

Bridging the Gap: Disciplines, Times, and Spaces in Dialogue

Volume 1

Sessions 1, 2, and 5 from the Conference
Broadening Horizons 6 Held at the Freie
Universität Berlin, 24–28 June 2019

Edited by
Christian W. Hess and Federico Manuelli



BROADENING HORIZONS **6**

Access Archaeology



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Foreword

These volumes represent the proceedings of the conference Broadening Horizons 6, hosted by the Institute for Ancient Near Eastern Studies and the Institute for Near Eastern Archaeology at the Freie Universität Berlin from 24–28 June 2019. Taking the long-standing partnership of the two institutes and the multidisciplinary tradition of Ancient Studies in Berlin as inspiration, the general theme of ‘Bridging the Gap’ was chosen to encourage approaches to the study of the Ancient Near East which transcend traditional disciplinary boundaries in bringing a range of evidence and methods into dialogue.

The Berlin conference was fortunate to include over 100 papers presented by participants from over 22 countries and 70 universities. These were divided into eight thematic sessions, each framed by an introductory keynote. Since its first incarnation at the University of Ghent in 2006, Broadening Horizons has developed into a regular venue for young scholars in the field. In many respects, it remains the only conference of its kind, taking both ‘ancient’ and ‘Near East’ in the broadest sense possible, from the prehistoric to the Islamic periods. It is a particular point of pride that the conference is not confined by field, but remains open to any philological, archaeological, and methodological approaches to the material. As a conference for and organized by young scholars, it thus provides a uniquely wide snapshot of current work.

Berlin was chosen as a venue for Broadening Horizons 6 by the members of the Organizing Committee of the previous conference that took place in Udine in 2017, and to whom we are grateful. In agreement between the two committees and in the spirit of international cooperation, the organization of the conference in Berlin also included members of the preceding one. We are happy to express our enormous thanks to the institutions and persons without whose support the conference, and these proceedings, would not have been possible. Funding for the conference was provided by the German Research Foundation (DFG), the Office of International Affairs of the Freie Universität Berlin, and the Ernst-Reuter Gesellschaft. The university’s administration and staff, the Department of History and Cultural Studies, Prof. Dominik Bonatz (Institute for Near Eastern Archaeology), and Prof. Jörg Klinger (Institute for Ancient Near Eastern Studies) all provided generous logistic and administrative support during the organization and the conference itself. Rana Zaher designed our brilliant logo, which contributed greatly both to conference identity and now the cover of these volumes. Members of our Scientific Committee, some of whom joined us during the conference, provided generous advice and encouragement.

The smooth and timely flow of the individual sessions was largely due to the tireless efforts of the numerous student assistants and session chairs. It is only fitting that we mention here explicitly the catering and hosting offered by Cosimo Dalessandro and the Ristorante Galileo, which has long since become an institution of its own within the Freie Universität Berlin, and which kept the breaks of the conference amply supplied with coffee and refreshments. The conference’s opening and closing events hosted at the Museum Europäischer Kulturen (MEK) by EßKultur provided the ideal setting for social interaction and exchange.

These volumes were only possible due to the perseverance of the participants who submitted their contributions despite the closure of libraries, difficulties in accessing resources, and the many hardships

the pandemic imposed on our lives in 2020 and 2021. Our thanks are due especially for their heroic efforts in the timely submission of their papers during a most difficult year. We also express our sympathy and understanding to those who decided to withdraw their papers as a result of the imposed limitations. Finally, we are especially grateful to the many referees who graciously agreed to donate their time and efforts to the reviews, even as their crucial contributions remain anonymous.

Costanza Coppini
Georg Cyrus
Hamaseh Golestaneh
Christian W. Hess
Nathalie Kallas
Federico Manuelli
Rocco Palermo

Berlin, 18 July 2021



Introduction

Christian W. Hess and Federico Manuelli

The first volume of the proceedings of the conference ‘Broadening Horizons 6 — Bridging the Gap: Disciplines, Times, and Space in Dialogue’ gathers the papers presented in three sessions: Session 1 — Entanglement. Material Culture and Written Sources in Dialogue; Session 2 — Integrating Sciences in Historical and Archaeological Research; Session 5 — Which Continuity? Evaluating Stability, Transformation, and Change in Transitional Periods. The range of topics covered here is certainly bewildering, and leaves us shuttling across vast periods and regions, from Neolithic Göbekli Tepe to the ink recipes of medieval Arabic manuscripts. At the core of each session and paper, however, is not only the overt confrontation with methodology in dealing with the evidence, but the need for multiple, intersecting methodologies in order to interpret that evidence in any meaningful sense.

The ‘entanglement’ of Session 1 takes as its starting point the complicated dependences and dependencies of things, most famously brought to the fore again by Ian Hodder.¹ More concretely, the papers in the session all to some degree address how and whether the ‘thinginess’ of objects and of texts relate. Augusta McMahon’s keynote (‘Tamed Violence: Inscribed Weapons in Mesopotamia’) moves beyond Hodder’s entanglement to design-theory and Malafouris’ material-engagement theory to analyze how inscription and figurative imagery might serve to change the affordances of an object.² Both contribute to a shift from brutally violent practicality to tamed symbolic piety.

While McMahon’s keynote advances our understanding of text-and-object, two papers of the session focus on text-and-architecture. Juan Álvarez Garcia (‘*La Maison d’Urtenu*. A Functional Study of a “Great House” from Ugarit’) gives a brief overview of how the architecture and archives of the ‘House of Urtenu’ at Ugarit might contribute to a better understanding of the archives within the context of Late Bronze Age political and mercantile networks. Giampiero Tursi’s ‘Protecting the Residence’ also adds color into the mix. Despite the hybrid Egyptian-Canaanite nature of the architecture at Beth-Shean, inscription, blue pigmentation, and imagery combine to turn an administrative complex into a powerful symbol of Egyptian rule. Texts and objects also combine to show how art is produced by and circulates within (‘art of’ vs. ‘art in’) the Achaemenid Empire in Zohreh Zehbari’s ‘On the Participation of Egyptian Artists in Achaemenid Art’. In side-stepping the thorny correlation of ethnic affiliation and stylistic traits, Zehbari combines evidence from objects and inscriptions to demonstrate the major role played by Egyptian craftsmen in the ‘performance’ of art in the Achaemenid heartland.

Session 2 reflects Ancient Near Eastern Studies’ ever-expanding toolkit to include both the digital and natural sciences. There is no doubt that in all fields of study, the scale of hard data available has become overwhelming. In Jerome McGann’s apt formulation, we have long since come to the point of ‘drinking information from a fire hose’.³ Nowhere is this more apparent than in Caroline Waerzegger’s review of the history of prosopography in her keynote address on ‘Digital Prosopography of Babylonia.’ Both

¹ Hodder 2012.

² Malafouris 2013.

³ McGann 2014, 15.

the philological tyro and the experienced scholar reading through the thousands of texts available inevitably come back to the basic question: ‘Who are all those people?’⁴ Waerzegger’s use of network analysis neatly joins the individual to the collective, showing along the way how we might finally move away from lists of names and persons towards a robust integration of prosopographical data into socio-economic research.⁵

Some of the most innovative work today is being carried out in graduate and post-doctoral projects. Both Hassan el-Hajj and Felix Wolter argue for the use of digital imagery at various scales to deal with information either inaccessible or invisible to other methods. The methods of el-Hajj’s ‘Monitoring Damage to Cultural Heritage Sites Using Open Source Sentinel-1 and Sentinel-2 Data’ employ Very High Resolution (VHR) satellite imagery as a monitoring tool for the urgent problem of site disturbances and destruction. While destructive events have an obviously major impact on heritage sites, the effect of other natural and anthropogenic processes can be more subtle, and easily slip under the radar. Both the well-known, tragic destruction of Palmyra, which has rightly been the focus of so much attention, and the lesser known site of Qornet ed-Deir in Lebanon serve as test cases for the method. Felix Wolter, in turn, uses 3D photogrammetry (‘3D Imagery for On-Site Assessment of Mud Brick Architecture’) at the site of Girdi Shamlu, not only as a product of final documentation, but as a constant tool for site evaluation during the excavation process. The camera takes its place alongside the trowel in the excavator’s toolbox.

Ghias Klesly’s paleobotanic comparison (‘Ancient Agriculture in Early Bronze Age Northern Mesopotamia Reconstructed from Archaeobotanical Remains’) brings us back to the laboratory microscope for a reconstruction of natural and agricultural environments of three Early Bronze Age sites in Syria. Carolin Dittrich and Eva Götting-Martin’s paper (‘Green Frog in the Water. A herpetological approach to the magico-medical use of frogs and frog-amulets in Mesopotamia’) successfully integrates textual and figurative representations of frogs in order to bring fresh light on their manifold use in ancient Mesopotamian medicine and rituals. Chemical analysis is the focus of both Negar Abdali’s (‘An Overview of the Achaemenid Glazed Architectural Decoration’) overview of colors and glazing techniques in the Achaemenid period and of Claudia Colini’s ‘Ink Recipes from the Islamic Era,’ which puts the ink recipes found in Arabic manuscripts to a rigorous scientific test. Where the recipes or glazes feed into discussions of social and historical movement, as in the posited Babylonian influences on glaze production at Tol-e Ajori or of common manuscript practices in the Islamic world, both papers highlight that not all glazes and inks are equal. The details of chemical composition and production are directly relevant. Together, the papers of the session give a real sense that the integration of the sciences, both digital and natural, is no longer a scholarly outlier, but has fast become an integral part of the field.

Marcella Frangipane’s keynote address to Session 5 elegantly frames one of the core issues of Ancient Near Eastern historiography. Long-term evolutionary narratives tend to lurch from immutable period to period, separated by ‘transitional phases’ where everything is in flux. But not all changes are equal. As Frangipane argues, historical and cultural breaks so often remain elusive because abrupt shifts themselves are the exception and not the rule. The keynote equally serves as a call to arms for a rigorous identification and documentation of contexts in stratigraphic succession in order to re-evaluate these shifts.

These conclusions are nicely reflected in Jesse Millek’s overview (‘Dual Narratives: Collapse and Transition at the End of the Late Bronze Age’) of how much of the evidence from the Late Bronze Age in

⁴ Renger 1973.

⁵ Every researcher is invited to apply the method herself: Seire 2020 provides a basic introduction to constructing datasets for the technologically uninitiated, using the open data provided by the project.

Syria and the Levant defies a clean historical narrative of catastrophic collapse, or in Lodeiro's summary of the historical development of Tarḫuntašša as a center within the Hittite Empire ('Tarḫuntašša: Rise and Fall of the New Capital for the Hittite Empire'). Moreover, the article by Mariacarmela Montesanto ('Do Not Fear the Dark: Change and Continuity in the Amuq Valley') offers further insights into the Late Bronze-Iron Age transition at the sites of Alalakh and Sabuniye through an overview of their pottery repertoires.

Even in periods of considerable change, as in the Hellenistic period, where Ancient Near Eastern Studies has traditionally resigned its purview, transitions rarely mean a break. Stefanos Karampekos' study of house forms attested in Hellenistic settlements ('A Possible Neo-Babylonian House-Type for the New Seleucid Foundations?') highlights their debt to older prototypes. The paper by Julia Schönicke ('There and Back Again – Towards a New Understanding of Abandonment Practices at the Neolithic Settlement of Göbekli Tepe') also leads us back to the themes of Session 1. Even as 'entanglement' remains a theme, what about 'disentanglement', the long divorce of occupation from site? Exactly the sort of rigorous attention to stratigraphic context called for by Frangipane here provides conclusive evidence against a sudden 'ritual back-filling' during abandonment and for a continuous re-building of structures.

So much for the overview, which can hardly do justice to the variety and depth promised by the keynotes and the contributions by so many young scholars in the field. Here, the reader is invited to peruse the papers herself.

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