

Gender, Methodology and the Ancient Near East
Titles and abstracts (in alphabetical order)

Host: Centre of Excellence "Changes in Sacred Texts and Traditions", University of Helsinki

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Julye Bidmead

"Births, Babies, and Betrothals: Women's Religious Rituals in the Ancient Near East"

Infertility, miscarriage, infant death and mortal danger to the mother, coupled with an ideological fear of women's sexuality, made the biblical commandment to "be fruitful and multiply," a perilous occupation for women, and an economical threat to the entire family. During life transitional periods, such as menarche, pregnancy, and childbirth, rituals to accompany the successful journey from the dangerous period of liminality to next phase of life are imperative. For example, in Mesopotamia, apotropaic rituals and amulets invoking magical protection from Lamashtu were numerous. Women in ancient Israel, like their Mesopotamian sisters, faced these same perils, yet the Hebrew Bible is silent on women's rituals. Using combined methodologies from ritual studies, feminist exegesis, and socio-anthropology, a re-examination of iconographic and archaeological remains show that rituals associated with betrothal and women's reproduction served a dual purpose--as apotropaic actions which functioned as gender-specific women's rite of passages. This intersectionality of methodologies transcends the hegemonic patriarchal structures and recovers the religious life of the ancient Near Eastern women.

Stephanie Budin

"Gender in the «Tale of Aqhat»"

Gender is one of the most important organizing elements in the "Tale of Aqhat," and may be the key not only to deciphering the meaning of the narrative in its Ugaritic context, but also to suggesting what may have appeared in some of the tale's all too frequent lacunae. Although not recognized in previous studies of "Aqhat," the progression of the narrative is organized according to a pattern of gendered activity which, over the course of the narrative, shows increasing interconnection between the male and female domains. At the beginning of the text, these domains appear as broad "swathes": First is the masculine segment showing Danel in a typically masculine pursuit for fertility and offspring, involving two additional male deities—Baal and El. The text then switches to the feminine domain, marked by the arrival of the Kotharat in Danel's home and the pregnancy of his wife. I argue that this feminine context is maintained in the following lacuna, where the Kotharat reappeared for the birth of Aqhat. In the lacuna that remains, the tale switches back to the masculine element in the creation and delivery of Aqhat's bow and arrows. Up to this point, the domains are clearly distinguished and separated, and contain large blocks of text. When Anat meets the adolescent Aqhat, a change occurs in the gendered pacing of the narrative, with the male and female domains interacting rapidly and often violently. This rapid switching of gender domains is paralleled by the increased pacing of the narrative in general. Finally, in the person of Pughat, the gendered domains collapse into one individual, who combines both the masculine and feminine into her persona. With her come the climax of the narrative and the resolution of the plot.

Megan Cifarelli

"Gendered Artifacts at Hasanlu, Iran"

The site of Hasanlu Tepe, in northwestern Iran, reached the height of its prosperity in the Iron II period (Hasanlu IVb, 1050–800 BCE), a zenith that ended abruptly with the destruction of approximately 800 BCE. Between 1957-1964, the excavators uncovered a fascinating range of archaeological contexts in this horizon, including the well known destruction levels at the citadel where more than 200 men, women and children were trapped when the burning buildings collapsed, as well as approximately 100 contemporary graves on Hasanlu's Low Mound.

The rise in the fortunes of early Iron Age Hasanlu occurred in lock step with the rise of two major empires in the region—Assyria to the west and Urartu to the north. The contents of a number of the Hasanlu Iron II burials diverge significantly from preceding burials of the late Bronze and Iron I periods, with the introduction of new, militarized, apparently gendered personal ornaments and armaments. These include iron jewelry, weapons, and sheet metal belts in elite male graves, and stiletto-like pins and bronze plaques decorated in relief with an erect phallus in some female burials.

The interpretation of these grave goods is grounded in part in costly signaling theory, the notion derived from evolutionary theory that conspicuous displays in rituals and contexts such as burials communicate powerful messages within complex social environments. This paper will argue that these messages are gendered in nature, based on the framework established by Judith Butler, by which gender is not static but is performed through continuous repetition of acts and through articles of dress and ornamentation. By investigating the items of personal adornment and armaments in the Hasanlu II burials, and the relationship of those objects to the bodies they adorned, this paper will analyze their role in the construction of gendered individual and social identity at Hasanlu.

M. Erica Couto-Ferreira

“When women get ill: gendered constructions of disease in cuneiform texts on healing”

When dealing with cuneiform texts on healing and therapeutic matters, it has been widely assumed by academia that the term NA (or more rarely LÚ) / awīlu “man” stands for any and every human being, thus alluding to a sort of universal patient.

This implies that, whenever the term NA / awīlu is employed in medical contexts, the symptoms described universally apply to any person with independency of their gender, age or status. On the contrary, the term MUNUS / sinništu “woman” as used in medical contexts would only apply to those conditions that are considered to be “typically female”.

Taking cuneiform texts from the second and first millennium B.C.E. as its main source, this paper aims at analysing whether gender issues are taken into account when it comes to diagnosing and treating a disease. Key historical questions are whether Mesopotamian intellectual elites find any differences between sick men and sick women; and if so, what principles these differences were based on, and which role gender played in the process of conceptualizing and understanding disease.

Starting from these questions, I will specifically discuss the degree to which medical conditions suffered by women are directly linked to reproductive issues; how sexuality and intercourse emerge as arenas where male and female agencies intertwine for the benefit of mutual pleasure; as well as the attitudes shown in non-reproductive-related medical conditions in connection with emic gender categories.

Amy Rebecca Gansell

“An Interdisciplinary Approach to Neo-Assyrian Queens”

Most of what we know about the royal Neo-Assyrian world is about the kings. Not only were the agendas of early researchers motivated to focus on male histories, but male histories were also the most readily accessible. The images, names, and achievements of royal men were recorded, monumentalized, and preserved in public, elite, and archival contexts. In contrast, due to their less public roles, female evidence is much sparser and far less obvious to modern perspectives. However, the present generation of scholars (including Melville, Macgregor, and Svärd) has made great strides in shedding new light on the lives and significance of elite Neo-Assyrian women.

Incorporating the results of recent, primarily philological, research into an interdisciplinary methodology, this study aims to reintegrate queens into Neo-Assyrian history. Archaeologically, the Nimrud tombs provide evidence for the appearance, treatment, and personal identities of deceased women. Art historical analysis of large- and small-scale

images of queens considers not only the nature of the queenly image, but the significance of the contexts in which these artworks would have been viewed. In addition, the royal use of divine and fantastical, often nude, female figures provides a window onto elite concepts of ideal feminine beauty, which royal women would have emulated and embodied. Enhancing the standard triad of textual, archaeological, and art historical evidence, ethnographic comparison can provide models to enliven and reinforce ancient sources, and digital reconstructions can be used to visually hypothesize and more actively analyze ancient realities. Finally, because neither male nor female histories exist independently, the relationship between king and queen is interpreted in the context of the palace, court, empire, and cosmos.

Overall, this paper hopes to demonstrate the utility of interdisciplinary gender research, especially when available sources of evidence are fragmentary, subtle, and unique, as they are in the case of the Neo-Assyrian queens. Indeed, the resulting perspectives add up to more than a sum of their parts, because each type of evidence can complement and enhance our understanding of the others. Moreover, a multi-faceted female history, built through interdisciplinary scholarship, can, more effectively and more meaningfully, be fit into a holistic understanding of the ancient world.

Agnès Garcia-Ventura

“Engendering Assyriology in the 21st century”

The different waves of gender studies have affected and shaped research in different fields like archaeology or ancient history. Nonetheless, in the field of Assyriology, there are few proposals using postfeminism and queer theories, which, by contrast, will be my approach.

In this communication I will reflect on the possibilities that several proposals labelled as “third wave feminism” can offer to Assyriology. I will concentrate mainly on feminist epistemologies and queer theories, referring to authors such as Sandra Harding, Donna Haraway, Nancy Hartsock, Monique Wittig or Judith Butler. Through their proposals I will defend that applying explicitly a postmodern theoretical framework would help us to deconstruct the modern theoretical framework that conditions our research implicitly. In doing so, I will try to show why some reflections done under the light of postfeminism can contribute to a better understanding of some primary and secondary sources. To illustrate some issues, the organisation of textile production at the end of third millennium BCE Mesopotamia will be used as case study.

Katrien de Graef

“Puppets on a String? Female Agency in Old Babylonian Economy”

Although Old Babylonian women in general were not very economically active, there is one class of them, the *nadiātu* of Šamaš, who were particularly present in this domain — so much even that they seem to predominate as an anomaly in a patriarchal society. As such they act within the existing social structure or bounded circle of their society but, as free agents take over economic roles usually filled by men. In this way it is my contention that practice theory, exploring the interaction between their activities and the structure of their society can yield new and interesting insights. Although their agency is not the result of their own free choice – their family decides to invest them with these roles – the unintended result is empowerment of this specific class of women-priests as first rank economic players. Their role initially was the transfer of undivided real estate to the next generation within the family. In order to achieve this, they were not allowed to bear children (which was probably one of the causes of their longevity) and thus the real estate they received reverted to their family after their death. Their heir would be a brother or a niece who became *nadītu* of Šamaš in her turn and continued the cycle. Soon, however, they developed active economic roles, renting and lending, not only keeping but also adding to the family property. In some cases they even gained the right to alienate the property, no doubt to play their economic role more efficiently and all kinds of clauses were added to the texts to specify how far their agency could extend.

In this paper we will investigate how this agency developed through time, pushing further the borders of the bounded circle in which they were enclosed.

Ann Guinan

“Is There a Sexology in Mesopotamian Literature? Ancient Genre and Modern Theory”

In his 2010 article “Are there Homosexuals in Mesopotamian Literature” Martti Nissinen discusses the problems of applying modern sexological categories to Mesopotamian sources. The short article is an open conversation with the critics of his 1998 *Homoeroticism in the Biblical World*, with himself and with future scholars. While it wasn't as evident in 1998, at this moment in history it is obvious that categories (homosexuality, heterosexuality, sexuality, and sex) which derive from a 19th century regime of knowledge cannot be retrospectively applied to ancient sources.

The categories may be inadequate, but the concept of sexology does have a Mesopotamian counterpart. Mesopotamian scholars studied human sexual diversity and sexual meaning within the divinatory genre. Omens derived from an array of erotic acts and desires are found on two tablets from the first millennium omen series, *Šumma ālu*. The protasis of each omen specifies an individual act and the apodosis relates it a future, non-sexual aspect of life. Like modern sexologists ancient scholars investigated erotic acts and desires systematically and ordered them in relation to a cultural norm. The sex omen tablets provide a window into ancient thinking about erotic diversity, subjectivity and gender. They both intersect with and diverge from the terms and categories of modern sexological and theoretical discourses in surprising and illuminating ways.

Vanessa Juloux

“Inventory of lexemes of action verbs, a new methodology for gender studies research. An example with ‘Anatu of Ugarit”

Ugarit literary materials in alphabetic cuneiform have been mainly studied by Ugaritologists with a biblical background, their research pursued by their scientific heirs ; de facto their approach is less favorable to an impartial study of power relationships between different entities of opposite biological (as opposed to social) gender.

Avoiding the trap of subjective interpretation makes it essential to use as neutral a tool as possible. The inventory of lexemes (IoL) proves to be such a tool for transparency analyses. Among other things it enables to highlight action verbs for each studied entity, be it divine or human, male or female. To determine social sex, the IoL of action verbs has been as unbiased a methodological tool as possible. Its interest is three-fold :

- 1) for a “female”, to distinguish verbs associated to ‘heteronormativity’ or to the ‘performativity’ of sexual gender ;
- 2) to draw up statistics of action verbs to determine the agency of involving all entities and their influence ;
- 3) taking into account socio-political context and cultural areas, a semantic and comparative analysis of commonly used Ugaritic verbs will make it possible to analyze the lexical choice of verbs used by entities of social sex ‘man’ or social sex ‘woman’ from a representative corpus from Mari, Ebla, Emar, Nuzi, Ḫatti and Sumerian texts.

For example, the IoL of West Semitic goddess ‘Anatu, one of the main protagonists of the Ba’lu Cycle from Ugarit, will be established. Let us consider the verb mḥṣ, “to kill or beat” used six times to describe ‘Anatu’s actions. What are the other verbs used for the same purpose in the same semantic field? In what sociopolitical and cultural context is it used elsewhere in the Ugaritic corpus ? By which biological or social sex?

This parallelism will not be limited to the Ugaritic corpus but will be also compared to a list of equivalent action verbs belonging to the same semantic field in Hittite (kuen-), Sumerian (SIG3/RA) and Akkadian (maḥāṣu). The major objective is to determine whether the social sex of ‘Anatu can be determined, and her decisions legitimated, by examining the semantics of the action verbs according to the contexts and cultural areas.

Stephanie Langin-Hooper

“Gendered Ambiguities, Gendered Sexualities, and Gendered Experiments: Performance and Negotiation through Hellenistic Babylonian Figurines”

The Hellenistic period (c. 330 BCE – 200 CE) in Babylonia was an era marked by wide-spread cross-cultural interaction and substantial social change. Within this environment of social transformation, gender roles and gendered bodies – as represented in the terracotta figurines and other miniatures – emerged as a site for identity experimentation. Three case studies will be explored in this paper. Gendered ambiguities – which include figurines that depict characteristics usually associated with both male and female sexes, as well as figurines with amorphous or unspecifically sexed bodies – are discussed as fitting within broader Hellenistic-period explorations of the boundaries between genders, yet also received within Babylonian traditions that accepted gendered identities beyond male and female. In the second case study, gendered sexualities are explored through a discussion of overtly erotic figurines. Although these include sexualized depictions of youthful males, Greek traditions of ephēbophilia seem to have been largely discarded in favor of more broadly acceptable, female-directed sexual attraction – as evidenced in the plethora of sexually inviting and tactile female figurines. The final case study will discuss gendered experiments, in which changes in gender roles were negotiated through figurines. Figurines depicting male bodies bear evidence of a wide range of experimentation, with those miniatures depicting young boys adapting most to change, while depictions of bearded males being most static, as well as culturally singular. In contrast, almost all female figurines were more completely and consistently hybridized – perhaps reflecting a difference in male versus female gender roles, in which women were considered more adaptable and more able to cross Greek-Babylonian cultural lines. Through all three case studies, this paper will demonstrate that by approaching gender as created, in part, through performances of and interactions with the object world, gendered issues and social change can be more directly accessed in studies of the ancient Near East.

Kathleen McCaffrey

“Gnostic Gender vs. Physical Sex=Gender: The Competing Gender Logics of Antiquity”

This study examines abrupt changes in the nude female form in traditional Mesopotamian figurines, seals, and amulets, which took place when Mesopotamia came under colonial rule in the late first millennium BC. Hellenistic figurines from Babylon depict Ishtar in new poses, sometimes with male genitalia, while the lamashtu demoness transforms into a bearded and ithyphallic creature. The re-conceptualization of long-standing conventions for depicting female gender variance indicates that Mesopotamians and Greeks did not conceptualize sex and gender in the same manner. This paper argues that the Mesopotamians had a gnostic conception of gender, conceptualizing gender as a subtractable noncorporeal essence housed within the body. Gender essences could be manipulated, subtracted or added to imbue a person with active or passive personality traits that did not always match body type. Greek gender logic was much closer to the norms of the modern West in that gender was assumed to be biologically determined by anatomical sex or to be affected by physical impairment.

Beth Alpert Nakhai

“Reconstructing Women’s Lives in Iron Age Israel: The Complex Interplay between Text and Archaeology”

The confluence of extensive archaeological fieldwork and a robust textual corpus ought to be a boon to gender studies but when it comes to women’s lives in Iron Age Israel (1200-587 BCE), this is not always the case. The land of Israel is the world’s most thoroughly excavated, and the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament is the lengthiest and best-preserved text from Near Eastern antiquity. Even so, synthesizing these two disparate bodies of evidence to reconstruct the lives of Israelite women is fraught with problems. Some, including the traditional focus on reconstructing broad historical events, a disinterest in domestic archaeology, and the weak job market for scholars specializing in research about women, are not atypical within the field of ancient Near Eastern studies. Others,

however, are unique to those working with the Hebrew Bible (and to some extent, with the New Testament, as well).

The Hebrew Bible is exceptionally complex, containing materials in multiple genres that were written, compiled and redacted over the course of close to a millennium; the dating of major components remains (at least in some circles) hotly debated. The text is unapologetically androcentric and elitist, crafted to express the relationship between Yahweh and his people Israel and not to serve as a work of sociological or historical significance. It is sacred canon for three world religions, a factor that can complicate scholarly engagement with the text as a viable witness to antiquity. Additional challenges to reconstructing women's lives in Iron Age Israel include methodological problems relating to the use of ethnographic studies of "pre-modern" societies as comparanda for biblical narratives and archaeological data, and the paucity of contemporaneous extra-biblical texts. This presentation considers the impact these factors have for the study of gender in Iron Age Israel and presents some thoughts about fruitful modes of future inquiry.

Martti Nissinen & Saana Svärd

"Constructing the Image of *assinnu*"

The figure of *assinnu* has been debated for decades. One of the latest contributions is an article by Ilona Zsolnay. In her 2013 article "The Misconstrued Role of the Assinnu in Ancient Near Eastern Prophecy" (In C. L. Carvalho and J. Stökl (eds.), *Prophets Male and Female: Gender and Prophecy in the Hebrew Bible, the Eastern Mediterranean, and the Ancient Near East*) she suggests that *assinnus* should be understood as "a special class of warriors." Her discussion on the topic has opened up new questions and necessitated a re-evaluation of the evidence.

Our main focus in this paper is to examine the methodological questions relating to the construction of the image of *assinnu*. The paper will be based on a complete survey of Mesopotamian evidence relating to *assinnu*. But how exactly does one engage sources in such a reconstruction project? What kind of methodological tools can be wielded to piece together an image of *assinnu* based on the fragmentary and difficult Sumerian and Akkadian sources at our disposal?

The key themes that will be examined are *assinnu's* 1) place in the Mesopotamian gender matrix 2) relationship with Ishtar and her cult and 3) role in the social reality.

Omar N'Shea

"The Construct of Royal Masculinity in the Visual and Textual Representations of King Sennacherib"

Assyriology came late to gender discourse and to date most gender studies in this field concern women. In the field of Neo-Assyrian (ca. 900-612 BCE) gender studies, there is still a gaping lacuna in the understanding of what the rhetorics of kingship (visual and textual remains) could tell us about the construction of masculinity, especially the nature of the masculinity constructed by and for the royal 'subject'. Recent developments in masculinity studies, namely those which elaborate the notion of multiple masculinities and the concept of hegemonic masculinity, have helped many historians to problematise the nature of the construct of masculinity. In this paper, I will engage with the ongoing discussion of hegemonic, complicit and subordinate masculinities by looking at the visual and textual sources from the reign of king Sennacherib in order to find evidence of the construction and performance of royal, ideal masculinity. I will suggest that visual culture from this particular reign portrays one type of masculinity and texts portray another. Visual culture emphasised innovation over previous kings whereas texts mainly highlight continuity with previous concepts of masculinity. Thus, the paper discusses how different media play different roles in the Neo-Assyrian construction of masculine gender.

Natalie N. May

"Women and their Representation in Assyria"

The feminist scholarship launched a search for women in the human history. As soon as one started looking for women they are inevitably found. Neither women nor gender were invisible in the past. Nonetheless, with the further development of the gender studies, the question arises what aspects of gender were chosen for representation and what were consciously suppressed and why.

The paper will explore visibility and invisibility of women in Assyrian texts and art. The author will try to answer the question: why and how women were represented or not represented in textual and visual record. Special attention will be dedicated to visibility of Assyrian women in general and queens in particular in the Neo-Assyrian art, and the stress will be put on differences in methodological approach to written and pictorial sources as applied to gender studies. I will argue that the Assyrian high ranking women were not less visible than the male Neo-Assyrian officials and this state of affairs is reflected also in popular tradition.

High ranking females were not underrepresented in Assyrian written and pictorial sources, but their femininity was. Their status made these women man-equal, and our sources stress their "masculine" and not "feminine" features. The other reason for suppressing femininity, especially in pictorial representations, was protecting the women of high position from impudent gazes.

Nonetheless, it seems that femininity of royal women was important for rituals performed for the female deities. In this function royal females were much more important for the Assyrian state cult than male officials. The identity of the female participants of the Assyrian royal rituals and the functions of the Assyrian royal women in the state cult should be further investigated.

Gender related criteria and functions were represented or hidden for reason. The purpose was to create a model image that reflects the ideology of the ruling gender.

Frances Pinnock

"Building up a History of Art of the Ancient Near East. The Case of Ebla and the Third Millennium BC Court Ladies"

The discipline called Art History was born in Europe, or rather in Italy, where Dante Alighieri invented the term "artist", and gave of it a first, poetic, definition, in the XIIIth chant of Paradise of his *Comedy*. Thus, in the following elaborations of the Renaissance, and until the primary theoretical formulations of Aby Warburg, and Erwin Panofsky, it is basically devoted to the interpretation of the "artist"'s work, and to the analysis of the context in which he works. In this sense, as also happens with all the disciplines devoted to the study, and understanding of the processes through which Humankind dwells, changes, and uses the environment where they live, being, at the same time, influenced, and modified by environment in its turn, Art History is particularly suited for the analysis of the artistic, and crafts production of the European world, and, more in general, of what is usually defined Western world. Outside this sphere, and even with the most recent elaborations of the discipline, it faces several difficulties vis-à-vis cultures "other" as compared with this world, albeit differentiated. Facing the artistic productions of the ancient Near East, some major difficulty is met, like the impossibility to identify the artist's personality, and, as a consequence, his eventual personal contribution to the artefact; the lack, or extreme scarcity of written documents throwing light on those peoples' thoughts about the creation, and use of artistic productions; and, most of all, the dramatic disproportion between what was really made, and what has been preserved, and the fact that many objects come from the antique market, and, therefore, they cannot be analyzed in relation with the context to which they originally belonged.

With regard to these problems, the site of Ebla is an important exception: extensively excavated for 47 years, the site offers one of the most complete evidences as concerns architecture, urban pattern, and material culture, particularly for the two phases of BA IVA, and MB I-II. Moreover, for BA IVA (the mature Early Syrian period), the documents of the architectural, and figurative cultures, are joined by the treasure of information provided by the texts of the State Archives. Therefore, in this contribution I wish to take into account some aspect of the Eblaic culture of the mature Early Syrian period, which I believe show a very strong originality, and which allow, in my

opinion, to provide a more articulated interpretation of visual documents. In particular, I will analyze the Ritual of Kingship, as a system of territorial control, and of representation of kingship, the objects used during royal ceremonies, and the possible representations of this ritual. The aspects I will take into account, and, in general, all the palace art of Ebla, throw light on the peculiar position of women in the Ebla court, and I think it is also possible to propose, on the base of the visual, and written evidence, some hypothesis about gender representation/construction in the Eblaic society.

Marie Louise Stig Sørensen

“Gender methodology or gendering methodologies”

The paper aims to comment on some of the main methodological approaches to the ‘gendering of the past’. I shall pay particular attention to ‘context-of-action’, appearance studies, and the interpretation of images, and contrast them with biological approaches. My underlying concern is the development of methods that may aid studies of the construction and maintenance of gender (the making and being gendered) rather than merely identifying men and women in the past. I hold that to gain such insight we need to work with arguments about how gender is enacted and materialised. This, however, raises further questions; including how we may draw distinctions between the enactment and the representation and idealisation of gender, and therefore about the evidential value of different kinds of data.

Niek Veldhuis

“Gender Studies and Assyriology: Expectations of an Outsider”

Assyriology is a discipline that has developed over some 150 years with only minor methodological disputes, concentrating instead on developing the basic tools such as grammars, dictionaries, and text editions. As a result, the discipline has hardly been forced to think very hard about its own methods or about its own historical context. The relative isolation of Assyriology within the broader academia has further contributed to this situation.

One important result of feminist studies is the recognition that perspective matters and is central to any scholarly analysis. As long as Assyriology (and the humanities in general) was dominated by a relatively homogenous population of white males, there were few reasons to question the methods and the results that such scholarship produced at a fundamental level.

The gradual diversification in cuneiform scholarship, in particular the increase in female scholars, has led, first, to a focused interest in women in the ancient record. More importantly, it is leading to the recognition that numerous aspects of Mesopotamian culture that seem obvious or natural may be due to the perspective and historical contingency of earlier generations of scholars.

Among those aspects are gender, the relationships between the sexes, the perceived homogeneity of Mesopotamian society, and the issue of religion. The presentation will thus discuss a much broader development towards reflexivity, in which gender studies may find allies in queer studies, post-colonial studies, and religious studies.

Helga Vogel

“«It's a men's world – again!» – The current debate on the identification of main burials and the co-interments in the Royal Cemetery at Ur”

In my presentation I will discuss the problem of identifying female main burials and female co-interments in the Royal Tombs at Ur. Traditionally, items seen as typically “male” or “female” have been used to assign a specific gender to human remains or to an assemblage of artifacts. Most recently these identifications have been questioned for a number of reasons. Using the example of three much debated Royal Tombs, RT.800 - RT.1050 (tomb) – RT.1237, I discuss various factors that determine the production of knowledge in archaeology, including knowledge of archaeological materials, fashionable theories, gender bias, truth regimes or institutional power

structures. I focus in particular on the rather strange situation that Ancient Near Eastern Archaeology has long neutralized the position of women and continues to do so even within a postmodern framework.

Ilona Zsolnay

“Are We Just Mucking About? Perils, Pitfalls, and Progressions in the Application of the Theoretical Concept of Hegemonic Masculinity”

The concept of hegemonic masculinity, i.e., the complicit domination of men over women, is relatively new and, according to its framers R. W. Connell and James W. Messerschmidt, somewhat haphazardly applied in its scholarly appropriations. As Messerschmidt writes: “the concept of hegemonic masculinity was originally formulated to conceptualize how patriarchal relations are legitimated throughout society.” Fundamental to the concept is that most (if not all) performances of masculinities and femininities provide for its continued maintenance *in a relational manner*. As a hegemony, all genders are complicit and, as a relational project, all gendered interactions are influenced by and apply influence on one another.

It is evident that ancient Near Eastern cultures were patriarchal. The concept of hegemonic masculinity can help to elucidate how these patriarchies were systematically justified through gender relations and, even more substantially, provide a useful methodology for revealing how these systems were continually modified. A compelling example of the adjustments in the characteristics of hegemonic masculinity can be seen in the transition from the Old Assyrian commercial system to the Middle Assyrian militaristic empires. Both were patriarchies, yet they exhibit divergent models of hegemonic masculinity and had very different systems for their legitimation.

Applying the concept of hegemonic masculinity to the ancient Near East is no simple task. Not only is the Near East geographically massive, but what qualifies as ancient spans close to two millennia. Even more markedly problematic is the sundry nature of the texts and artifacts which may be investigated. This paper will consider these impediments and the manifold contexts in which it would be effective to apply the concept of hegemonic masculinity.