ARC4 – AKKADIAN LANGUAGE I
2016-2017

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Aims and objectives

This Paper aims to give you a working knowledge of the Akkadian language ('Akkadian' being a cover term for Babylonian and Assyrian). In particular, it will give you a thorough grounding in Old Babylonian (c. 2000-1500 BC), and some familiarity with 'Standard Babylonian', particularly as used in the inscriptions of Sennacherib (704-681 BC).

Now long extinct, Akkadian was used in and around ancient Iraq, c. 2000 BC - 100 AD. It is the language of the Gilgamesh Epic, and would have been spoken by Abraham. It also served as the lingua franca in diplomatic correspondence between Egypt, Anatolia, and Cyprus. Today it is known to us from hundreds of thousands of written sources, mostly clay tablets, many of which are in the British Museum.

In addition to learning the language itself, and some of the Cuneiform script, you will become proficient in the conventions used by modern editors to convert Akkadian into Roman characters (transliteration and normalisation).

In the first six weeks or so we will cover the rudiments of Old Babylonian grammar, and you will be set exercises in parsing verbal forms, and in translation between Old Babylonian and English, in both directions. We will then move on to read 'set texts', which you will prepare in advance of each session. Some will be in transliteration, some in the original cuneiform.

You will also be expected to prepare ahead and revise during the Christmas and Easter holidays.

Preparation

You should read the following survey article as soon as possible (freely available online at http://eprints.soas.ac.uk/3139/1/PAGE_31-71.pdf)

> A.R. George, "Babylonian and Assyrian: A history of Akkadian", in J.N. Postgate (ed.), *Languages of Iraq, Ancient and Modern* (2007), 31-71.

Teaching

The course will be taught by two weekly lectures, normally given by the course coordinator (except when on sabbatical leave), and a weekly supervision by Dr Marie Besnier.

Classes extend throughout the Michaelmas and Lent terms, and into the first four weeks of the Easter term. It is essential for good progress and successful completion of the course that you attend *all* lectures and supervisions.

The location of the lectures will be specified in the timetable. For location and timing of supervisions you should liaise directly with the supervisor.

From time to time there will be tests to monitor progress. These will not count towards the mark for the course, which is determined solely by a three-hour examination at the end of the year (see "Assessment", below).

Set texts

The set texts are specified on a yearly basis at http://www.arch.cam.ac.uk/about-us/mesopotamia/set-texts. It is important that you are aware what the set texts are, and whether you are expected to know them in transliteration or in cuneiform.

Early in the course, we will go through the set texts word by word. After the Christmas holidays, classes will have more of a troubleshooting nature, to deal with problems raised by students.

There is not sufficient course time to read all the set texts in class, and indeed it is not intended that this should happen. It is *your* responsibility to ensure that you are on top of all the set texts for the exam, and work during the Christmas and Easter holidays is essential for this.

The importance of reading set texts aloud during and after preparation cannot be overstated. Your brain is designed to process language through the ear as well as the eye, so it is good to help yourself by feeding it input from both.

Note (this will make sense within a few weeks of starting the courses): where set texts are specified as being in transliteration, any transliterated extract from them which appear in the exam will include sumerograms in Sumerian only, even if the prescribed edition normalises the word. For example, at OB *Gilgamesh* II 67, George's edition (p. 174) has "*sinništim*(munus)". If this were part of a set text it would appear in the exam as "munus", which you might be asked to normalise as "*sinništim*".

Cuneiform

You will start learning cuneiform in the second half of Michaelmas term. This is a mechanical process, largely to be conducted in your own time, though the course co-ordinator and the supervisor are on hand to provide advice.

The webpage https://cuneifyplus-puffin.rhcloud.com (created by Tom Gillam) can be used to convert transliterations into cuneiform (make sure to choose a Neo-Assyrian font).

Initiative

Learning a language cannot be done just by attending lectures. The better you want to be at Akkadian, the more initiative you must exercise along the way. Some ideas might be: make charts of verbal forms and pin them on your wall, make flash-cards with words and signs, record yourself reciting verbal paradigms and listen to them, re-read older exercises, read explanations in different grammars, etc. The course teachers will be glad to hear of your activities.

Backup

When submitting handwritten homework, you are strongly advised to make a photocopy for your records, as backup. The teacher you submit it to will of course aim to safeguard it responsibly, but accidents can happen, and it is your responsibility to take precautions.

You are likewise strongly encouraged to download onto your own hard drive any treaching materials made available via shared filing systems (e.g. Dropbox or Moodle), as these can be subject to problems.

Communication

If you email the course co-ordinator and have not had a response within three days, please send a reminder.

Assessment

The course will be assessed solely by one three-hour examination. This may comprise:

a) extracts from the set texts, asking you to translate them into English, perhaps also to comment on particular linguistic features in them; in the case of set texts in cuneiform, you may further be asked to transliterate and/or normalise them;

b) questions on Akkadian grammar;

c) passages or sentences for translation into transliterated and/or normalised Old Babylonian;
d) one or more unseen passages, in cuneiform and/or in transliteration, for translation into English, possibly also for transliteration or normalisation.

The 'percentage worth' of each component of the paper will be specified. The percentages of each component are liable to vary from one year to another.

For the purposes of setting unseens or passages for translation into Akkadian, it will be assumed that you know all the vocabulary in the set texts. For the purpose of setting unseens in Akkadian, it will be assumed you know all the signs and sign values from the set texts.

Translations

Where in assessed coursework and examinations you are asked to translate Akkadian, this should be in your own words. Reproducing a translation from another source is not acceptable.

Reading

There is very little secondary literature to this course: the bulk of your time will go on grappling with original Akkadian sources, and using a very small number of reference works (grammars, dictionaries, etc.) to work out their meaning.

The course will not use a single textbook, you will instead be given handouts. You are however encouraged to go and read up in different grammars about the topics you have met.

The lectures for the course are supported by the Assyriological holdings in the Haddon Library, where you will find the dictionaries, grammars and sign lists listed below. It will certainly help to have your own copy of the *Concise Dictionary*. Books can be ordered from e.g. http://www.amazon.co.uk or http://www.eisenbrauns.com. Eisenbrauns is a US bookseller, so delivery times may be longer.

Grammars

R. Caplice, *Introduction to Akkadian* (3rd ed. 1988) – Haddon 700.39a

J. Huehnergard, *A grammar of Akkadian* (1997) – Haddon 603.4

M. Worthington, *Teach Yourself Complete Babylonian* (2010) – Haddon 700.77 and 77a (there is also a corrected reprint, 2012).

Dictionary

J.A. Black, A.R. George & J.N. Postgate, *A Concise Dictionary of Akkadian* (1999) – Haddon 603.12 and 13.

Cuneiform sign lists

R. Labat & F. Malbran-Labat, *Manuel d'épigraphie akkadienne* (several editions) – Haddon 710.5.2 and 3, 603.7.

R. Borger, *Assyrisch-babylonische Zeichenliste* (several editions) – Haddon 710.43 and 43a, 603.5.

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MJW
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