

# HEAVEN ON EARTH

## TEMPLES, RITUAL, & COSMIC SYMBOLISM IN THE ANCIENT WORLD

---

### PROGRAM & ABSTRACTS



The Oriental Institute  
The University of Chicago  
March 2-3, 2012

# HEAVEN ON EARTH

## TEMPLES, RITUAL, & COSMIC SYMBOLISM IN THE ANCIENT WORLD

Organized by Deena Ragavan  
The Oriental Institute – The University of Chicago

### PROGRAM

Friday, March 2, 2012

- 9:00–9:15 Welcome and Introduction, Gil Stein, Director of the Oriental Institute  
9:15–9:30 Introduction, Deena Ragavan (The Oriental Institute)

#### SESSION 1: ARCHITECTURE & COSMOLOGY

Chair: Theo van den Hout

- 9:30–9:50 Julia A. B. Hegewald (University of Bonn)  
“Images of the Cosmos: Sacred and Ritual Space in Jaina Temple Architecture in India”  
9:50–10:10 Tracy Miller (Vanderbilt University)  
“Naturalizing Buddhist Cosmology in the Temple Architecture of China”  
10:10–10:30 Susanne Görke (Johannes Gutenberg-Universität, Mainz)  
“Hints at Temple Topography and Cosmic Geography from Hittite Sources”  
10:30–10:50 Discussion  
10:50–11:10 Coffee

#### SESSION 2: BUILT SPACE & NATURAL FORMS

Chair: Andrea Seri

- 11:10–11:30 Karl Taube (University of California, Riverside)  
“The Classic Maya Temple: Centrality, Cosmology, and Sacred Geography in Ancient Mesoamerica”  
11:30–11:50 Michael W. Meister (University of Pennsylvania)  
“Seeds and Mountains: The Cosmogony of Temples in South Asia”  
11:50–12:10 Gary Beckman (University of Michigan)  
“Intrinsic and Constructed Sacred Space in Hittite Anatolia”  
12:10–12:30 Discussion  
12:30–1:30 Lunch

#### SESSION 3: MYTH & MOVEMENT

Chair: Christopher Faraone

- 1:30–1:50 Deena Ragavan (The Oriental Institute)  
“Entering other Worlds: Gates, Rituals, and Cosmic Journeys in Sumerian Sources”

- 1:50-2:10 Betsey A. Robinson (Vanderbilt University)  
 "Airs, Waters, Places: Mountain Sanctuaries and Mythic Itineraries in Ancient Greece"
- 2:10-2:20 Discussion
- 2:20-2:40 Response | David Carrasco
- 2:40-3:20 Discussion
- 3:20-3:40 Coffee

#### SESSION 4: SACRED SPACE & RITUAL PRACTICE

Chair: Walter Farber

- 3:40-4:00 Uri Gabbay (Hebrew University of Jerusalem)  
 "'We are Going to the House in Prayer': The Cultic Topographical Context of the Emesal Prayers in Ancient Mesopotamia"
- 4:00-4:20 Yorke M. Rowan (The Oriental Institute)  
 "Sacred Space and Ritual Practice at the End of Prehistory in the Southern Levant"
- 4:20-4:40 Claus Ambos (Ruprecht-Karls-Universität Heidelberg)  
 "Temporary Ritual Structures and their Cosmological Symbolism in Ancient Mesopotamia"
- 4:40-5:00 Discussion
- 5:00-6:00 Reception in the Khorsabad Court, Oriental Institute Museum

### Saturday, March 3, 2012

#### SESSION 5: ARCHITECTURE, POWER, & THE STATE

Chair: Bruce Lincoln

- 9:00-9:20 Ömür Harmanşah (Brown University)  
 "The Cattle Pen and the Sheepfold: Cities, Temples, and Pastoral Power in Ancient Mesopotamia"
- 9:20-9:40 Matthew Canepa (University of Minnesota)  
 "The Transformation of Sacred Space, Topography, and Royal Ritual in Persia and the Ancient Iranian World"
- 9:40-10:00 Elizabeth Froid (University of Oxford)  
 "Egyptian Temple Graffiti and the Limits of State Religion and Personal Piety"
- 10:00-10:20 Discussion
- 10:20-10:40 Coffee

#### SESSION 6: IMAGES OF RITUAL

Chair: Janet Johnson

- 10:40-11:00 Clemente Marconi (New York University)  
 "Mirror and Memory: Images of Ritual Actions in Greek Temple Decoration"
- 11:00-11:20 John Baines (University of Oxford)  
 "Sources of Egyptian Temple Cosmology: Divine Image, Ritual Performer, King"
- 11:20-11:40 Discussion
- 11:40-12:00 Response | Richard Neer
- 12:00-12:30 Discussion
- 12:30-1:30 Lunch

# Abstracts & Bios

## Claus Ambos (Ruprecht-Karls-Universität Heidelberg)

**Title:** “Temporary Ritual Structures and Their Cosmological Symbolism in Ancient Mesopotamia” (Friday, 4:20-4:40)

**Abstract:** In ancient Near Eastern rituals, temporary structures and installations which existed only for the duration of the respective ritual performance played an important role. Such ritual space was composed of buildings or structures made of perishable materials as, for example, reed, flour or dust, and (loose) earth. Both by their architectural design as well as by the movement and actions of the ritual’s participants performed in them, these buildings expressed essential features of Mesopotamian world view and cosmic geography.

This topic is discussed in detail with examples from various rituals which served to get rid of impurity. The ritual handbooks that form the base of this study are from the first millennium BCE. The focus of this talk is on the written sources, since pictorial representations of these rituals are not extant.

**Bio:** Claus Ambos studied Assyriology, Near Eastern archaeology, and Indology at Berlin, Leipzig, and Heidelberg. He wrote a doctoral thesis on Mesopotamian building rituals (Heidelberg, 2002) and a habilitation thesis on the Babylonian New Year’s Festival in autumn (Heidelberg 2010). He is currently research fellow in the Collaborative Research Centre Ritual Dynamics - Socio-Cultural Processes from a Historical and Culturally Comparative Perspective at Heidelberg. Since 2008 he has also been active in the Priority Research Field The Order of Space, Norms, and Law in the Historical Cultures of Europe and Asia at the Heidelberg Academy of Sciences and Humanities.

## John Baines (University of Oxford)

**Title:** “Sources of Egyptian Temple Cosmology: Divine Image, Ritual Performer, King” (Saturday, 11:00-11:20)

**Abstract:** The aim of this paper is to address a gap in interpretations of ancient Egyptian pictorial compositions and of the architectural form of temples. From predynastic times (late 4th millennium) onward, cosmological elements can be identified in the design and imagery of objects dedicated in ritual contexts. The most powerful of these objects, the palettes, relate to ritual use of pigments, presumably for painting the body of the deity, a ritual performer, or both. The vital mediating figure in these compositions is the king, who is presented as the sole or prime performer. The earliest examples show rituals outside temples, while later sources, first attested from the late Early Dynastic period (ca. 2600), represent the interaction of king and deity in an abstract, consecrated space. The ultimate aim of the king’s depicted actions and of the decoration of sacred objects and temples is to assert and to celebrate order against disorder. The fruits of order are dedicated to the gods, who must be enticed to dwell in consecrated spaces and to bestow their benefits on the world.

What is little understood in this configuration is the relationship between the figure of the deity and the architectural form of the temple. The latter is much studied for the Graeco-Roman period, which provides the richest evidence, and similar ideas can be traced back to earlier times. The deity and temple cosmology are bound together essentially by rituals that enliven the deity’s presence. Two principal sets of questions emerge. How did ritual enact order, who performed the ritual, and how did the performer’s role relate to the crucial symbolic figure of the king? And can we improve interpretations of the relationship between the rituals performed and the configuration of the spaces in which they took place?

**Bio:** John Baines is professor of Egyptology at the University of Oxford. He has held visiting appointments at institutions in a number of countries. His publications include *The Cultural Atlas of Ancient Egypt* (with Jaromir Malék, 2nd edition, 2000), *Fecundity Figures* (1985), *Visual and Written Culture in Ancient Egypt* (2007), and *The Disappearance of Writing Systems* (edited with John Bennet and Stephen Houston, 2008). He has published widely in collected volumes and academic journals. His main research interests are in Egyptian art, religion, literature, and social forms. He is currently working on ancient elite exploitation of the rural environment and on a volume of studies of Egyptian kingship.

### Gary Beckman (University of Michigan)

**Title:** “Intrinsic and Constructed Sacred Space in Hittite Anatolia” (Friday, 11:50–12:10)

**Abstract:** As a society well adapted to its environment, the Hittite kingdom paid appropriate attention in its state religion to the powers perceived to be responsible for the thriving of nature and humans. Prominent among these forces in second-millennium Anatolia was water – provided by rivers and springs as well as by precipitation sent by the Storm-gods resident upon mountain peaks. While the cosmic forces immanent in these components of the world as experienced by men and women could be – and were – worshiped on the spot in the countryside, they were also represented by built elements in and around the Hittite capital. This paper discusses the role within Hittite cult of both cosmic features reconstructed within Hattusa (e.g., the Sacred Pool complex) and natural places architecturally modified to serve as shrines (e.g., Yazılıkaya and Gavurkalesi).

**Bio:** Gary Beckman is professor of Hittite and Mesopotamian studies in the Department of Near Eastern Studies at the University of Michigan. He is past president of the American Oriental Society and associate editor of the Society’s journal. He has published widely on Hittite social organization and diplomacy and on Hittite religion, including an essay on “Temple Building among the Hittites” (2010). The focus of his current research is the reception and adaptation of Syro-Mesopotamian culture by the Hittites. He is completing an edition of the tablets of the Epic of Gilgamesh recovered from the site of the Hittite capital, Hattusa.

### Matthew Canepa (University of Minnesota)

**Title:** “The Transformation of Sacred Space, Topography, and Royal Ritual in Persia and the Ancient Iranian World” (Saturday, 9:20–9:40)

**Abstract:** This paper explores the development of Iranian sacred space, topography, architecture, and royal ritual from the Achaemenid through the Sasanian era (550 BCE–642 CE). It analyzes the impact of the Seleukid Empire on Iranian cultures and religions (broadly defined) and the subsequent emergence of new traditions of sacred architecture and cult under the Arsacids, Kushans, and Sasanians. In addition to considering the transformation of Iranian traditions, it investigates the impact of these new traditions on the Mediterranean and the lands in the interstices, such as Armenia, Pontos, and Commagene, which selectively appropriated Greek, Iranian, and Mesopotamian traditions. As an important subtheme, this paper considers the introduction of new sacred topographies within the context of royal competition and active manipulation of patrons who inhabited and competed in multiple religious, architectural, and royal idioms.

**Bio:** Matthew Canepa teaches ancient art and archaeology in the Department of Art History at the University of Minnesota. His research tends to focus on the intersection of art, ritual, and power in the ancient Iranian world and the Mediterranean. His first book, entitled *The Two Eyes of the Earth* (Berkeley, 2009), is the first to analyze the artistic, ritual, and ideological interactions between the Roman and Sasanian empires. It was awarded the 2010 James Henry Breasted Prize from the American Historical Association for the best book in

English on any field of history prior to 1000 CE. He is currently writing a book exploring the transformation of Iranian art and kingship between the invasions of Alexander and Islam.

### **David Carrasco (Harvard University)**

David Carrasco is a Respondant (Friday, 2:20-2:40)

**Bio:** David Carrasco is a historian of religions focusing on the cities and symbols of Mesoamerican traditions in comparative perspective. Carrasco's work has explored the dynamics between social and symbolic "centers" and "peripheries" through his analysis of five major ceremonial cities in pre-Columbian cultures. His work at the Great Aztec Temple and at Teotihuacan in Mexico resulted in a series of publications including *Quetzalcoatl and the Irony of Empire*, *City of Sacrifice*, and the recent multi-disciplinary analysis of a rediscovered sixteenth-century codex *Cave, City and Eagle's Nest: An Interpretive Journey Through the Mapa de Cuauhtinchan #2* (co-edited with Scott Sessions). His interest in primary documents is also shown in his recent abridgement of Bernal Diaz del Castillo's *The History of the Conquest of New Spain*. He is the recipient of the Mexican Order of the Aztec Eagle.

### **Elizabeth Frood (University of Oxford)**

**Title:** "Egyptian Temple Graffiti and the Limits of State Religion and Personal Piety" (Saturday, 9:40-10:00)

**Abstract:** The late second and early first millennium BCE in Egypt is characterized by broad changes in non-royal display in temples. Included among these developments is an increase in the frequency of graffiti inscribed on the exterior and interior walls of temples, including prayers, images of gods, and records of involvement in festivals. These inscriptions, particularly the scenes of gods, have been widely interpreted as expressions of popular cult practices and personal piety. The graffiti in these contexts require a critical reassessment, particularly in light of restrictions on access imposed in temples, the diversity of motivations for and styles of graffiti, and, more generally, problems with their dating. This paper uses clusters of graffiti in the state temple complex of Karnak in Thebes (modern Luxor) as case studies to reassess perceived distinctions between personal and state religion in temple environments. This paper explores preliminary sets of criteria for dating and establishing the different styles, based, in part, on context, content, and the media used to inscribe the graffiti. These considerations begin to reveal how the inscription of some graffiti was an institutional practice that created alternative topographies of sacred space, appropriating potent inner areas and intensifying the significance of exterior and secondary spaces. The deities selected for display may also generate distinct cosmologies – new patterns of divine relation and action – which overlay, complement, or extend traditional temple decoration. Graffiti as a devotional and ritual act intersects, and perhaps mediates, personal and institutional agency, structures, and practices in temples; this paper examines the implications of such potential mediations for priestly power structures and changing meanings of sacred space in the first millennium.

**Bio:** Elizabeth Frood is University Lecturer in Egyptology at the Faculty of Oriental Studies and fellow of St. Cross College, University of Oxford. Her research is centered on features of self-presentation of Egyptian elites in the late second and early first millennium BCE. In particular, she focuses on the interpretive analysis of non-royal inscriptions within their broader physical settings, especially temples. Her new research project to edit and publish graffiti in the temple of Amun at Karnak, in collaboration with the Centre Franco-Égyptien d'Étude des Temples de Karnak, has developed out of this work. She is author of *Biographical Texts from Ramesside Egypt* (2007).

## Uri Gabbay (Hebrew University of Jerusalem)

**Title:** “‘We Are Going to the House in Prayer’: The Cultic Topographical Context of the Emesal Prayers in Ancient Mesopotamia” (Friday, 3:40-4:00)

**Abstract:** Prayers written in the Emesal register of Sumerian were known to have been part of the temple cult of ancient Mesopotamia from the end of the third millennium BCE up to the end of cuneiform culture in the last centuries BCE. The content of these prayers was lamentful, mourning the destruction of cities and temples. But the prayers were not intended as memorial rites. They were intended for the pacification of the divinity, recalling past or potential destructions, and asking the god to stay calm and not bring such destruction again.

There is internal evidence from the content of the prayers themselves and external evidence from ritual texts for the cultic topographical context of the prayers. They could be performed in the cella of the god or elsewhere in the temple, very often during processions. A close look at the prayers reveals that the theology expressed in various parts of the prayers fits the topographical context in which these parts were performed. For example, the image of the god abandoning his own temple in rage was reflected by processions which escorted the cultic image out of its temple.

Similarly, the final sections of various prayers, which asked the god to calm down, were closely connected to a recitation in front of the seated deity in his or her cella after the procession. This emphasizes the theological perception that the seated god in his cella is the place where he is most calm. When a section asking for the pacification of the god does not occur in prayers, it can be shown that this is to be connected to the cultic topographical context of that specific prayer, which occurred outside the cella. Thus, a close connection could be found between the cultic topographical context of the Emesal prayers and their theological content and perception.

**Bio:** Uri Gabbay teaches in the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. His research focuses on the repertoire of the “lamentation-priest” of ancient Mesopotamia (*kalûtu*), namely Sumerian Emesal prayers (especially Balag and Ershema) and their ritual context. He has recently completed a book dealing with various aspects of the Emesal prayers, including their theology, their cultic and musical performance, and their scribal context. This book will be published in the near future, as well as another book based on an updated version of his dissertation (2007) with editions of all first-millennium Ershema prayers.

## Susanne Görke (Johannes Gutenberg-Universität, Mainz)

**Title:** “Hints at Temple Topography and Cosmic Geography from Hittite Sources” (Friday, 10:10-10:30)

**Abstract:** As the title of this paper indicates, its main focus lies in “temple topography” and “cosmic geography.” “Ritual practice,” the second focus of the conference, is rather disregarded; Hittite cult inventories and festival texts provide some information about the veneration of gods and rituals in temples. Some short examples will be presented. More attention is drawn to temple topography: the first part of the paper focuses on hints of Hittite texts concerning temples, their physical appearance, their position in town, and divine journeys. The second part takes account of Hittite cosmic geography. Volkert Haas, in his 1994 *Geschichte der hethitischen Religion*, gave an overview of Hittite(-Hurrian) creation myths, Hittite conceptions of heaven and earth and genealogies of gods. Already Heinrich Otten and Jana Siegelová suggested that, besides the tri-partition of the world known from Mesopotamia (heaven, earth, underworld), a second concept might have existed in Anatolia that opposed heaven to earth (and) the underworld. Irene Tatišvili was recently able to underline the existence of two different cosmological concepts in Hittite Anatolia, already distinguished by Itamar Singer: a Hurrian-Mesopotamian one that explains the world being divided into three vertical zones: heaven, earth, and underworld, and a Hittite one, that consists of two zones: heaven and earth.

This paper aims at analyzing to what extent – if at all – concepts of Hittite cosmos or the perception of a Hittite world are mapped in Hittite sacred space.

**Bio:** Susanne Görke is a research associate at Johannes Gutenberg-Universität, Mainz. Her research interests are ancient Anatolia and Mesopotamia. She has published on Hittite rituals (*Das Ritual der Aštu* (CTH 490) – *Rekonstruktion und Tradition eines hurritisch-hethitischen Rituals aus Boğazköy/Hattuša*, CHANE 40, 2010), Hittite festivals (“Die Darstellung von Orten nach den ‘Reisefesten’ des hethitischen Königs,” 2010, “Prozessionen in hethitischen Festritualen als Ausdruck königlicher Herrschaft,” 2008), as well as on the Hurrian language (*Einige Bemerkungen zu den hurritischen Sprüchen des Giziya-Rituals*, with D. Bawanypeck, 2007). She is currently part of the project *Beschwörungsrituale der Hethiter* at Mainz University to publish Hittite rituals online, of the German-Italian Vigoni-Project on Hittite foundation rituals, and of the international ViGMA-Project under the supervision of A. Mouton (Strasbourg, Paris), where she is working on Hittite calendar rites.

### Ömür Harmanşah (Brown University)

**Title:** “The Cattle Pen and the Sheepfold: Cities, Temples, and Pastoral Power in Ancient Mesopotamia” (Saturday, 9:00–9:20)

**Abstract:** The construction of cities, their monumental structures and ceremonial spaces, and their cultural life occupy considerable space in the early literary compositions from southern Mesopotamia. The scholarship on Mesopotamian cities has been limited to questions of the emergence of urbanism, social complexity, state formation, labor organization, craft specialization, population estimates, and settlement hierarchies during the Late Chalcolithic and Early Bronze Ages. This paper contributes to these debates through the discussion of a series of concepts concerning the city and urban life drawn from the early Mesopotamian corpus of poetry in Sumerian, with special emphasis on the so-called city laments. This is, on the one hand, an attempt to bridge the gap between the archaeological accounts of early cities in the ancient Near East and the literary representations of urban space. On the other hand, the goal is to move toward understanding the poetics of urban space in Mesopotamia, to read cities as places of human experience, everyday practice, political discourse, and cultural imagination. The paper focuses on two frequently encountered metaphors concerning the city in early Mesopotamian poetry: the cattle pen and the sheepfold (Sumerian *tur* and *amaš*), which takes us to the Mesopotamian conceptualization of the king as shepherd and the society as his flock. This paper suggests that early Mesopotamian economy and political structure presents an intriguing case of what Michel Foucault has termed “pastoral power.”

Considering Foucault’s notion of “pastoral power” as a technology of governance and royal rhetoric, This paper discusses the cattle pen and sheepfold as spatial metaphors that define the Mesopotamian city between movement and settlement, between economies of pasturage and agriculture. Here, the city appears as a site where the king’s ideals of beneficence and pastoral power find expression, while royal power is characterized not so much as governance over a territory but over a “multiplicity” (the “flock”). This rhetoric of power based itself on a regime of beneficence and care, rather than on violence and terror.

**Bio:** Ömür Harmanşah works on the archaeology of the ancient Near East, particularly Mesopotamia, Syria, and Anatolia. Born and raised in Turkey, Ömür studied architecture and architectural history at the Middle East Technical University (Ankara). He received his PhD from the University of Pennsylvania (2005), with a dissertation on the practice of founding cities in the ancient Near East. He participated in several archaeological projects in Turkey and Greece such as Kerkenes Dag and Isthmia, while he is currently involved with projects at Gordion and Ayanis in Turkey. He directs Yalburt Yaylasi Archaeological Landscape Research Project, a survey project addressing questions of place and landscape in Konya Province of Central Turkey.

## Julia A. B. Hegewald (University of Bonn)

**Title:** “Images of the Cosmos: Sacred and Ritual Space in Jaina Temple Architecture in India” (Friday, 9:30-9:50)

**Abstract:** The Jainas, a relatively small but ancient religious group in India, have developed a particularly complex picture of their religious cosmos. A correct and detailed understanding of the nature of the universe is considered by the Jainas necessary to enable the practitioner to attain enlightenment and to break out of the continuous circle of rebirth by departing from the human areas of the cosmos. Due to the high status that cosmography gains in a Jaina context because of its religious and ontological significance and as a means to gain enlightenment, Jaina art and architecture regularly depict cosmic formations.

Highly intricate and convoluted textual descriptions of the Jaina universe have been translated into visual and concrete physical shape and through this they have been made easier to understand. Paintings, carved panels, sculptural representations, and architectural models illustrating aspects or views of the universe are commonly put on display in Jaina temples throughout South Asia. They are educational tools but at the same time they are also objects of veneration.

The Jaina community also constructs entire temple structures that form three-dimensional architectural interpretations of cosmic components. Particularly widespread are temples inspired by the shape of sacred mountains and certain cosmic continents, to which human beings in reality have no access. Through this, the temples offer devotees the opportunity to enter sacred extraterrestrial space, to participate in cosmic events and to anticipate their own enlightenment.

However, ritual practices carried out in Jaina temples, which have no immediate visual connection with cosmic structures, also relate to and re-enact mythical and cosmic events by transforming the space around ritual objects and ceremonial activities into cosmic space and time.

**Bio:** Prof. Dr. Julia A. B. Hegewald is professor and head of the Department of Asian and Islamic Art History in the Institute for Oriental and Asian Studies (IOA) at the University of Bonn. Her research work has mainly focused on South Asia and the Himalayan region. She is director of an interdisciplinary research project on Jaina culture in Karnataka (funded by the German Research Foundation / Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft). Dr. Hegewald has been a reader in art history and visual studies at the University of Manchester and has held post-doctoral fellowships at the South Asia Institute, Heidelberg University, and at University College Oxford. Her books are *Water Architecture in South Asia: A Study of Types, Developments and Meanings* (Brill, 2002), *Jaina Temple Architecture in India: The Development of a Distinct Language in Space and Ritual* (G+H Verlag, 2009), and *The Jaina Heritage: Distinction, Decline and Resilience* (Sanskriti, 2010).

## Clemente Marconi (New York University)

**Title:** “Mirror and Memory: Images of Ritual Actions in Greek Temple Decoration” (Saturday, 10:40-11:00)

**Abstract:** This paper addresses one critical issue about ancient Greek temple decoration, namely, the representation of rituals. It is traditionally assumed that the figural decoration of Greek sacred architecture was mostly devoted to deities and heroes, and to scenes with a mythological content. Within this approach the representation of rituals, such as the Panathenaic procession on the Parthenon frieze, has generally been regarded as exceptional. However, a systematic look at the evidence for figural decoration of temples and other sacred buildings, from the Archaic to the Hellenistic period, shows that rituals such as processions, parades, and dances played a significant role in this tradition. Besides reassessing the significance of depictions of rituals on buildings, this paper explores the meaning and function of such images, highlighting their double role as mirror and memory.

**Bio:** Clemente Marconi was educated in classics at the University of Rome - La Sapienza and in classical art and archaeology at the Scuola Normale Superiore in Pisa. His books, articles, and reviews are dedicated to the art and architecture of the Greek world in the archaic and classical periods. Arguing for a closer interaction between the study of ancient art and disciplines such as semiotics, anthropology, and hermeneutics, Marconi explores the connection between architecture, the visual arts, and other media (such as rituals or texts), investigating their form, meaning, and social function. An expert in the archaeology of Sicily, Marconi is the director of the Institute of Fine Arts (IFA) excavations on the Akropolis of Selinunte. He is also involved in the IFA investigations of the Sanctuary of the Great Gods at Samothrace.

### Michael W. Meister (University of Pennsylvania)

**Title:** “Seeds and Mountains: The Cosmogony of Temples in South Asia” (Friday, 11:30-11:50)

**Abstract:** A widely shared origin myth in South Asia, the “golden germ” (*hiranyagarbha*), commonly found in popular texts and imagery – the calyx of the ripe lotus supporting deities and divine emblems – can also be traced in early architectural constructions, from Mauryan-period pillars to early prototypes of Indic temples. The purpose of this paper is to question and problematize those material remains. By the first century BCE, the lotus had been joined (and later replaced) by the *amalaka*-seed as emblem of cosmic parturition, then used to crown stone temples by early in the fifth century CE. Development of “*amalaka*-crowned” temples is one of the themes of this paper.

Kramrisch pointed out a “construction” described in the cosmology of the Arthava-veda that for her foreshadowed the form of the Hindu temple one-and-a-half millennia later: “creation of the Sole Vratya [...] has three phases: the birth of a god, the vision of that god, and the building of his monument [...] built up by the words of hymns. [...] The sole Vratya arises as the lord of the space-time universe [...] the central pillar of a four-sided pyramid.”

That “earth” was the base, deity the seed, and mountain the form is a symbolism worked out in significant ways in later temple architecture. The first “*amalaka*-shrine” may have been an altar; “flat-roofed” temples, constructed “caves”; towering temples sheltering “mountains” – an evolution visually preserved. In the early fifth-century Gupta period, symbolic structures were placed on pyramidal platforms imbued with royal symbolism. Through many centuries of social changes, transformation of rituals, and shifting patronage connection to this deeply intuited cosmogony remained.

**Bio:** Michael W. Meister, W. Norman Brown Professor of South Asia Studies in the Department of the History of Art, is a specialist in the art of India and Pakistan. He has served as chair of the Departments of History of Art and South Asia Studies and as director of Penn’s South Asia Center; he is consulting curator of the Asian Section, University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology; and faculty curator of the South Asia Art Archive, van Pelt Library, within Penn Library’s South Asia Image Collection. His research focuses on temple architecture, the morphology of meaning, and other aspects of the art of the Indian subcontinent.

### Tracy Miller (Vanderbilt University)

**Title:** “Naturalizing Buddhist Cosmology in the Temple Architecture of China” (Friday, 9:50-10:10)

**Abstract:** This paper addresses the manner in which a new cosmology, that of Buddhism, was adapted to the environment of the Yellow River valley during the first centuries of the Common Era. By deconstructing a single monument from the sixth century CE, I illustrate the how concepts of ritual space developed within the

religious traditions of South Asia were transmitted and translated for the sake of an indigenous audience in northern China.

Prior to the introduction of Buddhism, ritual architecture of the Yellow River valley consisted of temples for worshipping ancestors (*zu* 祖) and more abstract deities such as those of grain and soil (*she* 社). As spirits of the deceased, ancestors were worshiped in temple/palace halls (*tang* 堂), whereas rites to deities of grain and soil took place on altars (*tan* 壇). Both types of architecture were constructed from indigenous materials readily available in the Yellow River valley and organized into walled building complexes emphasizing bilateral symmetry and a north-south axial alignment.

When Buddhism was introduced into East Asia in the early centuries CE, we see indigenous populations naturalizing the forms of ritual architecture by translating concepts of altar, palace, and temple from South Asia into the local architectural language. By focusing on a single monument, the stone Yicahui Pillar (ca. 567 CE), I show how the ritual diagrams associated with the *vāstupurusha maṇḍala* were applied and adapted to an architecture emphasizing different geometries than those in the homeland of the Buddha. The use of the *maṇḍala* to reorganize morphemes like the *tang* palace/temple hall allowed for the creation a new, and symbolic potent, architecture – one that could encompass the space and time of a cultural tradition as rich as that of early medieval China.

**Bio:** Tracy Miller is associate professor of history of art and Asian studies at Vanderbilt University, where she teaches East Asian art and architectural history. Her research focuses on the culture of ritual sites in middle-period China (618–1644 CE), specifically the ways in which identity was expressed visually through the media of temples and their artistic programs. Her first book, *The Divine Nature of Power: Chinese Ritual Architecture at the Sacred Site of Jinci*, was published by Harvard University Asia Center in 2007.

## Richard Neer (University of Chicago)

Richard Neer is a Respondant (Saturday, 11:40–12:00)

**Bio:** Richard Neer is David B. and Clara E. Stern Professor in Humanities, Art History and the College at the University of Chicago. He is also executive editor of the journal *Critical Inquiry*. He works on the intersection of aesthetics, archaeology, and art history, especially Classical Greek and neo-Classical French art. He has received fellowships and awards from the J. Paul Getty Museum, the Center for Advanced Study in the Visual Arts, the J. Paul Getty Trust, and the American Academy in Rome. Recent books are *The Emergence of the Classical Style in Greek Sculpture* (2010) and *The Art and Archaeology of the Greek World: A New History, 2000–100 BCE* (2011). He is currently working on theories of style in recent aesthetics, and questions of evidence, criteria, and judgment in some films by Godard, Malick, and others.

## Deena Ragavan (The Oriental Institute)

Deena Ragavan is the Organizer

**Title:** “Entering Other Worlds: Gates, Rituals, and Cosmic Journeys in Sumerian Sources” (Friday, 1:30–1:50)

**Abstract:** The doors and gateways of Sumerian temples and cities were visually distinctive, monumental structures, marking and enabling the passage between one space and another. Their appearance in the mythological tradition and their occurrence in cult practice suggest that movement through the gate may symbolize the transition from one part of the cosmos to another. This paper addresses the function and meaning of gates in the Sumerian tradition, in particular, the literary and administrative texts from the late third and early second millennium BCE.

There is substantial evidence in Mesopotamian cosmological tradition for the idea of cosmic gates, situated in the east and west, through which the celestial gods, particularly the sun god, would pass to enter and exit the visible sky. Several Sumerian literary sources which describe the journeys of the gods through the cosmos, most notably Inana's Descent to the Netherworld, feature gates as the key starting or stopping points as part of the divine itinerary. Both archaeological remains and textual evidence indicate that the gates of Sumerian cities, sacred precincts, and temples were often massive, imposing constructions, while administrative records of sacrificial offerings and other cult practices reveal that gates could function as the locus of ritual activity. Through close examination of these various sources, this paper questions the extent to which these mythological journeys may correlate with ritual movement, similarly punctuated by stops at the actual gates that permitted access through city, precinct, and temple walls. Furthermore, the significance of this ritual usage for the cosmological symbolism of these structures, and the spaces which they connect, is considered.

**Bio:** Deena Ragavan is a post-doctoral scholar at the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago. Her main interests are Mesopotamian religion, literature, and architecture. She received her BA in ancient Near Eastern studies from the University of London and her PhD in Sumerian and Akkadian studies from Harvard University. Her dissertation examined Mesopotamian cosmology and the symbolism of sacred architecture as represented in the Sumerian literary tradition. She has recently published a group of mostly Old Assyrian tablets in the Harvard Art Museum/Arthur M. Sackler Museum collection. She is currently working on a book about Sumerian temple architecture and topography based on textual and archaeological evidence.

### **Betsey A. Robinson (Vanderbilt University)**

**Title:** "Airs, Waters, Places: Mountain Sanctuaries and Mythic Itineraries in Ancient Greece" (Friday, 1:50-2:10)

**Abstract:** The aerial perspectives of deities articulated complex realities of space, identity, and ideation in the classical world. Mountain views, from Olympian and Idaean omniscience to Apollo's view from Parnassus reflected and reified the sacred charisma of such places. Divine transits among mountain peaks emphasized their intervisibility and linked them in ancient imaginations. While the dangers of flight for lesser beings were well known, sacred mountains offered highly affective climbs and climactic revelations. Along the way, springs, caves, and other marks of divinity invited human reverence and propitiation. Focusing on evidence from the third century BCE to the early first century CE, this paper considers setting, monuments, and rituals on the slopes of Helicon and Parnassus, places to be seen and from which to gaze as with the eyes of gods. The nature of such sacred landscapes is viewed through the imagery of two mountain reliefs, one – of Helicon personified – found in the Heliconian Valley of the Muses, the other – the "Archelaos relief," with poets figuring within ranks of inspiration – from the suburbs of Rome. Contrasting one another in representational strategies and epigraphic modes, the two reliefs provide insights into perceptions and experiences of place and divine presence. This paper thus examines interplays of narrative itineraries, pictorial and poetic imagery, and cultic topography.

**Bio:** Betsey A. Robinson's primary interests include Greek and Roman architecture, ancient cities and sanctuaries, and landscapes – actual, imagined, and as represented in ancient art and literature. Current research projects address Hellenistic and Roman activity and patronage in Greek sanctuaries and sacred games, monuments, and mosaics of Roman Greece, and the history of archaeological excavation in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. She is author of *Histories of Peirene: A Corinthian Fountain in Three Millennia* (Princeton: ASCSA, 2011).

## Yorke M. Rowan (The Oriental Institute)

**Title:** “Sacred Space and Ritual Practice at the End of Prehistory in the Southern Levant” (Friday, 4:00–4:20)

**Abstract:** Dynamic and continuously renegotiated, religion is often expressed through ritual performance. In the archaeological record, ritual paraphernalia, iconography, and sacred built or natural space provide evidence for understanding the human need to materialize the ethereal nature of religious belief. During the late prehistoric periods in the southern Levant, an apparent increase in ritual practice suggests a dramatic change during a time of demographic expansion and economic intensification. In this paper, the spaces for ritual practice are examined in relationship to the larger community and society, concentrating on the Chalcolithic period (ca. 4500–3600 BCE). Specifically, the identification of sacred ceremonies and the built or natural space for their performance is contrasted to earlier Neolithic and later Bronze Age practices. Comparative analysis allows for some insight into continuity and changes during this period of high ritual density and some possible reasons for this intensification.

**Bio:** Yorke M. Rowan is research associate in the archaeology of the Southern Levant with the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago. He has been a post-doctoral fellow at the Smithsonian Institution’s National Museum of Natural History, a visiting professor of anthropology at the University of Notre Dame, and a Fulbright Scholar in Jordan. His research focuses on the rise of social complexity, craft specialization (particularly stone vessels), and prehistoric ritual and mortuary practices. His edited volume *Beyond Belief: The Archaeology of Religion and Ritual* is currently in press; another volume, edited with J. L. Lovell, *Culture, Chronology and the Chalcolithic: Theory and Transition*, appeared in 2011. He directs the Oriental Institute’s excavations at the Chalcolithic (ca. 4500–3600 BCE) site of Marj Rabba, in Israel, and investigations at two late prehistoric sites in the eastern desert of Jordan.

## Karl Taube (University of California, Riverside)

**Title:** “The Classic Maya Temple: Centrality, Cosmology, and Sacred Geography in Ancient Mesoamerica” (Friday, 11:10–11:30)

**Abstract:** With their elaborate sculptural programs and often-detailed texts, Classic Maya temples have dominated our understanding of the ancient Maya. Indeed, for too long we have described their communities as “ceremonial centers,” as if the monumental structures were hollow edifices only used for occasional, calendrically timed events. Although during the past fifty years Maya archaeological field research generally has turned away from the monumental architecture in favor of daily human existence, still they remain. Oddly, few studies have investigated what the “pyramids” meant to the people who created and sustained them for centuries. This presentation focuses on some of the underlying meanings of these structures, including the basic symbolic significance of being humanly created and ordered structures replicating the four-cornered house and the maize field. From this basic model, temples also encapsulate the world center framed by the inter-cardinal points. As such, ancient Maya temples often evoke imagery pertaining to the three-stone hearth of the household as well as the pivotal world tree as another form of the *axis mundi*. In addition, pyramid temples are also symbolic mountains. As such, many evoke Flower Mountain, a paradise realm of honored ancestors. Appearing as zoomorphic mountains, many such structures have entrances in the form of a toothy maw, with the dark interior being a symbolic cave. At the sides of these doorways are breath scrolls, frequently elaborate, denoting the temples as living entities providing vital soul essence, probably in the form of aromatic incense in ritual practice.

**Bio:** Karl Taube is a professor in the Department of Anthropology at the University of California, Riverside. In addition to extensive archaeological and linguistic fieldwork in Yucatan, Professor Taube has participated

on archaeological projects in Chiapas, Mexico, coastal Ecuador, highland Peru, Copan, Honduras, and in the Motagua Valley of Guatemala. Taube is currently serving as the project iconographer for the San Bartolo Project in the Peten of Guatemala. Taube has broad interests in the archaeology and ethnology of Mesoamerica and the American Southwest, including the development of agricultural symbolism in pre-Hispanic Mesoamerica and the American Southwest, and the relation of Teotihuacan to the Classic Maya. Much of his recent research and publications center upon the writing and religious systems of ancient Mesoamerica.

# ON SALE AT THE SUQ

## MARCH 2-3, 2012

### ORIENTAL INSTITUTE SEMINARS

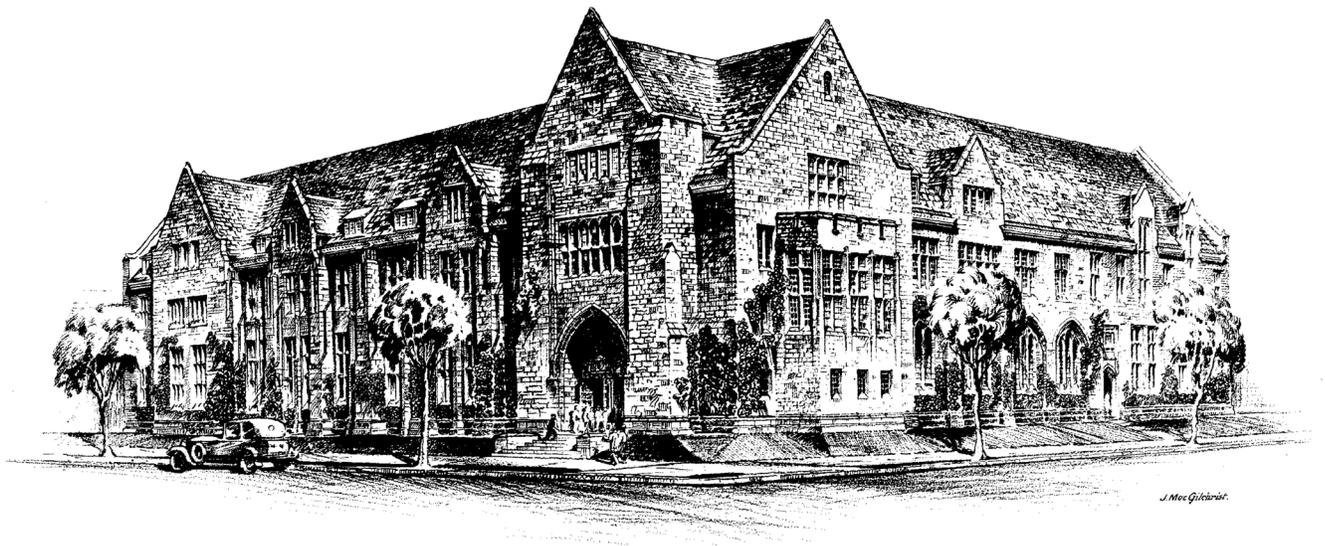
Proceedings from small, focused seminars that explore important theoretical, methodological, and cross-culturally significant topics relating to broader issues in the Near East

THE ORIENTAL INSTITUTE, 1155 EAST 58TH STREET, CHICAGO, ILLINOIS 60637

[oi.uchicago.edu](http://oi.uchicago.edu)

1. *Changing Social Identity with the Spread of Islam: Archaeological Perspectives*. Edited by Donald Whitcomb, with case studies by Jodi Magness, Tracy Hoffman, Yury Karev, Mark C. Horton, and Timothy Insoll. 2004. Pp. x + 102; 46 figures. \$17.95
2. *Margins of Writing, Origins of Cultures*. Edited by Seth L. Sanders, with contributions by Seth L. Sanders, John Kelly, Gonzalo Rubio, Jacco Dieleman, Jerrold Cooper, Christopher Woods, Annick Payne, William Schniedewind, Michael Silverstein, Piotr Michalowski, Paul-Alain Beaulieu, Theo van den Hout, Paul Zimansky, Sheldon Pollock, and Peter Machinist. Second Edition 2007. Pp. xi + 300; 9 figures. \$24.95
3. *Performing Death: Social Analyses of Funerary Traditions in the Ancient Near East and Mediterranean*. Edited by Nicola Laneri, with contributions by Nicola Laneri, Ellen F. Morris, Glenn M. Schwartz, Robert Chapman, Massimo Cultraro, Meredith S. Chesson, Alessandro Naso, Adam T. Smith, Dina Katz, Seth Richardson, Susan Pollock, Ian Rutherford, John Pollini, John Robb, and James A. Brown. Second edition with minor corrections, 2008. Pp. xviii + 318; 86 figures, 5 tables. \$24.95
4. *Religion and Power: Divine Kingship in the Ancient World and Beyond*. Edited by Nicole Brisch, with contributions by Nicole Brisch, Gebhard J. Selz, Piotr Michalowski, Paul John Frandsen, Irene J. Winter, Erica Ehenberg, Clemens Reichel, Reinhard Bernbeck, Michelle Gilbert, David Freidel, Michael Puett, Bruce Lincoln, Greg Woolf, Jerrold S. Cooper, and Kathleen D. Morrison. 2008. Pp. xiii + 271; 7 figures. \$24.95
5. *Nomads, Tribes, and the State in the Ancient Near East: Cross-disciplinary Perspectives*. Edited by Jeffrey Szuchman, with contributions by Jeffrey Szuchman, Hans Barnard, Robert Ritner, Steven A. Rosen, Benjamin A. Saidel, Eveline van der Steen, Anatoly M. Khazanov, Abbas Alizadeh, Thomas E. Levy, Bertille Lyonnet, Anne Porter, Daniel E. Fleming, Donald Whitcomb, and Frank Hole. 2009. Pp. xvi + 288; 70 figures, 7 tables. \$24.95
6. *Divination and Interpretation of Signs in the Ancient World*. Edited by Amar Annus, with contributions by Amar Annus, Francesca Rochberg, James Allen, Ulla Susanne Koch, Edward L. Shaughnessy, Niek Veldhuis, Eckart Frahm, Scott B. Noegel, Nils P. Heeßel, Abraham Winitzer, Barbara Böck, Seth F. C. Richardson, Cynthia Jean, JoAnn Scurlock, John Jacobs, and Martti Nissinen. 2010. Pp. viii + 352; 10 figures, 1 table. \$27.95
7. *Slaves and Households in the Near East*. Edited by Laura Culbertson, with contributions by Indrani Chatterjee, Laura Culbertson, Matthew S. Gordon, Kristin Kleber, F. Rachel Magdalene, Hans Neumann, Andrea Seri, Jonathan S. Tenney, Ehud R. Toledano, and Cornelia Wunsch. 2011. Pp. viii + 152; 1 figure, 3 tables. \$24.95

**ATTENDEES OF THE HEAVEN ON EARTH  
SEMINAR RECEIVE A 20% DISCOUNT ON ALL  
ORIENTAL INSTITUTE PUBLICATIONS**



**Information on how to receive the discount is available on the order form at the registration desk.**

**Books must be ordered from the David Brown Book Company**

**[www.oxbowbooks.com](http://www.oxbowbooks.com)**