

Workshop: Current Research in Middle Assyrian
Organizers: Jacob de Ridder and Daisuke Shibata

Speakers (alphabetically ordered)

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Eva Cancik-Kirschbaum (Freie Universität Berlin)
Betina Faist (Ruprecht-Karls-Universität Heidelberg)
Stefan Jakob (Ruprecht-Karls-Universität Heidelberg)
Jaume Llop (Universidad Complutense de Madrid)
Lionel Marti (CNRS, UMR 7192)
Aurélié Paci (Université Paris Nanterre)
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Daisuke Shibata (University of Tsukuba) and Shigeo Yamada (University of Tsukuba)
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General Abstract

Middle Assyrian studies is counted among the research fields which have made rapid progress in recent years. In the last few decades, Middle Assyrian material unearthed in Aššur and now kept in the museums of Berlin and Istanbul has been systematically published, and excavations of various sites in Syria and Iraq have succeeded in finding new material. With this impetus, research on a wide range of topics in Middle Assyrian studies is flourishing. The aim of this workshop is to offer an opportunity to exchange the results of ongoing research into the language, history, society and culture in the Middle Assyrian period. In the hope of developing an active discussion among those researching the Middle Assyrian period, participants from wide range of fields are warmly invited to join this workshop.

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Øyvind Bjøru and Na'ama Pat-El
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Eva Cancik-Kirschbaum

La capitale en miroir: Regional Centers in the Middle Assyrian Kingdom.

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Abstracts

Øyvind Bjøru and Na'ama Pat-El
The Subordinate Marker in Assyrian

All dialects of Akkadian mark their subordinated verbs with a designated morpheme: Babylonian *-u* and Assyrian *-(ū)ni*. This morpheme, and indeed the category itself, is not attested in West Semitic. Neither morpheme has any semantic content, and they are conditioned by their syntactic position. The distribution, function, and origin of these morphemes are not fully clear. Assyriologists and Semitists have debated at length, without reaching a consensus, the possible origin of this rather redundant category. Most scholars treat both morphemes as functionally identical, and reconstruct them as a single morpheme, and where *-ni* is absent in East Semitic, namely in Eblaite and Babylonian Akkadian, it would then reflect a loss.

In this paper we will consider two issues: the relationship between the morphemes *-u* and *-ni*, and their syntactic development from Old Assyrian to Neo-Assyrian. We will argue that they were originally two distinct and unrelated morphemes involved in marking subordinate clauses: a verbal morpheme *-u* and a clause-level clitic *-ni*. We will then show that during the history of Assyrian, *-u* lost its independent status. By Middle Assyrian, the combined morpheme is attested on all verbal and deverbal predicates, with no restriction, including with verbs carrying other suffixes. The most interesting development, however, is attested in Neo-Assyrian, where the morpheme is used to mark the right-most edge of the subordinated sentence, no matter what element is located there, including pronominal subjects in nominal sentences. We will conclude by discussing the implications of our proposal on the reconstruction of this feature to Proto-Semitic and its relation to indicative markers in West Semitic.

Eva Cancik-Kirschbaum

La capitale en miroir: Regional Centers in the Middle Assyrian Kingdom

Spatial extension represents a challenge for the state in premodern societies. This applies all the more to polities whose territories do not exist within fixed borders, but are subject to more or less permanent processes of expansion and reduction. Here, physical infrastructure is of particular importance for territorial domination. Recent research on toponymy and topography in the Late Bronze Age indicates that the Middle Assyrian kings of Assur considered infrastructure as an issue when establishing hegemony over Upper Mesopotamia. The regional centres had a special role to play in this, as they were designed, in organizational terms, effectively as a mirror image of the capital Assur. The contribution will draw especially on findings in Middle Assyrian texts from Tell Shech Hamad, Tell Fekherije, Tell Chuera and - of course - Assur.

Betina Faist

The Middle Assyrian Tablets from Mardama/Bassetki

Since 2015 excavations have been conducted at the site of Bassetki in the Duhok province of the Autonomous Region of Kurdistan in North Iraq. The excavation project is a joint mission of the University of Tübingen and the Directorate of Antiquities of Duhok, co-directed by Peter Pfälzner and Hasan A. Wasim. During the second season of excavations a first group of 22 small Middle Assyrian fragments was found in the eastern slope of the site. During the following two seasons nearly 200 Middle Assyrian tablets and fragments of tablets were discovered in the same archaeological context. Most of the texts were scattered on the floor of a room, but 64 were stored in a clay pot. The latter turned out to be part of the archive of Aššur-nāšir, son of Iddin-Marduk, governor of (the city of) Mardama. The city was already known under its older name Mardaman, especially from Ur III administrative texts and Mari letters, and can now confidently be identified with the site of Bassetki. It had, however, not been known that there existed a Middle Assyrian province named Mardama. The aim of this paper is to give a first insight into the new material, especially into the tablets kept in the clay pot. The main emphasis is on the typology of the texts, their chronological horizon and geographical scope.

Stefan Jakob

Middle Assyrian Royal Epics

It has been known for a long time that some Assyrian kings of the 2nd millennium BCE did not restrict themselves to royal inscriptions when thinking about their posthumous fame. Starting from the 13th century, a special genre came into being, the royal epic. It tells the story of the Assyrian king as the hero of his army, a warrior, but also as a wise monarch, superior to his enemies and always victorious.

Nevertheless, only a few of these narratives have been published in full. They are considered to be slightly difficult, on the one hand because of the fragmentary state of preservation, on the other hand due to lexical and syntactic difficulties.

Among the cuneiform tablets from the German excavations in the Assyrian capital Assur from the beginning of the 20th century, a huge bulk of fragments of Middle Assyrian epic texts could be newly identified in recent years. Besides additional parts of the Tukulti-Ninurta Epic and perhaps the Adad-nerari Epic as well, there are many others still waiting to be put into a secure

context.

The aim of this paper is to present a first overview of that collection which is currently being prepared for publication as a part of the research project *Literarische Keilschrifttexte aus Assur* at the *Heidelberger Akademie der Wissenschaften*.

Jaume Llop

Tributes and Taxes in the Middle Assyrian Texts

The resources of the Assyrian state came from tributes on conquered foreign peoples and taxes on the Assyrian subjects. Assyrian tributes and taxes have received some attention from scholars but especially for the Neo Assyrian Period, while their study for the Middle Assyrian period has been neglected. In this paper, the attestations for tributes and taxes in the Middle Assyrian documents will be gathered and the results discussed.

Lionel Marti

Some Thoughts on the M 13 Archive of Aššur

The M 13 archive in Aššur has just been published largely in copy by V. Donbaz, then in transcription by H. Freydank. S. Maul proposed a presentation showing its richness and greater than expected extension. This documentation illustrates the activities of craftsmen producing goods for the palace. We propose to take an interest, based on these different data, in its archival nature. Thus, by studying the way in which they were constituted in the house of these craftsmen, we will be able to study the links between them and the palace.

Aurélie Paci

The *sukkallu rabi'u* (Grand Viziers): A Lineage of High Dignitaries within the Assyrian Empire

The *sukkallu rabi'u* (Grand Viziers) are a lineage of high dignitaries who are linked with the Assyrian royal family. Indeed, they are the descendants of the king Adad-nērāri I. During the Middle-Assyrian period, the members of this line occupied a major place in the central power in Aššur, holding important positions and prestigious titles, even a royal title: *šar māt Hanigalbat*. Their ties with the Assyrian royal family may have been reinforced by dynastic links.

Their power also came from a significant territorial base in the western provinces of Assyria:

Aššur-iddin, great-grandson of Adad-nērāri I, was established in Dur-Katlimmu on the Habur to manage the tensions that ran through the region during the middle of the reign of Tukultī-Ninurta I. Sources of this period reveal that he was more generally in charge of the western part of the empire, where he was very active. He was also the owner of a fortified *dunnu* on the Balih, near the western margins of the empire (as were his two successors, Šulmānu-mušabši and Ilī-padâ). His son Ilī-padâ played a fundamental role at the Court of Aššur, possibly being involved in Tukultī-Ninurta's death. After a period of exile, Ninurta-apil-Ekur (Ilī-padâ's son) overthrew the main Assyrian royal branch and became the Assyrian king. The title of *sukkallu rabi'u* is attested, but rarely, after this overthrow.

The purpose of this communication will therefore be to present what is known about this lineage of high dignitaries by bringing together the latest research, but also to consider their role as local authorities and how they were able to use their provincial territorial base to influence power in Aššur.

Jacob de Ridder

Pirīs is a Riddle. *Parīs* is an Explanation

One of the less studied aspects of Akkadian grammar are the nominal patterns, and the differences between those of the two main varieties, Assyrian and Babylonian, has been particularly neglected. Wolfram von Soden's *Grundriss der Akkadischen Grammatik* remains the most comprehensive overview of the subject. In his list of patterns, von Soden mentions a number of peculiar features of the Assyrian dialect for which he offers only one or two examples. In this paper we will look at a number of these typically Assyrian patterns and variations of more common forms, while trying to explain how these differences from the Babylonian dialect originated. This will be achieved through an investigation of the Middle Assyrian evidence in comparison with the more archaic Old Assyrian material as well as that of the more recent neo-Assyrian period. Using the earlier material, it can be ascertained that certain sound changes of nominal patterns assumed to have been introduced in the neo-Assyrian period appear to have roots in the second millennium. This is especially clear among the literary texts and royal inscriptions in the discussion. In such cases one may wonder to what extent the affected nominal patterns are part of the Assyrian language, as opposed to peculiar variations from standard Akkadian. This paper is part of a research project carried out at Leipzig University, entitled "Akkadian Noun Patterns", which has been funded by the *Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft*.

Daisuke Shibata and Shigeo Yamada

The Building Inscriptions of Aššur-ketta-lēšir II, “King of the Land of Māri”: Their Structure,
Contents, and Historical Implications

The excavations at Tell Taban in north-eastern Syria brought out a pile of inscriptions commissioned by the Middle Assyrian local rulers of the land of Māri and commemorating their building activities. A local ruler by the name of Aššur-ketta/lēšir (II), roughly contemporary with Tiglath-pileser I of Assyria (1114–1076), left behind an especially large number of inscriptions, which mostly commemorate the construction and renovation of various defensive structures, including the fortification of a satellite city Adališḫu, building of a new fortress Dūr-Aššur-ketta/lēšir, and above all the building of multiple city walls of Ṭabetu, the capital city of his local kingdom.

We will first classify his inscriptions, and then investigate the details of his defense system construction, in particular the city-walls of Ṭabetu that may have shaped the city landscape. At the end, we will discuss the menace brought by Aramaeans and Chaldeans, as partly referred to in the Assyrian inscriptions of Tiglath-pileser I and Aššur-bēl-kala at the turn from the 12th to the 11th century B.C.E., as the historical circumstances of Ṭabetu’s defense building.

Aline Tenu

Holding the Euphrates Border in the Middle Assyrian Empire

From the middle of the 14th century the Euphrates became the western border of the Middle Assyrian Empire. Located under direct threat from Hittites and nomadic groups, the Assyrians sought to ensure lasting control over it. The coexistence of different types of installations, highlighted by archaeological research, shows the diversity of situations and solutions envisaged by the Assyrians. This paper will focus on presenting the Assyrian control strategies developed from upstream to downstream, based on several archaeological examples: fortresses and strongholds, harbors, and cities.