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Digital Heritage Repatriation

The Cuneiform Digital Library Initiative in Arabic

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2026

Document Version:

Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

[Link to publication](#)

Citation for published version (APA):

Rattenborg, R., Aqil Abid, H., Pagé-Perron, É., & Jotheri, J. (2026). *Digital Heritage Repatriation: The Cuneiform Digital Library Initiative in Arabic*. 61-62. Abstract from British Association for Near Eastern Archaeology Annual Conference, UCL London, 22-24 April 2026, London, United Kingdom.

Total number of authors:

4

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Production and Consumption of Knowledge in the Archaeology of West Asia



BANE A

The British Association
for Near Eastern
Archaeology

TABLE OF CONTENTS

About BANE	3
Organising committee	3
Sponsors	3
Conference information	3
Wi-Fi	5
Accessibility	5
Getting around	5
Food and drink	6
Schedule	9
Wednesday 22 April events	9
Thursday 23 April session summary	10
Themed sessions (early morning)	11
Workshops (early morning)	12
Themed sessions (late morning)	13
Themed sessions (afternoon)	14
Workshops (afternoon)	15
Keynote lecture 2 (evening)	16
Friday 24 April session summary	17
Themed sessions (early morning)	18
Workshops (early morning)	19
Themed sessions (late morning)	20
Workshops (late morning)	21
Themed sessions (afternoon)	21
Workshops (afternoon)	22
Keynote abstracts	25
Presentation abstracts	26
Poster abstracts	71

ABOUT BANEA

The British Association of Near Eastern Archaeology (BANEA) is a charitable organisation set up to facilitate information exchange on the archaeology of the Ancient Near East and related fields between professionals and non-professionals alike. The most important forum for information exchange is the annual conference which rotates between universities in the United Kingdom where related subjects are taught.

ORGANISING COMMITTEE

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CONFERENCE INFORMATION

The conference will take place across the Roberts Engineering Building and the adjacent Malet Place Engineering Building on UCL's Bloomsbury campus. The registration desk, which opens Wednesday afternoon, will be located in the foyer of the Roberts Building.

Roberts Engineering Building
1–4 Malet Place
London WC1E 7JE

The building is located on the corner of Malet Place and Torrington Place.

an end in the late 5th millennium BCE, ceramic artefacts, including the locally manufactured types, are not seen again in Arabia for nearly a millennium. Therefore, this early appearance of ceramics in the Gulf region takes on a central role in approaching the wider questions of cross-cultural interaction, and not just of the physical but also the intangible. My research includes the study of material from the Arabian coast, southern Iraq and western Iran, through ICP-AES and petrographic analysis, in order to further our understanding of the exchange relationship, within the Gulf and put the Ubaid in context of the Arabian Neolithic.

Karolina Przyłęcka¹, Latif Öksüz², and Christina Tsouparopoulou³: *Shifting Sacred Landscapes: A Meso-Scale Analysis of Nippur*

1 University of Warsaw; 2, 3 Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University

The paper presents results of the Mesopotamian Material Religion (McMaRe) project's analyses focusing on sacred spaces examined at the meso-scale. The city of Nippur serves as a case study illustrating long-term transformations of religious topography within the site. By integrating GIS-based spatial analyses with textual sources the study identifies recurring patterns governing the placement, distribution, and mutual relations of sacred structures. The analysis explores how religious buildings functioned within the urban layout and how ritual landscapes were shaped by political and social factors. Rather than focusing just on temples, the study incorporates gates, chapels, as well as open spaces to be examined as a network. While the study covers the period from the 3rd millennium BCE to 539 BCE, special attention is given to the Ur III period, during which cult was increasingly centralised around major institutional temples, yet at the same time private and semi-private sacred spaces start to occur within residential quarters of Nippur. The paper's aim is to show a complex reconfiguration of urban religious topography. By combining archaeological data with textual evidence, the study aims to reconstruct shifting conceptual relations between the city gods and their attributed buildings as well as to uncover the information about the temples that have not yet been discovered archaeologically.

Frederick W. Rademakers¹ and Graham Philip²: *Revisiting the Metalwork from Tell el-Dab'a: New Insights on the Movement of Copper Metal and Silver Jewellery*

1 British Museum, 2 Durham University

In the mid-1980s, Mr Mike Cowell of the British Museum undertook a programme of analysis which examined the composition of the copper-alloy and silver finds from the Middle Kingdom and Second Intermediate period occupations at Tell el-Dab'a in the eastern Nile Delta. These results were published in a monograph on the metalwork from the site in 2006. However, none of those samples was subject to lead-isotope analysis, as the method was only just emerging when the work was undertaken. Recently, unused material from the 1980s samples was found in storage at the British Museum. We present here, the results of the reinvestigation of this material, including through lead-isotope analysis, and a consideration of the probable origins of both silver artefacts and the remains of copper ingots found at Tell el-Dab'a.

Rune Rattenborg¹, Haider Aqeel², Émilie Pagé-Perron³ and Jaafar Jotheri⁴: *Digital Heritage Repatriation: The Cuneiform Digital Library Initiative in Arabic*

1 Lund University; 2 Al-Qadisiyah University; 3 University of York; 4 University of Al-Qadisiyah

Today, the vast majority of more than half a million cuneiform inscriptions unearthed across the Middle East are housed in museums and collections in Europe and North America. Their study and publication is confined to books, journals, and electronic resources rendered in English,

French, German, Italian, and Spanish. Even the rapidly growing ecosystem of online catalogues and research platforms dedicated to the digital documentation and curation of cuneiform inscriptions remain exclusive to the priorities and needs of scholars and research institutions of the West. Needless to say, this situation significantly inhibits researchers and general audiences in the Arab-speaking world from accessing and exploring a most essential part of their own national heritage. The present talk presents the results of Access to Cuneiform Texts (CDLI-ACT), an initiative aiming to translate the database and webpages of the Cuneiform Digital Library Initiative (<https://cdli.earth>) into Arabic. Forming a first open-access, open-source, community-based digital platform of cuneiform in Arabic, outputs include curated vocabularies for controlled metadata and a fully translated interface, tested in practice through workshops held at universities in Iraq in January 2026. This resource will enable Arabic language users with limited or no proficiency in English to freely search, explore, download, and reuse data from the Cuneiform Digital Library Initiative for research, teaching, and communication purposes.

Nick Ray¹, Ahmad Emrage², and Saad Mohammed Boyadem: *Climate Change and Libyan Coastal Heritage: Vulnerability and Pathways to Sustainability and Resilience*

1 Ulster University; 2 University of Benghazi; 3 Omar Al-Mukhtar University

This paper explores how notions of climate, sustainability, and resilience are mobilised within archaeological research on Libya's coast, a region of exceptional heritage significance increasingly threatened by sea-level rise, coastal erosion, and extreme weather events. Case studies from Tocra and Apollonia provide a lens to examine how global climate narratives intersect with local understandings of environmental change, heritage vulnerability, and adaptive practice. The paper introduces the Integrated Maritime and Coastal Research Centre, a developing collaborative initiative dedicated to studying, documenting, and mitigating climate impacts on coastal heritage through interdisciplinary research and public engagement. It reflects on how such collaborations negotiate sustainability frameworks and capacity limitations within Libya, underscoring the importance of partnership and co-production of knowledge. Finally, the paper considers local perceptions of climate change and examines whether adaptation strategies in Libya are moving beyond hard engineering solutions toward more integrated, sustainable approaches. It reflects on how archaeologists and heritage professionals in the MENA region engage with vulnerability and adaptation. As a work in progress, we invite dialogue and suggestions to refine methodologies and strategies for safeguarding Libya's maritime and coastal heritage in a changing climate.

Bethany Reay: *Hierarchies of Value: Historiographic Bias in the Study of Funerary Cartonnage*
University of Manchester

Egyptian funerary cartonnage has occupied a marginal position in the archaeology of ancient West Asia. Its scholarly treatment has been shaped less by its role in ancient funerary practice than by modern priorities of excavation, collection, and publication. This paper presents a historiographic analysis of cartonnage studies to examine how archaeological knowledge about this material has been produced and constrained from the late nineteenth century to the present. Although cartonnage was widely used within Egypt from the First Intermediate Period through to the Roman era, early research focused primarily on its value as a source of reused papyri or dismissed it as visually inferior, particularly due to perceived Greek influence in Ptolemaic examples. These priorities established hierarchies of material value that continue to influence research today. Even with recent advances in conservation and scientific analysis, scholarship still tends to privilege philological evidence over systematic study of imagery, workshop practices,