Akkadian Wisdom Texts (NEJS 201A)
Brandeis University, Fall 2019
M/W 3:30–4:50pm

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Course Description
This is an advanced Akkadian text course focusing on texts commonly considered “wisdom literature.” The course is seminar-style and will combine reading of primary sources with discussion of secondary studies.

Course Objectives
1. Become familiar with the corpus of wisdom literature and secondary work on the subject.
2. Gain facility in Akkadian paleography (Neo-Assyrian and Old Babylonian).
3. Learn to create a score (“partitur”) of Akkadian texts in multiple exemplars.

Course Materials
❖ Whenever possible, I have posted assigned articles and books to the course webpage. Books that I could not get digitally are available through the library or ILL.
❖ A course bibliography is attached. This includes the full bibliographic information for all assigned texts as well as additional readings that may be of use.
❖ Other helpful resources include:
  ❖ Abbreviations: A comprehensive list of assyriological abbreviations is available at http://cdli.ox.ac.uk/wiki/abbreviations_for_assyriology. This is generally more up-to-date than the lists in the front of CAD volumes.
  ❖ Dictionaries:
    • AHw: A PDF of AHw has been uploaded to the course website.
    • CAD: All CAD volumes can be downloaded for free here.
    • CDA: The CDA has a helpful list of Semitic roots keyed to their reflexes in Akkadian (listed as infinitives). Otherwise, it is an unreliable abbreviation of AhW and not a good resource for this class.
• **EPSD2**: Although we won’t be doing Sumerian in this class, searching in the Electronic Pennsylvania Sumerian Dictionary will give you the most up-to-date readings for logograms.

❖ **Paleography**: You will be expected to read all texts from cuneiform in class and on exams. We will have semi-weekly paleography quizzes. The following books and websites and programs are useful for learning sign forms:

  • **Labat’s *Manuel d’épigraphie Akkadienne*** remains the best resource for the development of each sign across all periods. It should not be used for sign values.

  • **Borger’s *Mesopotamisches Zeichenlexikon*** is the standard for sign values in all periods. The sign list is split into two parts, and you will likely only need the second part (= Chapter 3):
    • **Chapter 2**: This includes the following information, in the following order:
      • Heading: A standard value assigned to the sign.
      • Bibliography on the paleographic development of the sign.
      • A section on the Sumerian values of the sign, including any compound Sumerian words that begin with the sign (e.g., ANNA ‘tin’ is listed under the sign AN).
        • This section includes both references to ancient lexical lists and to modern secondary literature discussing the Sumerian values.
    • **Chapter 3**: This is the actual sign list giving Akkadian values. It begins on page 245.

  • **Cuneify** allows you to produce sign forms in standard OB and NA lapidary and OB cursive.

  • **LaBaSi** is a powerful (if somewhat cumbersome) tool for Late Babylonian paleography. You can browse signs by value and see both a standard LB form and photographs of the signs on actual tablets. This tool is also useful for MB script, which is often significantly evolved from the OB forms.

  • **CDLI** has also compiled period-specific sign lists that allow you to search for values by sign forms.

**Course Assignments and Exams**

• **Semi-weekly paleography quizzes**. These quizzes are designed to help you learn cuneiform signs and review seen texts. One portion of the quiz will be drawing the cuneiform sign for a given value.
- **Midterm exam.** The midterm exam will include seen and unseen texts (presented in hand copy).
  - **Schedule**: M 10/7.
- **Final exam.** Like the midterm, the final will include seen and unseen texts (in hand copy).
  - **Schedule**: M 12/9.
- **Final project or paper.** You will complete a final written assignment for this class. Your work should be formatted according to a standard reference guide, such as the *Chicago Manual of Style*, or an appropriate field specific guide, such as the author-date formats employed by the OI Publications or BASOR.
  - You may choose one of the following options:
    - **Research Paper.** Write a research paper on a topic of your choice. The paper may be comparative but must have an assyriological focus—i.e., if you engage biblical materials, you must demonstrate how they contribute to our understanding of Mesopotamian history, religion, or literature. *The paper may not exceed 10,000 words.*
    - **Text edition with score.** You may also complete a text edition of a text or section of text that we did not cover in class. Your edition should cover at least 30 substantial lines of cuneiform text, and it must account for all extant manuscripts (for which hand copies or photographs are available). Your final edition will include an introduction to the text and its manuscript witnesses in addition to a score, normalized standard text, translation, and substantial commentary.
  - **Schedule**: Submit topic by W 11/20; final project due by F 12/20.

**Grading**

Your grade will be based on performance in-class and on written assignments, weighted as follows:

- Participation: 30%
- Quizzes: 15%
- Midterm: 15%
- Final exam: 20%
- Final project: 20%
I will drop the lowest quiz grade. I also reserve the right to increase student grades based on consistently improving performance. Do not make yourself sick over Akkadian.

**Academic Honesty**
You are expected to be honest in all of your academic work. Please consult Brandeis University Rights and Responsibilities for all policies and procedures related to academic integrity. Allegations of alleged academic dishonesty will be forwarded to the Director of Academic Integrity. Sanctions for academic dishonesty can include failing grades and/or suspension from the university. Citation and research assistance can be found at LTS - Library guides.

**Student Support**
❖ **Learning Disability or Difference.** Brandeis seeks to welcome and include all students. If you are a student who needs accommodations as outlined in an accommodations letter, please talk with me and present your letter of accommodation as soon as you can. If you have questions about documenting a disability or requesting accommodations, please contact Student Accessibility Support (SAS) at 781.736.3470 or access@brandeis.edu.
❖ **Student Health.** If you are having any physical or mental health issues that may affect your academic performance, please feel free to reach out to me. I am always open to making reasonable accommodations, such as delayed due dates. These accommodations are not given retroactively except in cases of acute illness.
❖ **Names and Pronouns.** You are invited to share your pronouns at any point during the class. We will address you respectfully.

**Schedule**

*Week 1: Introduction*
W 8/26: First meeting

**Weeks 2–3: Ashurbanipal’s Hymn to Aššur (SAA 3.1). W 9/4, M 9/9, W 9/11**

**Text:** K 3258 = SAA 3.1; **Copy:** ABRT 1 (= Craig 1895), pls. 32–34; **Edition:** SAA 3 (= Livingstone 1989: no. 1); **Translations:** Falkenstein and Soden 1953; Foster 2005.

**Schedule:**
• Meetings: W 9/4, M 9/9, W 9/11
• **Discussion** on Wednesday 9/11: Defining Wisdom Literature

**Weeks 5–7: Ludlul Bēl Nēmeqi (Tablet I)**

**Exemplars**: Sigla given according to Oshima 2014.

- **Tablet I**:
  - I. F = Si 1.D.4
    - **Copy** George and Al-Rawi 1998: 188–189
  - A = BM 32208+
    - **Copy** Oshima 2014: pls. 1–2.
    - **Photo** Oshima 2014: pls. XXXV–XXXVI.

**Editions**: Lambert 1960 (missing many exemplars); George and Al-Rawi 1998 (exemplar Si 1.D.4 only); Oshima 2014.

**Translations/popular editions**: Annus and Lenzi 2010.

**Schedule**:

- Meetings: M 9/16, W 9/18, W 9/25, W 10/2, Th 10/3 (make-up date)
- **There will be no class on M 9/23**, If you are available, I invite you to come to see sessions at *The Spirit of Scholarship* conference on Mesopotamia and biblical studies held at Boston College.
- **Paleography and seen text quiz** on W 9/18
- **Discussion** on W 9/25: Ludlul and the problem of theodicy
- **Paleography and seen text quiz** on Th 10/3

**Weeks 8–9: Wisdom on the Periphery (RS 25.460)**


**Schedule**:

- Meetings: M 10/7; T 10/15 (make-up date); W 10/16
- **Midterm exam** on M 10/7
- **Discussion** on W 10/16: Wisdom on the Periphery
Weeks 10–12: The Babylonian Theodicy (Lines 1–88)

Exemplars: Sigla given according to Oshima 2014: 439. Lambert sigla given in parentheses.

• B = BM 34773 (a).
• C = BM 35405 (L).
  • Photo: Oshima 2014: pls. LV–LVI
  • Copy: Lambert 1960: pl. 20.
• D = BM 40098+ (multiple Lambert sigla).
  • Photo: Oshima 2014: LVII.
  • Copy: This tablet is in multiple fragments (consult Oshima 2014: 439). The copy of the relevant fragment for our study (BM 40098) can be found in Lambert 1960: Pl. 21.
• E = BM 47745.
  • Copy: Oshima 2014: pl. XV
• F = BM 68589
  • Copy: Oshima 2014: pl. XIV
• G = K 1743+ (multiple Lambert sigla).
  • Copy: This tablet is in multiple fragments (consult Oshima 2014: 439). The full tablet is reconstructed as pls. XVI–XVII. Larger copies of individual fragments are on subsequent pls. and in Lambert 1960. For lines 1–88, you’ll want to locate fragments $G_2$, $G_4$, and $G_5$.
• H = K 9290+9297 (D)
  • Photo: Oshima 2014: pls. LVIII–LIX.
  • Copy: Lambert 1960: pls. 21–22.

Editions: Landsberger 1936; Lambert 1960; Oshima 2014.

Schedule

• Meetings: W 10/23; M 10/28; W 10/30; M 11/4; W 11/6.
• Paleography and seen text quiz on W 10/30
• Discussion on W 11/6: The Scribe and School
  • Read Oppenheim 1975; Harris 1990; Kramer 1990; Beaulieu 2007; Cohen 2018.

Weeks 13–15: TBD (depending on student interest and class pacing)

Schedule
• Meetings: M 11/11; W 11/13; M 11/18; W 11/20; no class week of 11/25; M 12/2; W 12/4; M 12/9.
• Paleography and seen text quiz on W 11/13.
• Paper topic due by W 11/20.
• In-class final exam on 12/9.

Final paper due on 12/20.

Bibliography

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Beaulieu, P.-A.

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Buccellati, G.

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Cohen, Y.
2013 *Wisdom from the Late Bronze Age*. Atlanta: SBL Press.

Cooper, J. S.

Craig, J. A.
1895 *Assyrian and Babylonian religious texts, being prayers, oracles, hymns, etc., copied from the original tablets preserved in the British Museum and autographed*. Leipzig: Hinrichs.

Falkenstein, A. and Soden, W. von

Falkenstein, A. and Von Soden, W.

Foster, B. R.

George, A.
George, A. R. and Al-Rawi, F. N. H.  

Greenstein, E. L.  

Harris, R.  

Horowitz, W. and Lambert, W. G.  

Jiménez, E.  

Kramer, S. N.  

Lambert  

Landsberger, B.  

Lenzi, A.  


Pongratz-Leisten, B.


