and to a better understanding of the problems involved. Besides, the wide range of topics will also provide an overview of the state of the art of the sociolinguistic history of ancient Anatolia.

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**Workshop 6:** Near Eastern *Weltanschauungen* in Contact and in Contrast: Rethinking the Terms Ideology and Propaganda

In the light of the multicultural world of the Ancient Near East, the *Weltanschauungen* (lit. views of the world") are extremely multifaceted and, according to the historical-political situation, they are, at times, in contact and/or in contrast with one another. These interactions and mechanisms are often explained, or at least connected, with the concepts of ideology and propaganda. These terms, however, are often employed without a reflection about their use in ancient context. Therefore, an (re-)examination of the terms "ideology" and "propaganda" is required. The workshop aims at examining and pondering these terms applied to the Ancient Near Eastern studies, with regard to social or cultural groups, kingdoms, or empires. These terms and ideas mostly have a Eurocentric or Western-centric origin. Arguably, these are in many cases inadequate and should be revised.

According to Marxist thinkers, "Ideology" was understood in its pejorative meaning, namely a strategy deployed by political elites to influence social behaviour, to disguise social and economic stratification, and to serve the integration of different social groups (B. Pongratz-Leisten, *Religion and Ideology in Assyria*, 2015, 23). Concerning the term "Propaganda", the issue becomes more complex. "Propaganda" adds purpose to an ideology: it disseminates ideology to convince, shape, and alter the other's ideology. In some contexts and ages, the word loses its neutrality and later usages have added a tone that implies a negative and deceitful message. This term has developed a spectrum of meanings in contemporary scholarly discussion on the Ancient Near East. A number of scholars makes use of the term (see, a.o. M. Liverani *International Relations in the Ancient Near East, 1600-1200 BC*, 2001; K. Sano, *Die Repräsentation der Königsherrschaft in neuassyrischer Zeit Ideologie, Propaganda und Adressaten der Königsinschriften*, 2016, 215-236; M. Karlsson, *Relations of Power in Early*

*Neo-Assyrian State Ideology*, 2016, 18), while a smaller group of academics have pondered and questioned the issue of propaganda in Near Eastern studies (D. Bonatz, *Funktionen des Bildes in Altvorderasien*, 2011, 287-307; Pongratz-Leisten, *Religion and Ideology in Assyria*, 2015, 28: 130).

Most often, both terms have been overused to describe the materialization of ideas or the strategies of assertion through which a social or cultural group, a kingdom or an empire, represented itself to the world. The latter mechanism is the last step of a process that begins from the subject's self-perception or self-reflection to the perception of "the other" as antagonist. In this sense, such a concept entails that any individual or group defined itself and constructed its identity in relation to "the other". Therefore, any ideological and propagandistic tool requires a recipient or audience, the identity of which is essential to understand the *Weltanschauung* (worldview) of the dominating group.

The focus of this workshop is therefore on Near Eastern textual, visual, and archaeological evidence from the fourth to the first millennium BCE that have been evaluated as ideological and propagandistic tools used to encounter and communicate with "the other". Additionally, this workshop fosters analyses that examine the cultural consequences of this contact or contrast and to what extent it initiates a process of self-perception or self-reflection.

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**Workshop 7:** Partnership in Ancient Near Eastern Societies — Legal Texts in Comparative Perspective

Based on a preliminary study of Akkadian legal texts from Susa dealing with partnership (cf. Badamchi & Pfeifer 2019) this workshop will extend the range of the legal texts into a broader comparative perspective that stretches across time and space. Scholars are invited to contribute studies of partnership from all regions and periods of Ancient Near Eastern legal history.

Partnership and its socio-economic context (esp. trade) is a valuable topic to study the contact of (legal) cultures. We seek to reexamine the formation and typology of partnership as a legal institution by asking: How were partnership contracts executed? How were practices of kinship, agriculture, and religion intertwined? And how might an understanding of these practices contribute to a broader revision of legal history in the region? To address these questions through interdisciplinary conversation, this workshop welcomes not only legal historians, but also archeologists and philologists.

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**Workshop 8:** Priests and Profits — New Perspectives and Approaches to the Role of the Temple in Babylonian Economy

The aim of the "Priests and Profits" project is to develop the first comprehensive study of the economic role of Babylonian temples as institutions and their evolving relation with the State and the urban elites by combing data from both temple and private archives from various cities in southern, central and northern Babylonia. By applying new and innovative methods and approaches (such as network, régulation, gender, …) to existing corpora in combination with opening up new sources, we aim to investigate the economic, social and ideological procedures by which temples were able to stabilize their positions as extractive institutions in order to determine their functioning and autonomy throughout history.

The aim of the workshop is to create a platform to present, examine, and discuss various perspectives and approaches to the role of the temple in Babylonian economy through papers and discussion panels.

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**Workshop 9:** Recent Fieldwork in the Near East

This workshop will provide the opportunity to present the results of recent fieldwork during the RAI. Presentations may cover excavations of sites, or even of areas within sites which are of special importance, surface surveys or systematic field sampling programs, all preferably from the last three years or otherwise little known. Reports shall address the wider audience of the Rencontre in order to foster discussions among scholars working in different areas.

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**Workshop 10:** Spatial Data for Cuneiformists

The formation, augmentation, and integration of spatial knowledge in a digital form offers immense opportunities for the further development of digital humanities research designs, particularly in Assyriology. With an empirical base counting close to half a million catalogued texts, distributed across all of the Middle East, and encompassing more than 3,000 years of recorded human history (Streck 2010), the sheer geographical and chronological span of the cuneiform script holds unique potential for pairing traditional philological, archaeological, and historical approaches with spatial data applications. By spatial data, we refer to a diverse spectrum of information, e.g. provenience data, historical gazetteers, web mapping resources, interactive cartographies, geotagging and -annotation, and a host of different spatial analysis tools that are rapidly becoming staples of data structuring and scholarly inquiry in a great variety of ways.

Increasing integration and interlinkage of such resources, e.g. through linked open data (LOD) standards, will, in a not too distant future, enable a much closer binding of formerly dispersed data resources and further strengthen the potential application of spatial parameters as an integrated part of computer-driven research. Research agendas are bound to become increasingly imbedded in and reliant on fully digital research ecosystems in the future, ecosystems where spatial data plays an important, structuring role. Education, dissemination, public information, and management of archaeological and historical heritage will only become more reliant on the lasting integration of digital repositories and data collections in years ahead, including locational data. Fields closely related to ours are currently experiencing a rapid growth in the scale and quality of spatial data repositories, e.g. Near Eastern archaeology (see for example Harrison 2018; Zerbini 2018), and especially Classics, where the development and implementation of a wide range of spatial data resources and applications has boomed in recent years. In Assyriology, however, the definition, acquisition, integration, and dissemination of spatial data in a digital form is very much a developing and inchoate yet sprawling field of study.

As there are no general surveys of spatial data or its applications in the field at the moment, this workshop intends to showcase current projects working with spatial data in Assyriology, to explore and discuss the potential and use of spatial data in future research designs, and to stimulate collaboration, data sharing, and dissemination across different scholarly projects and networks. The very diverse range of technological means and methodological approaches employed in current research, not to mention the wide range of different applications and digital

ecosystems used to integrate analogue knowledge and spatial computing environments, invites extended dialogue and collaboration among scholars, so as to further data sharing, integration, and reuse.

Consequently, this workshop aims to gather researchers and initiatives working with any aspect of spatial data in a digital form, so as to take stock of the current state of spatial data repositories and approaches in cuneiform studies, and to stimulate discussions about the future implementation and use of spatial data in research and knowledge dissemination. The workshop invites contributions engaging with any aspect of the definition, collection, storage and analysis of spatial data, with reference to one or more of the following themes; Artefact Provenience and Metadata, Historical Geography, and Spatial Analysis and Interpretation.

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