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INSTITUTE FOR THE STUDY OF THE ANCIENT WORLD

Newsletter 21 Spring 2018



NYU | ISAW

From the Director

From the outset ISAW was intended to be a research center, but differing from others not only on account of its specific mission to foster studies of antiquity, but also in that it was to have a doctoral program. This component of our mission was no mere detail: it has shaped the institution that ISAW has become, encouraging our faculty to push beyond the limits of our past work and to think collaboratively, as we seek to provide coherent individualized courses of study for each student. Joining us in this effort this fall is our colleague, Antonis Kotsonas, who will add his strengths in Classics and interdisciplinary research to the ISAW faculty (see p. 6). During the years from arrival to graduation, our students develop and grow intellectually, but indirectly they also encourage the rest of us to grow.

In this issue of the ISAW Newsletter, we celebrate our latest graduating class: four students who have enriched our community and who will be missed. As we go to press, all four have multi-year appointments in different countries in the coming academic year: Sam Mirelman will start a 3-year British Academy postdoctoral fellowship at the School for Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), University of London, with a focus on the Ancient Near East. Irene Soto Marín will continue to work as an Academic Assistant at the University of Basel, Switzerland in the Institute of Ancient History. Jonathan Valk will commence a 3.5-year lectureship in Assyriology at Leiden University in the Institute of Area Studies. Fan Zhang will be a postdoctoral fellow at NYU Shanghai for one year, teaching in the undergraduate core curriculum. She will then start in the fall of 2019, a faculty position jointly appointed in the Department of Art and the Asian Studies Program at Tulane University. All four students will contribute to an interconnected understanding of the ancient world from their specific expertise at research universities.

The diverse competencies of these students reflect our shared vision of an integral and organic ancient world. As ISAW's still-small body of alumni grows, we hope that many of them will effect change in traditionally insular departments and institutions, promoting the idea that a connective approach to studying antiquity is both fruitful and necessary.

Alexander Jones
Leon Levy Director and Professor of the History of the Exact Sciences in Antiquity

ABOUT ISAW

The creation of the Institute for the Study of the Ancient World (ISAW) at New York University had its roots in the passion of Shelby White and Leon Levy for the art and history of the ancient world, which led them to envision an institute that would encourage the study of the economic, religious, political, and cultural connections among ancient civilizations across geographic, chronological, and disciplinary boundaries.

The Institute, established in 2006, is an independent center for scholarly research and graduate education.

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Cover Photo: ISAW's four PhD graduates with Leon Levy Director Alexander Jones
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Photo: @Andrea Brizzi

Commencement 2018

During March and April, four of our ISAW doctoral students successfully defended their dissertations. They received their degrees of PhD in the Ancient World at the NYU university-wide Commencement on May 16, and on May 18, three of them attended the Graduate School of Arts and Science Doctoral Convocation, where Leon Levy Director Alexander Jones and Leon Levy Director Emeritus Roger

Bagnall congratulated them and presented them with their traditional doctoral hoods. Our graduating class of 2018 embodies ISAW's breadths along the disciplinary, cultural, and chronological dimensions. We are proud to welcome Sam, Irene, Jonathan, and Fan anew as ISAW alumni!



Roger Bagnall and Irene Soto Marín



Beate Pongratz-Leisten, Sam Mirelman, and Daniel Fleming



Beate Pongratz-Leisten, Josephine Berger-Nadler, and Karen Rubinson



Fan Zhang and Marc LeBlanc



Annette Juliano, Fan Zhang, and Rod Campbell



Shelby White, Alexander Jones, and Clare Fitzgerald

Our PhD Graduates



Sam Mirelman received his BMus from the Royal Northern College of Music, MMus from King's College London, PhD in Musical Composition from the University at Buffalo, and Certificate in Ancient Near Eastern Studies from the School of Oriental and African Studies. Sam also spent a year studying Assyriology at Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität, Munich. His doctoral dissertation is entitled "Text and Performance in the Mesopotamian Liturgical Tradition." From September 2018, Sam will be a British Academy post-doctoral fellow at the School of Oriental and African Studies in London.



Irene Soto Marín received her BA in Ancient Studies and Anthropology at Barnard College. She defended her doctoral dissertation, entitled "The Economic Integration of a Late Roman Province: Egypt from Diocletian to Anastasius," at ISAW in March 2018. Since fall 2017, Irene has been employed as an Academic Assistant in the Ancient History Department at the University of Basel in Switzerland.



Jonathan Valk received his BA in Oriental Studies from the University of Oxford and his MA in Middle Eastern Studies from the University of Chicago. His doctoral dissertation, which he defended at ISAW in April 2018, is entitled "Assyrian Collective Identity in the Second Millennium BCE: A Social Categories Approach." Beginning fall 2018, Jonathan will be appointed as a University Lecturer in Assyriology in the Leiden Institute for Area Studies at Leiden University.



Fan Zhang received her BA in History from Nankai University in Tianjin, China. The title of her doctoral dissertation is "Cultural Encounters: Ethnic Complexity and Material Expression in Fifth-century Pingcheng, China." For the 2018-19 academic year, Fan has been appointed as a Global Perspectives on Society Teaching Fellow at NYU Shanghai. Beginning fall 2019, she will be Professor of Practice in the Department of Art and the Asian Studies program at Tulane University.



(L to R): Elizabeth Knott (Ancient Near East and Egyptian Studies, NYU), Jonathan Valk, Irene Soto Marín, Alexander Jones, Shelby White, Fan Zhang, Nancy Highcock (Ancient Near East and Egyptian Studies, NYU), and Sam Mirelman

All photos ©Kahn: Courtesy of NYU Photo Bureau

Community News

Appointment of Antonis Kotsonas

Alexander Jones

Leon Levy Director and Professor of the History of the Exact Sciences in Antiquity

I am very pleased to announce that Antonis Kotsonas has accepted the position of Assistant Professor of Mediterranean History and Archaeology at ISAW, beginning in September 2018.

Prior to his appointment at ISAW, Antonis was on the faculty of the Department of Classics at the University of Cincinnati. He specializes in Early Iron Age Greece and the Mediterranean and has broader research interests extending from the Late Bronze Age to the Roman period.

Before taking up his position at the University of Cincinnati, he worked in British, Greek, and Dutch universities. He has also served as Curator of Greek Archaeology at the Allard Pierson Museum, Amsterdam. Antonis' teaching and research has focused on material culture, sociocultural and economic history, and the history of Greek archaeology. He has active research projects in Crete and Macedonia, and his research takes him from Italy to Cyprus.

During fall 2018, Antonis will teach an ISAW seminar, entitled "Colonization in the Ancient Mediterranean and the Black Sea." This seminar will focus on the social, economic, political and cultural processes that shaped the expansion of the Phoenicians, Greeks, Etruscans, and Romans (in the Republican period) in the context of broader current discussions of mobility and Mediterraneanization, network analyses, and cross-cultural discourses on colonialism in the ancient and the modern world. During spring 2019, he will teach an ISAW seminar, entitled "Greek and Mediterranean Ceramics: Material Culture and Historical Interpretation."



Appointment of Fanny Mezard, Library Intern

David M. Ratzan

Head Librarian



This term we welcomed Fanny Mézard from the École des chartes (Paris, France) to the ISAW Library. Fanny, who is finishing her MA in Technologies Numériques Appliquées à l'Histoire (Digital Technologies for History), has come to ISAW in order to study—and help to strengthen—our already successful digital publishing program.

Fanny's degree program at the École des chartes, which is the premier training ground for France's top archivists, combines traditional library science (e.g., the organization and description of archives, print collections, etc.) with coursework in digital approaches to humanities and archival research, teaching, and preservation. Fanny chose to write her MA thesis on trends in scholarly communication, and one of the requirements of her thesis is that she contribute to an existing digital project. In other words, she needs to submit not only an academic research paper, but also a portfolio of technical work. Fortunately for us, Fanny decided to come to ISAW to work with Patrick Burns and Sebastian Heath on finding ways to improve the

presentation, discoverability, access to, and reuse of the scholarship and data in ISAW digital publications, such as ISAW Papers (<http://isaw.nyu.edu/publications/isaw-papers>).

Fanny's internship was organized under the aegis of the strategic accord that NYU President Hamilton signed in December 2016 with Université PSL (Paris Sciences et Lettres), a new research university which integrated some of France's most prestigious institutions, like the École des chartes, into one federated academic research organization. This is first internship of any sort to be arranged between the two universities under this accord, which to date has largely been used to facilitate intellectual exchange via conferences and doctoral research. For us, this internship is tremendously exciting. It not only helps us to establish rich lines of communication with the wide array of research institutions represented in Université PSL, but it also enables us to enrich and expand the ISAW research portfolio, particularly in the realm of the digital humanities and scholarly communication. We look forward to hosting other interns from Université PSL in the near future and hope to use this program as a model for other types of student exchanges in the ISAW Library. In the meantime, we invite you to follow Fanny's progress—and all other developments in the ISAW Library—via the ISAW Library Blog: <http://isaw.nyu.edu/library/blog>.

Conferences

Text and Image, April 27, 2018

Organized by **Beate Pongratz-Leisten**

Professor of Ancient Near Eastern Studies

Together with my students, this semester I explored the dynamics between text and image on objects and monuments from Mesopotamia. Our research culminated in a workshop entitled "Text and Image: Transmedial Inquiries into Ancient Near Eastern Cultures." Image and language, icon and discourse are disjunctive symbolic systems, and each medium might have its own agenda and so might act interdependently and in a complementary way rather than illustrate each other. Moreover, such intermediality of text and image might be referential with the particular allocation of text on the image or the depiction of a particular element such as a pectoral alluding to another medium, either myth or ritual, discussed in the opening talk by myself.

Irene Winter elaborated on the theme of Text on/in/as Image emphasizing the aspect of writing as validating the image and by its mere placement changing the environment and interacting with the beholder beyond communication. Zainab Bahrani took a small Elamite chalcedony pebble showing a seated man with his daughter in front of him holding the same pebble as a case study and discussed the dialectical and interdependent relationship of text and image with the pebble in the image acting as a metapicture and so referencing the representation. Karen Sonik discussed oral and written mythological traditions along with the pictorial repertoire as the different building

blocks of cultural memory with the image activating memories of more extensive narratives. Matthew Waters addressed the trans-cultural perspectives of text and image discussing the adaptation of Assyrian tropes to shape the image of the "divine king" in the verbal and the pictorial repertoire of the Old Persian kings. Natalie May focused on the aspect of drawing being part of the scholarly training



Wall Relief from the Throne Room in Ashurnasirpal II's Northwest Palace at Nimrud showing the combination of text and image. (British Museum: 124531)

by pointing to the fact that archaic cuneiform started out as drawing and drawings were combined with text on school tablets from the archaic period onwards. Each speaker contributed in an insightful and thought-provoking way to the conference.



Conference participants (L to R): Natalie May (Freie Universität, Berlin), Beate Pongratz-Leisten, Zainab Bahrani (Columbia University), Karen Sonik (Auburn University), Matthew Waters (University of Wisconsin, Eau Claire), Nathan Lovejoy, Nancy Highcock (NYU), Kate Justement, Irene Winter (Harvard University), and Elizabeth Knott (NYU)

Conferences

Appetite for the Past, April 30 - May 1, 2018
Organized by **Yitzchak Jaffe**, Visiting Assistant Professor and **Kelila Jaffe**, Chef, Archaeologist, and PhD Student (Department of Nutrition and Food Studies, NYU)
Article by **Candida Moss**, Research Associate; a version first appeared in the *Daily Beast* on May 5, 2018

At the Last Supper Jesus told his disciples that he was about to be betrayed by one of those present. Shocked, they asked him who the person was. “It is one of the 12 who is dipping bread into the bowl with me.” He’s talking about Judas, of course. The shock value of his statement hinges on an unlikely plot device: a small dish of “dip,” which drives home the point that Jesus was betrayed by one of his closest companions.

But what was this mysterious dish? Other than much-publicized bread and wine, which have gone on to be celebrated as part of the Eucharist in Christian churches around the world, this condiment was the last thing that Jesus chose to eat. So what did it taste like?

The most probable answer is that it was garum, an ancient kind of fish sauce that was used throughout the Roman Empire by rich and poor alike. This spring semester, a collaboration between ISAW Visiting Assistant Professor Yitzchak Jaffe and chef Kelila Jaffe (no relation) of NYU’s Nutritional Science department brought together an international team of chefs and scholars together to recreate garum and a host of other ancient dishes.

Food and food habits are a key marker of identity. It defines where, how, and what you eat, which, in turn, determines when and with whom you can socialize. At the same time, historically speaking, when we come into contact with other groups it is often the other group’s



Nicholas Vogt (Indiana University) and Chef Wai Hon Chu (ICE and NYU) recreate a Han-dynasty era “bake” (Bao 炮) of suckling pig

food that slips unannounced into our cultural repertoire. Classicist Gregory Woolf wrote in his seminal study of Roman Gaul (France) that in the Roman empire food and wine spread more quickly than other cultural markers such as language and clothing. In other words, we are willing to eat novel food before we start dressing differently and becoming bilingual.

For some of those involved at the conference “Appetite for the Past,” it wasn’t at all clear that the recipes would actually work. Nicholas Vogt of Indiana University thought it possible that his Han-dynasty era recipe was the invention of an author who had likely never stepped foot in a kitchen. His partner, chef Wai Hon Chu, helped him recreate a “bake” of suckling pig that they described as pretty delicious. The recipe required some supplementation, but it demonstrated that the elite author had gone to the trouble to talk to chefs about how to cook this dish.

In some cases the scientific process of cooking actually helped the scholars involved understand the history better. The team working on Babylonian recipes encountered some that were only a few sentences long. A situation like this poses all kinds of methodological questions for the chefs: can we be sure that we know what the listed ingredients actually are?



A team presents a recreation of a Babylonian lamb-and-beet stew



A vessel found in an ancient Chinese cemetery which contains puzzling scorched patterns

How do we know how these ingredients were actually prepared? And should food be seasoned if seasoning is not listed in the recipe? In these situations, Harvard senior preceptor and chemist Pia Sörensen told me, the science can help us understand how an ingredient was used in ancient cooking. Knowledge about how the human taste buds react to sour and sweet tastes can help the investigators ascertain if they are on the right track. One recipe for stew called for the use of soapwort, but trial runs in the kitchen revealed that it was just too bitter to be incorporated into the dish as it was. In the end they made the surprising discovery that soapwort is a potent emulsifier and used it to blend the dish more effectively. It’s a revelation that might actually have applicability in kitchens today.

In other cases the culinary arts can rescue an artifact from obscurity. Ordinarily archaeologists who study pottery spend much of their time trying to figure out who made the jars, pots, and ceramics discovered at a particular location. Jaffe realized how intrinsically flawed this



Chef Childs presents his reimagined Siwa recipe with carrots and apricots served with millet crackers

method is: “Imagine that in the future archaeologists argued that anyone who used IKEA cookware was Swedish.” Instead he wanted to know something else: how were these vessels used? His project “What Did Barbarians Eat?” involved trying to reproduce the burn marks scorched into ancient earthenware from Zhou Dynasty China. In the process of their experiments, he and partners Raymond Childs (Chef, ISAW) and Karine Taché (Assistant Professor, Anthropology, Queens College-CUNY) used chemical analysis and trial and error to discover that pots were designed to be placed into the flames on their side, a method that allowed for greater flexibility of use. Among other dishes, the team was able to cook millet crackers inside the rim of the pots.

This kind of ground-breaking work is important because it provides another route into the past. As Leon Levy Director Alexander Jones said at the beginning of the symposium, most of the time historians



Chef Childs recreates the millet-pork stew

learn about the past using their eyes, but taste and smell can give us a window into the past that reading cannot. Understanding the labor, smells, and sensory experience of people in the past can better help us understand who they were, what they valued, and how they lived.

The part of this project that was altogether unprecedented was the organizer’s insistence that chefs be involved from the beginning to the end of the process. Jaffe told me: “Archaeologists, in a sense, study everything about the world today, yesterday. Economy, politics, religion family relationships social class, science, fashion, art psychology; you name it! And to do that we consume (no pun intended) theoretical perspectives from each one of these fields and do our best to collaborate with their experts. Shouldn’t we be working with chefs then to help us look at early foodways as well? I, for one, learned a whole lot of humility and appreciation for chefs and their incredible knowledge.” Chefs can teach archaeologists a thing or two about the past.

Conferences

Future Philologies, April 20, 2018

Organized by **Patrick Burns**

Assistant Research Scholar, Digital and Special Projects

The ISAW Library hosted “Future Philologies: Digital Directions in Ancient World Text,” a conference organized by Patrick J. Burns, David Ratzan, and Sebastian Heath on the intersection of research on historical languages and computer science on April 20. The conference brought together scholars working on a diverse range of languages—Latin, Greek, Coptic, Persian, Arabic, Classical Chinese, and Sumerian were represented on the program—to discuss the effect that digitization and the ability to analyze massive amounts of text is having on philological research and teaching. The event was co-sponsored by the NYU Center for the Humanities, NYU Division of Libraries, NYU Center for Ancient Studies, and NYU Department of Classics. The complete “Future Philologies” program can be found at <http://isaw.nyu.edu/events/future-philologies>.

Two things immediately stood out about the program, both of which capture the deeply interdisciplinary and interdepartmental aims of the conference: the diversity of historical languages and the evolving nature of the collaboration between humanities disciplines and computer and information science. In both its linguistic range and its incorporation of a digital approach to humanistic inquiry, the conference reflected in miniature important aspects of ISAW's mission, namely a dual commitment to a wide geographic and broad chronological definition of the ancient world and the promotion of innovative research via digital platforms and rich scholarly communities in ancient studies.

A primary goal of “Future Philologies” was to assemble scholars working on large-scale ancient world text projects who might not otherwise find opportunities to discuss their work together. A



cuneiform machine learning project will find an audience in a Near Eastern Language department, but perhaps not in a Classics department. Corpus-based approaches to periodization in Arabic literature could be readily adapted to the study of other ancient languages. Linguistic differences, to be sure, translate into differences in digital approach and design; but there is also a great deal of overlap at the foundational level of most computational approaches to languages, and “Future Philologies” took advantage of the common ground to expand the vision of all the projects involved. This kind of inclusive view of the ancient world is a core strength of ISAW, making it an ideal venue for a conference on the future of comparative philology.

A further goal of “Future Philologies” was to include computer scientists in the discussion. Computer Science can be seen as a discipline of solving interesting problems that, whether for reasons of scale or subtlety, are difficult to solve through human study and cognition alone. Managing large collections of untranslated Sumerian tablets and making them accessible to automated searches is an interesting problem. The periodization of Arabic literature on stylistic and philological grounds over centuries is another interesting problem. Helping students to learn Greek, Arabic, and Persian more quickly and more effectively is yet another interesting problem. Philology, and comparative philology in particular, contains many such problems and, at the level of complex information problems, they are not dissimilar to those that CS departments study and solve in different contexts. These are the areas where we find some of the most innovative work on historical languages in the 21st century.

“Future Philologies” was organized as part of the Linked Ancient World Data series, which recently included LAWNY workshops and last fall’s “Digital Publication in Mediterranean Archaeology: Current Practice and Common Goals.” This programming continues with our next conference “Digital Approaches to Teaching the Ancient Mediterranean” later this year on October 26.



Donald Sturgeon (Harvard University) on
Accessible Digital Text Analysis for Classical Chinese

Exhibitions

Devotion and Decadence: The Berthouville Treasure and Roman Luxury

from the Bibliothèque nationale de France

October 17, 2018 - January 6, 2019

Discovered by chance by a farmer in rural Normandy while plowing his field, the Berthouville Treasure is the largest and best-preserved hoard of silver from the ancient world. Silver statuettes and vessels—about ninety pieces weighing over fifty pounds in total—had been buried in a brick-lined cist during antiquity. Located in an area of ancient pilgrimage, assembly, and spectacle, the site was a Gallo-Roman religious sanctuary devoted to Mercury *Canetonensis*. The temple treasure includes extraordinary representations of Mercury

as well as other pieces illustrating vivid episodes from the Trojan War and theatrical Bacchic scenes. The collection offers a striking example of the cross-cultural interactions between Roman and indigenous Gallic culture.

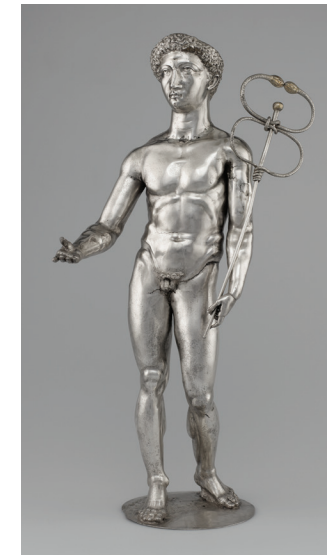


Figure 2

The farmer, Prosper Taurin, had originally intended to sell the Treasure for the value of the silver. But instead of melting it down (as many similar discoveries were reported to have been), Taurin shared news of his good fortune with a relative who recommended that they show several pieces to an expert from the Society of Antiquaries of Normandy. This expert, Auguste Le Prévost, communicated news of the discovery to Paris and convinced Taurin that the historic significance and aesthetic qualities enhanced the value of the Treasure beyond the market price of the silver. And indeed it did: A bidding war ensued between a representative of the Musée du Louvre, Charles Lenormant, and a curator from the Bibliothèque nationale de France, Désiré Raoul-Rochette. Raoul-Rochette won by offering Taurin more than he was authorized to pay, thus

securing the acquisition for the Bibliothèque nationale de France, but tarnishing his own reputation and damaging his subsequent career. His professional misstep is our benefit today.

For its presentation at ISAW, the Berthouville Treasure will be joined by approximately seventy-five other luxury objects from the collections of the Bibliothèque nationale de France including silver platters, cameos, gems, coins, and jewelry. Such prestige objects were not only used as votive offerings to the gods, but also functioned in daily life as signs of their owner's wealth, power, and refinement. *Devotion and Decadence: The Berthouville Treasure and Roman Luxury* provides an exceptional opportunity to explore the significance of Roman luxury arts and its role in different devotional and cultural settings.



Figure 1



Figure 3

Figure 1: Cameo of Jupiter (The Cameo of Chartres) Set in Fourteenth-Century Mount. Roman, ca. 50 CE. Rome, mounted in Paris. Sardonyx; gold and enamel mount. Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris: Camée.1. Photo © BnF

Figure 2: Statuette of Mercury. Roman, 175–225 CE. Berthouville, France. Silver and gold. Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris: Inv. 56.1. Photo: Tahnee Cracchiola © Getty-BnF

Figure 3: Cup with Centaurs and Cupids. Roman, 1–100 CE. Berthouville, France. Silver and gold. Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris: Inv. 56.7. Photo: Tahnee Cracchiola © Getty-BnF

INSTITUTE FOR THE STUDY OF THE ANCIENT WORLD

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Apply to ISAW's Doctoral Program and Visiting Scholar Program

The recommended deadline for
applications for fall 2019 enrollment in
ISAW's Doctoral program is December 18, 2018.

For more information and to apply, please visit:
<http://www.isaw.nyu.edu/graduate-studies>

The deadline for applications for
one-year **Visiting Research Scholarships** (2019-20)
and
two-year **Visiting Assistant Professorships** (2019-21)
is November 20, 2018.

For more information and to apply, please visit:
<http://www.isaw.nyu.edu/visiting-scholars>

