By far the most wonderful of all cetacean relics was the almost complete vast skeleton of an extinct monster... When I stand among these mighty Leviathan skeletons, skulls, tusks, jaws, ribs, and vertebrae, all characterized by partial resemblances to the existing breeds of sea monsters; ...I am, by a flood, borne back to that wondrous period, ere time itself can be said to have began; for time began with man.

H. Melville, *Moby-Dick* 1851

Human curiosity and amazement regarding other animals (past or contemporary) seem to be timeless and to have had repercussions in many societies around the world, if not all. Paradoxically, these encounters, being as old as human beings themselves, have only become the focus of rich academic debates over the last few decades, when non-human animals began to be foregrounded...
in scholarly debates in the Humanities and the Social Sciences. The rich insights stemming from Anthropology, Archaeology and Philosophy have slowly seeped into the study of Antiquity, but it has made a minor impact in other fields dedicated to the study of the Ancient Near East. The goal of this venue is to open a space for interdisciplinary dialogue between different fields of research that rarely come across each other at a congress or conference setting. Bringing together scholars from Anthropology, Archaeology, Assyriology, Hittitology and Biblical Studies, the colloquium aims to incentivize new ways of collaboration and debate between different fields of research that share similar thematic interests.

The venue will be streamed live on Zoom on June 21, 2021 (from 14:50 to 20:30). Please see the schedule below.

* Organizers: Romina Della Casa and Lidar Sapir-Hen.

**Schedule**

June 21 | 14:50-20:30
Live on Zoom

**14:50 Opening**

**Session 1: Human-non-Human Animal Bodies and Substances**
15:00 - 16:30 (session chair Lidar Sapir-Hen)

**The Sacrificial Animal in Mesopotamia**
Yoram Cohen | Tel Aviv University

**Animal Sacrifice in I Millennium Babylonian Religious Contexts**
Rocío Da Riva | University of Barcelona

**From Animal to Animal: Ritual Spitting and the Absorption of Evil in Hittite Anatolia**
Romina Della Casa | Tel Aviv University

16:30 break (15’ break)

**Session 2: Human-non-Human Animal Conceptualizations**
16:45 - 18:45 (session chair Romina Della Casa)

**Domestication and the Flattening of the Wild in the Ancient Near East**
Benjamin S. Arbuckle | The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

**The Hermeneutics of Human-Non-Human Interactions in Ancient Mesopotamian Divinatory Texts**
Nicla De Zorzi | University of Vienna

**Acting as Animals: Hybrids in Hittite Cultic Festivals**
Alice Mouton | Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique CNR Paris
“Do Not Muzzle an Ox while it is Treading Out the Grain” (Deut. 25:4): Animal Ethics as a Unique Phenomenon in the Biblical Law.
Idan Breier | Bar-Ilan University & Oxford Centre for Animal Ethics

18:45 break (15’ break)

Session 3: Human-non-Human Animal Materializations
19:00 - 20:30 (session chair Abra Spiciarich)
“Habits and Habitats: Animal ‘Vignettes’ in Neo-Assyrian Reliefs”
Allison Thomason | Southern Illinois University Edwardsville
Animal Materializations as a Window into Social Bonds at Çatalhöyük
Lidnsay Der | The University of British Columbia
“Urban-Rural,” “Producer-Consumer,” “Public-Private,” and “Continuity-Discontinuity” Binaries and Their Utility in Zooarchaeological Research: Case Studies from Central Anatolian Bronze Age
Levent Atici | University of Nevada

Titles and Abstracts

Session 1: Human-non-Human Animal Bodies and Substances

Title: The Sacrificial Animal in Mesopotamia
Prof. Yoram Cohen
Tel Aviv University
Email: ycohen1@tauex.tau.ac.il
This paper will discuss the raison d’être of animal sacrifice, in particularly, sheep and birds. The animal sacrifice will be examined within the context of divination, that is, divulging from the animal corpse omens relating to one’s future. It will be seen how sacrifice was placed within an elaborate ritual which ensured that only a perfect and free of any physical blemish living being would have been sacrificed to the gods.

Title: Animal Sacrifice in I Millennium Babylonian Religious Contexts
Prof. Rocío Da Riva
University of Barcelona
Email: mrdarivam@ub.edu
Animal sacrifice is one of the most significant aspects of temple ceremonies in ancient Mesopotamia. The purpose of this paper is to scrutinize textual sources related to the Late Babylonian temple ceremonies to decode the different practices of the ritual killing of domesticated animals in temple contexts with the aim of elucidating its cultural and religious functions and its social and political significance.
Title: From Animal to Animal: Ritual Spitting and the Absorption of Evil in Hittite Anatolia
Dr. Romina Della Casa
Tel Aviv University
Email: romina@mail.tau.ac.il

When a patient was entering the realm of the dead and her/his body was suffering, or when a father and a son quarreled and their words continued to have a prominent impact on their lives, an Old Woman (a Hittite practitioner) would perform specific rituals so that the patients’ evil would be eliminated—respectively, Tunnawiyā’s taknaz dā-ritual, and the Ritual of Maštigga for Domestic Quarrel. In these and other compositions one of the characteristic practices was that of spitting into a non-human animal’s mouth, considered of fundamental importance to achieve the transformation in the status of both the individual and the animal. It is normally assumed that spiting was a way of transferring the evil of the human (the pollution or miasma) into the body of the non-human animal, who then became a substitute. But, were there specific evils particularly associated with the practice of spitting? How were human and non-human animal bodies (and their fluids) conceived so that a substitution would take place through this practice? I will explore these and other questions to approach different ritual dynamics that involved harmful speech and non-human animal substitution in Hittite Anatolia.

Session 2: Human-non-Human Animal Conceptualizations

Title: Domestication and the Flattening of the Wild in the Ancient Near East
Prof. Benjamin S. Arbuckle
Email: bsarbu@email.unc.edu

The concept of ‘domestication’ and its dyadic complement ‘wild’ have an enormous impact on how zooarchaeological work in SW Asia is structured. In this paper, I emphasize the problems inherent in the use of this framework and the naturalist ontology that it is housed within. In particular I explore what the dominance of the domestication concept within the domestic-wild dyad means for our perception of the ‘wild’ in the ancient Near East. I argue that this framework flattens the wild into a homogenous and rather boring category that distances wild things from human experience, history, and practices reflecting a projection of a unique present into the past. I discuss several zooarchaeological and textual examples from Middle and Late Bronze Age Anatolia and Mesopotamia that suggest ancient Near Eastern conceptions of the wild were significantly different than what is presented in faunal reports (which mostly use wild taxa as ecological indicators), that wild animals in particular were incorporated into the fabric of Bronze Age urban societies, and that these societies can be conceived of as multi-species collaborations. I suggest that we need a more robust zooarchaeology of the wild and speculate about the potential for a way forward that binds emic views reflected in ancient texts and iconography to anthropological ontologies to better utilize ‘the wild’ in our understanding of the ancient Near East.

Title: The Hermeneutics of Human-Non-Human Interactions in Ancient Mesopotamian Divinatory Texts
Prof. Nicla De Zorzi
University of Vienna
Email: nicla.de.zorzi@univie.ac.at

In a Babylonian collection of omens dealing with animals and animal behaviour, we read: “If pigs run around lively in the main street, rising of [wind], or: calling up of (corvée labourers wielding) spade and basket (for carrying bricks and earth).” And elsewhere, we read: “if a dog digs in the dirt in front of a man and lies down, his wife is a serial adulteress.” How are we to interpret the connection between animal behaviour and prediction, between the dog digging dirt and the adulterous wife or the connection between the bustling activity of pigs and low-class labourers? In my paper, I will argue that we are confronted here with constructed texts that draw on certain culturally conditioned assumptions about animals and humans, and about their interconnection. My thesis, based on the study of Mesopotamian divinatory hermeneutics, is that Mesopotamian omens dealing with animals and animal behaviour should be seen, not as sources of objective information on the animal world in ancient Mesopotamia, but rather as culturally constructed bestiaria shedding light on how animals and their behavior were conceptualized, and judged, in the image of man. All this I will attempt to illustrate by looking at a series of case studies.

Title: Acting as Animals: Hybrids in Hittite Cultic Festivals
Dr. Alice Mouton
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In the cuneiform texts of Hittite Anatolia (second half of the second millennium BCE), dog-men, bear-men, wolf-men and other hybrids are mentioned in cultic contexts. Although the mentions of such characters are known from Hittitologists, an in-depth analysis on them is still needed. The aim of this paper will consist in portraying them as precisely as possible: who are they, what do they do and why? With what other characters do they interact? In order to attempt an answer to these questions, a corpus of texts will be built and the excerpts thus selected will be analyzed in context.

Title: “Do Not Muzzle an Ox while it is Treading Out the Grain” (Deut. 25:4): Animal Ethics as a Unique Phenomenon in the Biblical Law.
Dr. Idan Breier
Bar-Ilan University; Oxford Centre for Animal Ethics
Email: idan.breier@biu.ac.il

This paper examines the attitude towards animals in the Pentateuch and ancient Near Eastern legal codes. Employing a comparative approach, it analyzes criminal and tort law in relation to animals and their owner—stealing and finding livestock, the responsibility of watchmen and renters, and that of the legal owners of animals that cause damage. Demonstrating how animals form part of the biblical ethical system, in which ethical demands become binding statutes, it looks at why this process only occurred in the Hebrew Bible and not in other ancient Near Eastern cultures.

Session 3: Human-non-Human Animal Materializations

Title: “Habits and Habitats: Animal ‘Vignettes’ in Neo-Assyrian Reliefs”
Prof. Allison Thomason
Southern Illinois University Edwardsville, IL
Email: althoma@siue.edu
There are many small vignettes in Neo-Assyrian art that depict animals behaving as they would naturally in their typical habitats or in captivity, such as a monkey turning back to view something behind them, does and their fawns or sows and their piglets foraging through wild habitats, captive ungulates turning back as they flee their attendants, horses rearing up as they await action. These are small-scale and distinct scenes, and they are often “hidden” among the details of the narratives showing military campaigns, rituals and ceremonies, or other activities of the king and his court that are the focus of the Neo-Assyrian royal reliefs. The inclusion of these animal vignettes begs the question—what is their purpose and function in the large-scale programmatic Neo-Assyrian reliefs, and how were they meant to be interpreted by the artisans who created them and the audience(s) of the reliefs? In this paper, I will explore these questions and others regarding the behavior of animals and their relationships to their environments as depicted in Neo-Assyrian orthostats.

**Title: Animal Materializations as a Window into Social Bonds at Çatalhöyük**

Dr. Lindsay Der  
The University of British Columbia  
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Animals played a pivotal role at the Neolithic site of Çatalhöyük, both in terms of as a source of sustenance, as well as in the social sphere. Using animal materializations across different media, this talk will track changes in visual expressions at the site and how they were produced by, maintained and themselves produced human-animal and human-human relationships.

**Title: “Urban-Rural,” “Producer-Consumer,” “Public-Private,” and “Continuity-Discontinuity” Binaries and Their Utility in Zooarchaeological Research: Case Studies from Central Anatolian Bronze Age**

Prof. Levent Atici  
University of Nevada, Las Vegas  
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As zooarchaeologists often employ idealized dichotomies such as urban consumers and rural producers and distinguish between centralized/regulated and decentralized/unregulated animal economies with direct/indirect food provisioning systems and public/private institutions, the zooarchaeologist must first gain insights into such dichotomies to elucidate agropastoral economies of early complex societies. We are tasked with encompassing the epistemological continuum and bridging more abstract and ideational anthropological variables with the archaeological hard evidence as well as with a narrower set of more explicit zooarchaeological measures; thus, moving up from heavily fragmented animal bones to complex and abstract human behaviors. As we move through the anthropological to the archaeological to the zooarchaeological records, our limitations increase and overall resolution decreases. This presentation discusses the utility of such binaries in zooarchaeological research and probes whether we can confirm their material correlations in the zooarchaeological record for the Bronze Age in Central Anatolia. Toward this end, I review animal exploitation patterns of the Early, Middle and Late Bronze ages in Central Anatolia to create a diachronic perspective, identify conspicuous zooarchaeological measurements, and discuss continuity and disruption in animal exploitation patterns within this explanatory framework.