



Ancient Near Eastern Languages in Contact – eLecture Series

We are pleased to announce that University College London and King's College London are co-hosting an eLecture series, entitled *Ancient Near Eastern Languages in Contact* (ANELC). With this initiative we aim to bring together scholars from around the world with an interest in Ancient Near Eastern languages, and we hope it stimulates an exchange of ideas and collaboration in a time of academic isolation. The eLectures take place each Wednesday from 1 July until 26 August 2020 from 16:00 until 17:00 BST (London). We are delighted to invite you to this free online event and we look forward to seeing you in one of the meetings!

Co-Organizers: Dr Alinda Damsma — Dr Lily Kahn — Dr Jonathan Stökl

On the next pages you will find the schedule for the eLectures – which will take place via Microsoft Teams – followed by the abstract of each lecture. Pre-registration is required for the eLectures, and please register your attendance by contacting Alinda Damsma: a.damsma@ucl.ac.uk. Participants are under no obligation to attend each eLecture; they can pre-register for the eLecture(s) that is/are of interest to them.

Schedule ANELC eLecture series

Wednesdays 1 July – 26 August 2020 from 16:00 until 17:00 BST (London)

18:00-19:00 IDT (Jerusalem)
17:00-18:00 CET (Paris)
11:00-12:00 EST (New York)
08:00-09:00 PST (Los Angeles)



eLecture 1	01.07.20	Dr Mark Weeden (SOAS, London) Language Contact between Hittite and Sumerian
eLecture 2	08.07.20	Prof. Mark Geller (University College London) Mind the Gap: A Lecture on Comparative Ancient Magic from Mesopotamia
eLecture 3	15.07.20	Prof. Aaron Rubin (Pennsylvania State University) The Relationship of Egyptian and Semitic
eLecture 4	22.07.20	Prof. Gary A. Rendsburg (Rutgers University New Brunswick) Ancient Hebrew and Hieroglyphic Egyptian: Contact through the Ages
eLecture 5	29.07.20	Prof. Dr. Stefan Schorch (Martin-Luther-Universität Halle-Wittenberg) Through Aramaic Lenses: Reconstructing Late Antique Samaritan Hebrew
eLecture 6	05.08.20	Dr Marieke Dhont (University of Cambridge) Jewish Multilingualism in the Second Temple Period: Greek as a Jewish Language
eLecture 7	12.08.20	Benjamin Whittle (University College London) The Translation of Biblical Hebrew Verbal Stems in the Septuagint of the Pentateuch and Former Prophets
eLecture 8	19.08.20	Dr Na'ama Pat-El (University of Texas Austin) & Dr Phillip Stokes (University of Tennessee Knoxville) Reevaluating Contact between Aramaic and Arabic in the Levant
eLecture 9	26.08.20	Dr Rebecca Hasselbach-Andee (University of Chicago)



Language contact in the Third Millennium BCE: The Case of “Eblaite”

Abstracts

01/07 Dr Mark Weeden (SOAS, London)

Language contact between Hittite and Sumerian

By the late 2nd millennium BC Sumerian had definitively died out as a spoken language but continued in use as a language of scholarship throughout the cuneiform world. Bizarrely phrased scholastic Sumerian compositions such as the "Scholars of Uruk" witness this development already in the Old Babylonian period in Mesopotamia. This and certain other learned compositions encourage a view of Sumerian as a language of the obscure, comprehensible only to the initiated, written in a language constructed on the basis of lexical lists and other school texts. There was thus absolutely no chance that there was any language contact between Hittite and Sumerian speakers during the Late Bronze Age. What then was the use-context of Sumerian texts at Hattusa? Were scribes on the geographical edge of the cuneiform world indulging in the same kind of hermeneutic use of Sumerian as some of their Mesopotamian counterparts?

08/07 Prof. Mark Geller (University College London)

Mind the Gap: A lecture on Comparative Ancient Magic from Mesopotamia

Therapeutic magic was both a discipline and practice in the ancient world, which crossed geographical, chronological, and linguistic boundaries. This talk will provide an example of a type of medically-orientated incantation which appears to have originated in cuneiform tablets and later appeared in an Aramaic magical text in Iraq in Late Antiquity. This example is a model for other cases of healing magic from cuneiform sources which later influenced therapies in the Babylonian Talmud.

15/07 Prof. Aaron Rubin (Pennsylvania State University)

The Relationship of Egyptian and Semitic

It has long been known that the ancient Egyptian language is related to the Semitic language family, but the details of this relationship are still not fully understood. In this lecture, we will look at the major similarities (and differences) of the two language groups, including topics in phonology, morphology, and the lexicon, with an eye towards identifying inherited Afroasiatic features. We will also look at how Egyptian and some dialects of Northwest Semitic influenced one another as a consequence of sustained linguistic and cultural contact.

22/07 Prof. Gary A. Rendsburg (Rutgers University New Brunswick)

Ancient Hebrew and Hieroglyphic Egyptian: Contact through the Ages

The lands of Israel (better: Canaan) and Egypt were interconnected for most of the 2nd millennium B.C.E., and indeed into the 1st millennium B.C.E., notwithstanding the relatively empty space of the Sinai peninsula separating the two geographically.



During this period hundreds of Canaanite words entered the Egyptian language and dozens of Egyptian words entered the Hebrew language. This talk will focus on these lexical items, but it also will widen the lens to discuss literary style and literary motifs shared by the two cultures.

29/07 Prof. Dr. Stefan Schorch (Martin-Luther-Universität Halle-Wittenberg)

Through Aramaic lenses: Reconstructing Late Antique Samaritan Hebrew

Samaritan Hebrew, i.e. the variety of Hebrew spoken and transmitted in the Samaritan community, originates in the Hebrew dialect that was common in the region of Samaria and became the religious sociolect of the Samaritans at the end of the 2nd century BCE, when the followers of the Israelite cult on Mount Gerizim became increasingly independent from Judaism, leading to the emergence of the Samaritans. Limited to the Samaritan Pentateuch, the corpus of Samaritan Hebrew texts from this period is rather small. As a result, the means to determine the meaning of a given word on account of its usage in different contexts are extremely restricted. Under these circumstances, the Aramaic translations from the Samaritan Targumim are a main source for the reconstruction of Late Antique Samaritan Hebrew. These translations emerged between the 1st and 11th century CE, when Aramaic replaced Hebrew as Samaritan vernacular. The paper presents challenges and results from the study of these sources, currently pursued in the framework of an ongoing project of a dictionary of Samaritan Hebrew.

05/08 Dr Mariek Dhont (University of Cambridge)

Jewish Multilingualism in the Second Temple Period: Greek as a Jewish Language

The style of the Jewish-Greek authors has often been evaluated as "bad Greek." Their Greek is often considered to be tainted by Semitic interference, which, in turn, is seen as evidence of their lack of education. The negative views on the language use of Hellenistic Jewish writers are illustrative of a broader issue in the study of Hellenistic Judaism: language usage has been a key element in the discussion on the societal position of Jews in the Hellenistic world. I discuss how to assess the style of various fragmentary Jewish-Greek writers in the context of post-classical Greek, and conclude that their language reflects standard Hellenistic Greek. The linguistic analysis then becomes a starting point to reflect on the level of integration of Jews in the Greek-speaking world as well as to consider the nature of Jewish multilingualism in the late Second Temple period.

12/08 Benjamin Whittle (University College London)

The Translation of Biblical Hebrew Verbal Stems in the Septuagint of the Pentateuch and Former Prophets

This paper analyses the translation of Biblical Hebrew verbal stems in the Greek version of the Pentateuch and Former Prophets codified in the Septuagint. The Biblical Hebrew system of stems differs significantly from the Greek verbal system, and therefore systematic investigation of the strategies employed by the Greek translators can shed light on the ways in which they negotiated this linguistic difference, as well as contributing to our understanding of ancient perceptions of the functions of the Biblical Hebrew stems.

19/08 Dr Na'ama Patel (University of Texas Austin) & Dr Phillip Stokes (University of Tennessee Knoxville)
Reevaluating Contact between Aramaic and Arabic in the Levant



The fact that Aramaic was the lingua franca of most of the area where Arabic is spoken today is not in dispute. The exact nature of the spread of Arabic and the specifics of language shift in the Middle East are less well understood. Many scholars assume that Arabic spread with the Islamic conquest and that Arabic was learnt quickly and imperfectly by speakers of Aramaic. As a result, number of structural features of the colloquial dialects of the Levant were argued to be a result of an Aramaic substrate. In this paper we discuss the contact between Arabic and Aramaic in Antiquity and Late Antiquity, draw attention to a number of methodological flaws in work on Aramaicism in Arabic, and argue that the evidence is not consistent with a rapid and imperfect language shift, but rather with a prolonged period of contact and bilingualism.

29/08 Dr Rebecca Hasselbach-Andee (University of Chicago)

Language contact in the third millennium BCE: The case of “Eblaite”

Eblaite is attested in written material from the northern Syrian site of Tell Mardikh (ancient Ebla) dating to a short period in the 24th century BCE (app. 2370-2320 BCE). The language attested in the texts has been classified as East Semitic, although it is still uncertain whether it constitutes an independent language of this sub-branch or an archaic dialect of Akkadian. The linguistic sub-grouping of Eblaite is difficult to determine based on traditional historical and comparative approaches because of the many features exhibited by Eblaite that defy clear classification. In this talk, I argue that any explanation of the linguistic situation at Ebla needs to consider extra-linguistic factors, such as the extensive trade network connecting Ebla to e.g. Mesopotamia and Egypt, and, more importantly, the well-established cultural and scribal contacts between Mesopotamia and Syrian sites such as Mari and Ebla, which resulted in sustained language contact.

