



IS PROUD TO PRESENT...

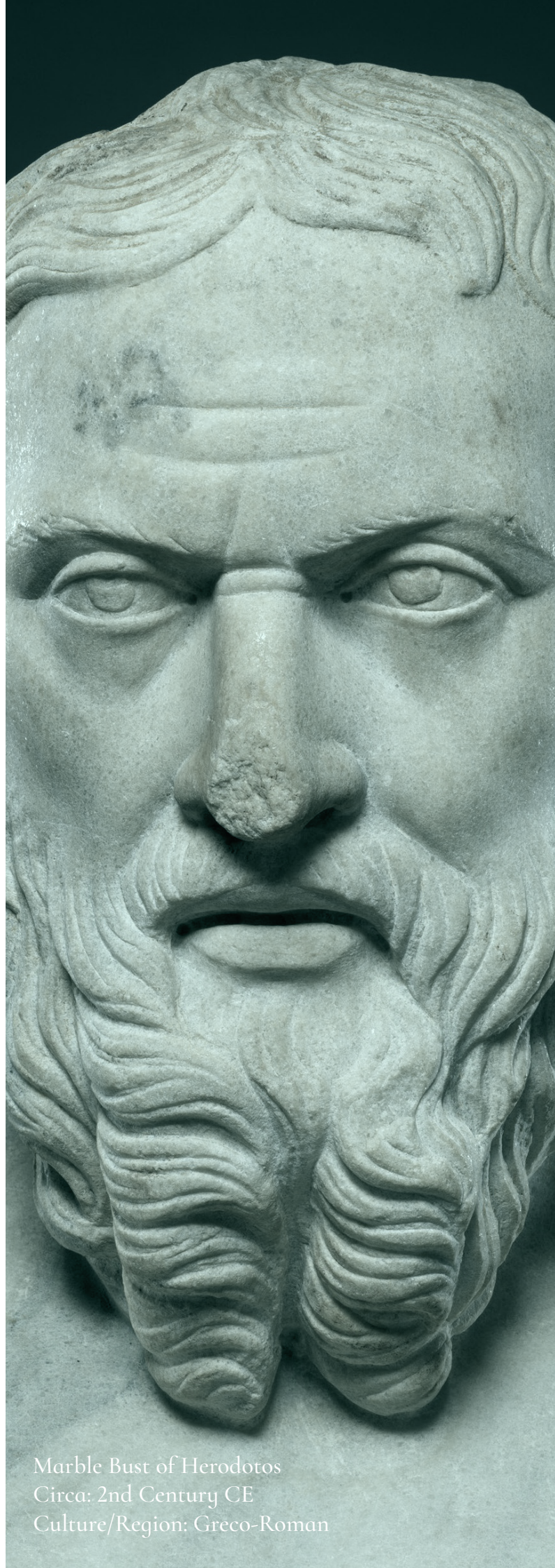
OPENING THE ANCIENT WORLD

Representations of the Past
in Ancient & Modern Times

A large, stylized brown vase with horizontal lines and a lotus-like base is centered in the lower half of the image. The vase is set against a background of orange and teal vertical stripes. The text 'A VIRTUAL CONFERENCE' is written in a white serif font across the top of the vase.

A VIRTUAL CONFERENCE

JULY 20 -
JULY 21, 2025



Marble Bust of Herodotos
Circa: 2nd Century CE
Culture/Region: Greco-Roman



OPENING THE ANCIENT WORLD

Representations of the Past
in Ancient & Modern Times

A FREE, VIRTUAL CONFERENCE

July 20–21, 2025

LIVESTREAMED

Available in English, Spanish, and Arabic

SASA's website (saveancientstudies.org/virtual-conference)

SASA's YouTube Channel ([Save Ancient Studies Alliance](https://www.youtube.com/SaveAncientStudiesAlliance))

SASA's Facebook ([@SaveAncientStudies](https://www.facebook.com/SaveAncientStudies))

SASA's Twitch ([@SaveAncientStudies](https://www.twitch.tv/SaveAncientStudies))

Co-Organizers

David Danzig

Julie Levy

Anh Nguyen



RSVP [HERE](#) FOR EMAIL
REMINDERS!

Learn about the
Special Sessions [here](#)!

Want to learn more about us?

Go to our website!

saveancientstudies.org

Follow the conversation on Bluesky

with #OAWconference!

TABLE OF CONTENTS



It is the first tablet of a series of letters about the city of Nineveh, dated 700 BC.

The first tablet of a series of letters about the city of Nineveh, dated 700 BC.

A quadrilateral map of the city of Nineveh, dated 700 BC.



The first tablet of a series of letters about the city of Nineveh, dated 700 BC.

The first tablet of a series of letters about the city of Nineveh, dated 700 BC.

The first tablet of a series of letters about the city of Nineveh, dated 700 BC.



The first tablet of a series of letters about the city of Nineveh, dated 700 BC.



Object removed for study

The first tablet of a series of letters about the city of Nineveh, dated 700 BC.

The first tablet of a series of letters about the city of Nineveh, dated 700 BC.



The first tablet of a series of letters about the city of Nineveh, dated 700 BC.

The first tablet of a series of letters about the city of Nineveh, dated 700 BC.

The first tablet of a series of letters about the city of Nineveh, dated 700 BC.



The first tablet of a series of letters about the city of Nineveh, dated 700 BC.



The first tablet of a series of letters about the city of Nineveh, dated 700 BC.

The first tablet of a series of letters about the city of Nineveh, dated 700 BC.



The first tablet of a series of letters about the city of Nineveh, dated 700 BC.

The first tablet of a series of letters about the city of Nineveh, dated 700 BC.

The first tablet of a series of letters about the city of Nineveh, dated 700 BC.



The first tablet of a series of letters about the city of Nineveh, dated 700 BC.



Overview 7 – 12

About This Conference	7
Our Organizers	8
Our Keynote Speakers	9
Conference Format	10
Conference Theme	12

Schedule 14 – 17

Schedule Day 1	14
Schedule Day 2	16
About the Special Sessions	17

Keynotes & Abstracts 18 – 24

Keynotes	18
Abstracts Day 1	22
Abstracts Day 2	24

About 39 – 40

About SASA	35
Index of Presenters	36
Image Attribution	37



The School of Athens by Raphael
Circa: 1508–11 CE
Culture/Region: Italy



ABOUT THIS CONFERENCE

Save Ancient Studies Alliance presents our fifth annual conference, a new type of online conference for ALL Ancient Studies scholars & anyone interested in the Ancient World.

Our goals for this conference are...

1. *To hold an academic Ancient Studies conference freely available to the public.*
2. *To foster discussion and action regarding public outreach and scholarly inclusiveness, and...*
3. *To present and support excellent scholarship by independent and underemployed scholars around the world, in order to continue building a joint community of scholars including both those whose occupations are inside and outside academia.*

We aim to bring together all scholars, especially including those who do not normally have the opportunity to present and engage with scholarship in academic settings, including...

- *Contingent faculty, those who completed a PhD and are now professionals in other fields*
- *Those who left PhD programs, or have had to take time out of their studies*
- *Academics from marginalized groups, teachers, professors, and staff from K-12 schools and community colleges*
- *Professionals at public humanities institutions and cultural resource management professionals*
- *Independent scholars.*

OUR ORGANIZERS



David Danzig

SASA Founder & Director
PhD, Ancient Near Eastern
Historian



Julie Levy

Managing Director
M.A, Ancient Greek and
Roman Literature



Anh Nguyen

PharmD
M.A., Egyptology

Confucius, Buddha, & Lao-Tzu
Culture/Region: China



OUR KEYNOTE SPEAKERS

**Dr. Casey L. Kirkpatrick**

M.A., Ancient Egyptian Culture,
Swansea University

PhD in Anthropology, specializing in
Bioarchaeology and Archaeology,
University of Western Ontario

**Dr. Bronwen L. Wickkiser**

M.A., Latin, University of Texas at Austin

PhD, Classics, University of Texas at Austin





FORMAT FOR THIS CONFERENCE

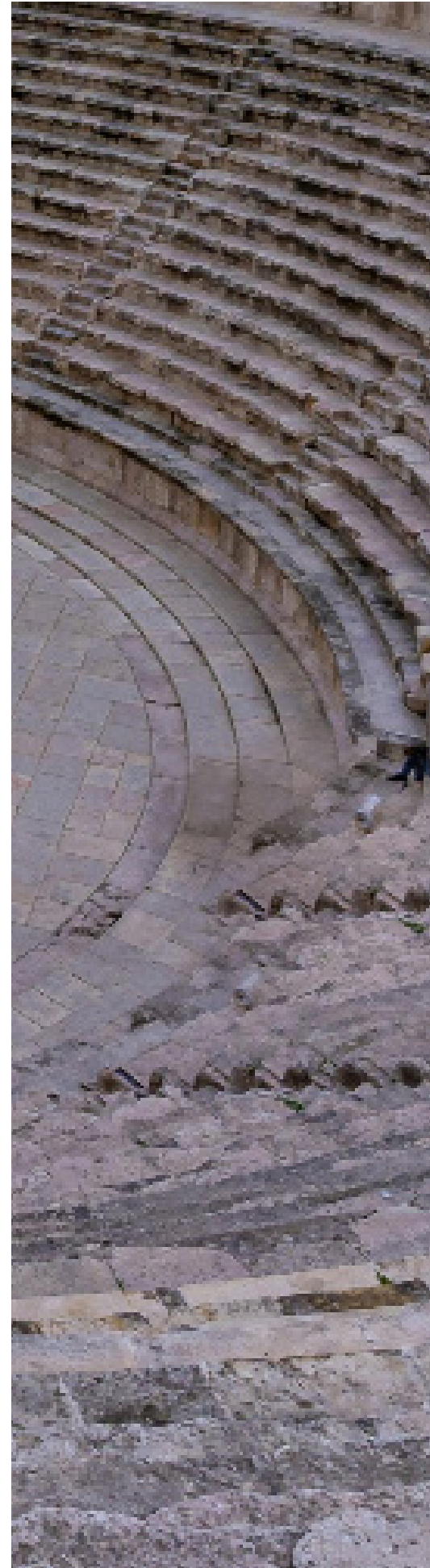
This free, public conference will be held on Sunday and Monday, July 20th to 21st, 2025, and will be livestreamed on SASA's website, social media channels, and on our partners' platforms. Past live streaming partners include:

- *Digital Hammurabi*
- *World History Encyclopedia*
- *World of Antiquity*
- *Voices of Ancient Egypt*
- *Per-Hay Studio*
- *History with Kayleigh*

Through our partnerships, we were able to attract over 24,000 people to participate in the 2024 conference. In 2025, we expect to grow our online reach to new communities of students, enthusiasts, and scholars.

We will support simultaneous live streams in AI translated Spanish and Arabic. Presenters who speak those languages will be able to present in their native languages and presentations spoken in English will be interpreted in those languages. Through this effort, we aim to continue including many more people around the world who are interested in the ancient past.

All viewers are invited to submit questions through any of the streamed chats to be posed to the presenters, though they will be moderated to ensure that the discussion stays on topic. Bluesky discussions will be ongoing throughout the conference at #OAWconference and other hashtags unique to each session.



Presentations will remain freely available online for viewing after the conference.

Beyond the scholarly presentations, we will also host two special sessions. The first special session will explore the history of ancient quakery. From snake oils to sacred rituals, ancient civilizations had no shortage of creative ways to treat illness, some surprisingly familiar, others totally out there. This session explores how different cultures approached health and healing long before modern medicine. We'll look at everything from herbal remedies and spiritual healers to magical spells and early versions of holistic care. These practices weren't just about curing disease, they reflected how people understood the body, the spirit, and the world around them.

The second special session is a close reading workshop in which scholars will discuss how they approach close reading, especially when working with ancient languages. These examples will shine a window into their process, how they notice details, ask questions, and build interpretations. Participants will also have an opportunity to practice working on a set of English texts. The goal is to practice noticing what's easy to overlook and to start building arguments based on the evidence you find.

These sessions will be livestreamed. But, only those present in the Zoom meeting will be able to participate. So, please [RSVP](#) if you would like to participate.



THEME OF THIS CONFERENCE

The theme of the conference, “*Body and Medicine in Antiquity: Health Care, Knowledge, and Practice*,” invites a critical examination of medicine’s historical dimensions, challenging the common assumption that medicine is primarily a modern science. The human experience of having and caring for bodies is universal and timeless. Throughout antiquity, medical practices, physical regimes, and healthcare traditions have played a central role in cultures across the world.

History of medicine is a field of study established within the last century, with notable programs established at universities, such as Harvard and Johns Hopkins (the latter founded its department in 1929), formalizing the study of medical traditions. However, healthcare and medical knowledge span all of human history. Examples range from the prehistoric use of antibacterial medicinal plants over 35,000 years ago in Iran to the Hippocratic texts of 4th century BCE Greece, and the remedies of *Huangdi Neijing* (*The Yellow Emperor’s Inner Classic*) from 3rd century CE China. The materials available, cultural beliefs about the body, and societal interpretations of healthcare have varied widely across time and geographic space.

Wellbeing, both individual and collective, can be deeply personal or socially significant. For instance, personal hygiene and fitness were emphasized in the Roman public baths, while civic health and safety took place in Greek mythology, as seen in the story of King Oedipus,

The Triumph of Galatea by Raphael
Circa: 1512 CE
Culture/Region: Italy



whose presence brought spiritual plague to his city, only to be expunged with his expulsion. Healthcare could also address physical ailments, such as the treatment of broken bones in prehistoric Neanderthals, or it could confront spiritual afflictions, such as demonic possession driven out by Christian exorcism.

This interdisciplinary conference seeks to explore the representation, reception, and understanding of past medical traditions in a broad, cross-cultural, global, and atemporal context. This conference employs the framework of interdisciplinary “Ancient Studies,” the study of the deep past of all societies, to examine how historical medical practices and knowledge are constructed, interpreted, and transmitted. This conference aims to treat the study of medicine as a universal cultural phenomenon, shared across all human societies.

Presentation topics may include:

- *Ancient medical practices and beliefs*
- *Public and private healthcare in the ancient world*
- *Scientific methodologies of past medical knowledge*
- *The role of the human body in perceptions of health and wellness in antiquity*
- *Ancient and modern medical mythology*
- *Diet, exercise, and prayer in the maintenance of human health*
- *The role of shamans, amulets and charms in medicine*
- *Hygiene practices as state infrastructure*
- *Gendered medical practices and women’s healthcare*





CONFERENCE SCHEDULE

Day 1: July 20, 2025

9:00 am - 9:30 am EDT

Introductions

- **Dr. David Danzig**

9:30 am - 10:30 am EDT

Session 1 - Art and Medicine

- **Vasiliki Kampourelli**
Death and Death Awareness: Greek Tragedy and Narrative Medicine
- **Rimi Nandy**
Of Demons and Remedies: Religious and Supernatural Mediations of Illness in Japanese Talisman Art

10:30 am - 11:00 am EDT

SASA Team Presentations

11:00am - 12:30 pm EDT

Session 2: Environment and Health

- **Leon Corneille Cowell**
Climate Change and Health During the Little Ice Age: The Skeletal Evidence
- **Nermine Ahmed**
Visualizing Water, Sanitation and Environmentally Related Hygiene in the Ancient Hellenic Arts
- **Alaa Abana**
Healing in the Desert: Medical Practices and Healthcare Knowledge of the Nabateans

12:30 pm - 1:00 pm EDT

SASA Team Presentations

Cicero Attacks Catiline: Painting by Cesare Maccari
Circa: 63 CE
Culture/Region: Roman

1:00 pm - 2:00 pm EDT

Special Session 1

*Snake Oils and Magic Herbs:
The Art of Ancient Quackery*

2:00 pm - 2:30 pm EDT

SASA Team Presentations

2:30 pm - 3:30 pm EDT

Session 3: Ancient Medical Texts

- **Ratrayee Bhowmick**
*Ayurveda: A Study of Ancient Indian
Healing Tradition*
- **Tanya Blake**
*"It is Truly Effective": Rethinking Efficacy
in the Magical and Medical Texts from
the Pharaonic Egypt*

3:30 pm - 4:30 pm EDT

Keynote 1

- **Casey Kirkpatrick**
*A Multidisciplinary Approach to Health,
Disease, and Medicine in Ancient Egypt*

4:30 pm EDT

Day 1 Closing Remarks



Day 2: July 21, 2025

9:00 am - 9:30 am EDT

Opening Remarks

9:30 am - 11:30 am EDT

Session 4: Care for and by the Marginalized

- **Katherine Petrusek**
Aspasia the Doctor: Exploring Women's Pseudonyms in Greco-Roman Drug Works
- **Charlotte Rose**
Call the Midwife: Women in Ancient Egyptian Medical - Magical Practices
- **Jasmine Sahu-Hough**
Disability and the Dynamics of Healing in Ancient Egypt
- **Patryk Grancow**
The Use of Selected of Seafood in Ancient Gynecology (4th century BCE - 5th century CE)

11:30 am - 12:00 pm EDT

SASA Team Presentation

12:00 pm - 2:00 pm EDT

Session 5: Medical Practice in Antiquity

- **Vartika Kushwaha**
Antiquity of Ayurveda: it's Alliedness and Scope of Positive as Positive Health Sciences
- **Menna Salal**
The Double Diamond Framework in Ancient Public and Private Healthcare
- **Shrangi Mishra**
From Tradition to Technique: Rise of Surgery in Ancient India
- **Mahsa Najafi**
The Intersection of Burial Rituals and Public Health in Sassanian Zoroastrianism

2:00 pm - 3:00 pm EDT

Keynote 2

- **Bronwyn Wickkiser**
Medicine, Religion, and Terroir in Greco-Roman Healthcare: Galen's Voyage to Lemnos

3:00 pm - 3:30 pm EDT

SASA Team Presentation

3:30 pm - 4:30 pm EDT

Special Session 2

Close Reading Workshop: How to Diagnose a Text

4:30 pm - 5:00 pm EDT

Closing Remarks

5:00 pm - 6:00 pm EDT

Social Hour



About the Special Sessions

Snake Oils and Magic Herbs: The Art of Ancient Quackery

From snake oils to sacred rituals, ancient civilizations had no shortage of creative ways to treat illness, some surprisingly familiar, others totally out there. This session explores how different cultures approached health and healing long before modern medicine. We'll look at everything from herbal remedies and spiritual healers to magical spells and early versions of holistic care. These practices weren't just about curing disease, they reflected how people understood the body, the spirit, and the world around them.

We'll also dig into the cultural context: who got to be a healer, what people believed about illness, and how medicine often blurred into religion, performance, and even politics. When science meets superstition, figuring out what "works" is more complicated than it seems. And some of these practices still echo in wellness trends today. Is it real healing, or just a really good show? Let's dive into the weird, wild world of ancient alternative medicine and find out.

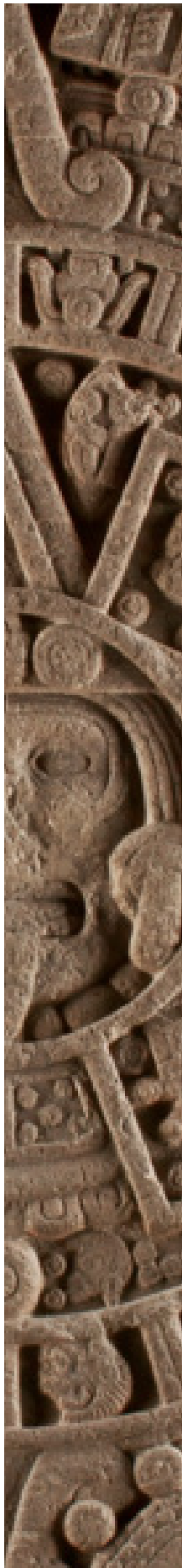
Close Reading Workshop: How to Diagnose a Text

In this workshop, we'll approach reading the way a doctor might approach a diagnosis: by paying close attention to small details and using them to build a thoughtful, well-supported conclusion. Whether the text is ancient or modern, making a strong argument starts with noticing things like tone, word choice, and structure.

We'll start things off with a few short presentations from scholars who'll walk us through how they approach close reading, especially when working with ancient languages. These examples will give you a window into their process, how they notice details, ask questions, and build interpretations.

Then it's your turn. You'll get a set of texts in English to work on, either individually or with others in a small group. The goal is to practice noticing what's easy to overlook and to start building arguments based on the evidence you find. Together, we'll explore how close reading can help us better understand what a text is doing, and why it matters.

The Special Sessions will be livestreamed on our platforms, though only participants in the Zoom meeting will be able to engage in the discussion. Therefore, pre-registration is necessary to participate. If you do not want to participate or do not want to be included in the broadcast then you can still follow the discussion!





THE KEYNOTES

I

Dr. Casey L. Kirkpatrick

A Multidisciplinary Approach to Health, Disease, and Medicine in Ancient Egypt

Casey L. Kirkpatrick, PhD is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Archaeology at Simon Fraser University, an Adjunct Research Professor in the Department of Anthropology at the University of Western Ontario, and a Guest Researcher at the Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology. She is also Head of Osteology on the BYU Egypt Excavation Project, and Director of the Preserving Theban Archaeological Heritage (PTAH) Project, through which she excavates an ancient Egyptian tomb in the Theban Necropolis.

Dr. Kirkpatrick earned an MA in Ancient Egyptian Culture from Swansea University and a PhD in Anthropology, specializing in Bioarchaeology and Archaeology, from the University of Western Ontario. She also completed a postdoc at the Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology.

She is a bioarchaeologist/biological anthropologist with a regional focus on Egypt and research interests in human health and disease, trauma, and mortuary archaeology. Her multidisciplinary work includes methodological studies and biocultural approaches to understanding ancient health and disease. Some of her studies have focused on sacral spina bifida occulta as a morphogenetic indicator of kinship, photogrammetric methods for dental age estimation, and diagnosis and sociocultural perceptions of dwarfism in ancient Egypt. She has also studied trauma in Egypt's Fag El-Gamous cemetery, which was previously considered to



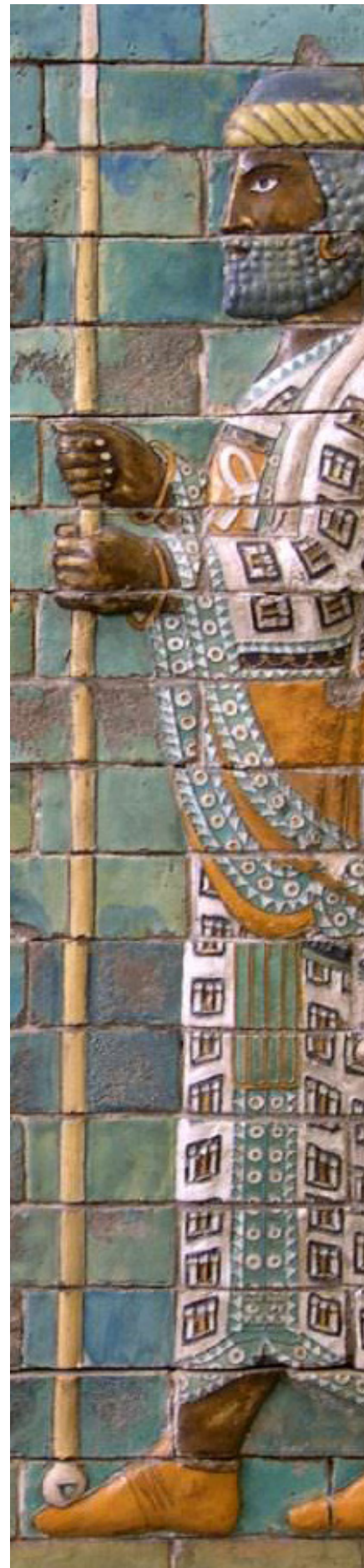
be evidence of early Christian martyrdom, and the Jebel Sahaba skeletal collection in The British Museum, which is considered to be the world's earliest evidence of mass violence. Casey has also contributed to the study of cancers in ancient remains, and is a Co-founder and former Executive Director of the Paleo-oncology Research Organization (PRO) and the Ancient Cancer Foundation. Lately, she has been working on tracing the evolution and spread of diseases through the study of ancient pathogen DNA, and recently co-authored a groundbreaking study that addresses the long-standing debate on the origins of syphilis and other treponemal diseases.

II

Dr. Bronwen L. Wickkiser *Medicine, Religion, and Terroir in Greco-Roman Healthcare: Galen's Voyage to Lemnos*

Dr. Bronwen Wickkiser is the Solomon Bluhm Professor of Ancient History at Hunter College and professor at the Graduate Center, City University of New York. She also directs the Bluhm Scholars Program, an honors program in Classics at Hunter College. Her research draws on archaeological evidence alongside ancient texts to explore intersections between religion and healthcare in the Greco-Roman world.

Bronwen is the author of *Asklepios, Medicine and the Politics of Healing in Fifth-Century Greece: Between Craft and Cult* (Johns Hopkins University 2008); co-author of *The Thymele at Epidauros: Healing, Space, and Musical Performance in Late Classical Greece*, with P. Schultz, G. Hinge, C. Kanellopoulos, and J. Franklin (Theran 2017); co-editor of *Aspects of Ancient Greek Cult: Context, Ritual, and Iconography*, with J. Tae Jensen, P. Schultz, and G. Hinge (Aarhus University, 2009); and co-editor of *Godscapes: Environment and the Sacred in the Ancient Mediterranean and Beyond* with S. Blakely and W. Closterman (Lockwood, in process).





THE ABSTRACTS: DAY ONE

Session 1: Art and Medicine

I

Vasiliki Kampourelli: *Death and Death Awareness: Greek Tragedy and Narrative Medicine*

By fostering empathy, reflection, and a deeper understanding of the human condition, Medical Humanities and Narrative Medicine, in particular, engage not only healthcare professionals but also patients, caregivers, and the broader public. My research focuses on the application of Greek tragedy within the field of Medical Humanities, with a specific emphasis on its role in Narrative Medicine. It aims to explore the ways in which ancient Greek tragedy may contribute fruitfully to the corpus of the texts employed in these fields.

Greek tragedy has been successfully used in projects about end-of-life issues, such as the *End of Life program* at Harvard Medical School (Lee, 2010), and traumatized societies after wars and personal losses (Meineck, 2020). The dramatic readings of scenes from Greek tragedy during the COVID-19 pandemic organized by the Theatre of War for Frontline Medical Providers about themes which the plays arise, such as end-of-life care, can be, according to Rushton et al. (2020), an important tool to work through difficult experiences. Even though death is one of the primary themes of problematization in the Greek tragic plays, these works have not received any particular attention within the fields of medical humanities and narrative medicine, which have begun to encompass topics on death.

My paper aims to address this gap. First, a brief discussion of the role of the acknowledgement of human mortality and the understanding of the shared human finitude in the blurring of the boundaries between the healthy self and the suffering or dying “other” is offered. Then death and death awareness are examined through selected excerpts from ancient texts to exemplify the wide range of possibilities which the tragic plays may offer towards this direction.

Issyk kurgan (Golden Man Belt)
Culture/Region: Scythian



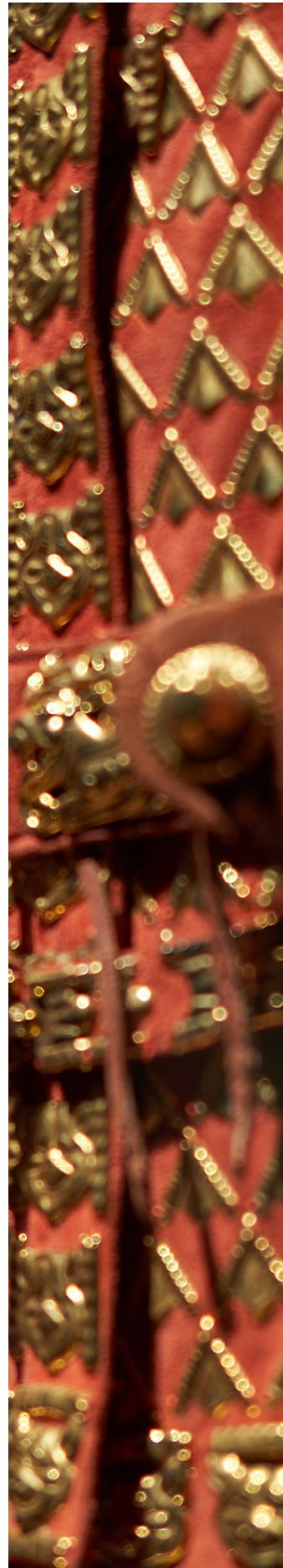
III

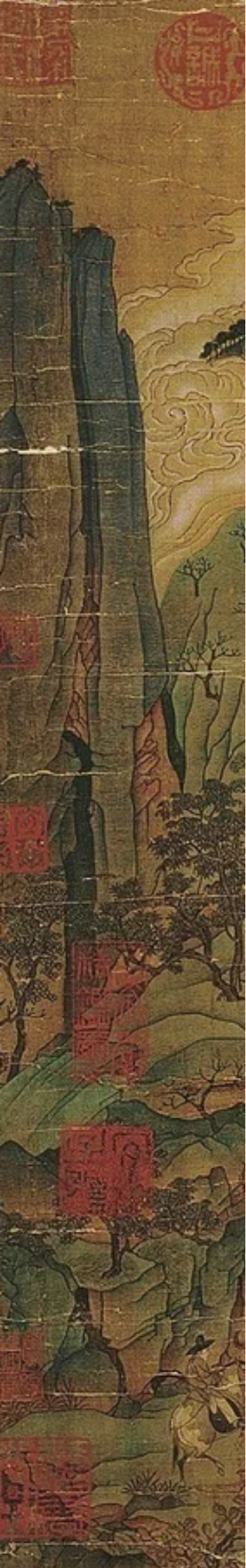
Rimi Nandy: *Of Demons and Remedies: Religious and Supernatural Mediations of Illness in Japanese Talismanic Art*

Medicinal Art in Japan can be traced back to the Ancient age. Influenced by Chinese medicinal practices, local remedies were created to ward off disease and illness. Western medicines only became popular during the 19th century. Apart from medicinal cure, a vast expanse of medicinal practices are based around shamanic rituals and talismans. This paper examines the visual and conceptual framing of disease in early modern Japan through ukiyo-e woodblock prints and their contemporary reinterpretation in the anime series *Mononoke*. Drawing from traditions that entwine medicine with cosmology, ritual, and spiritual practice, this study foregrounds the cultural logic through which illness was understood not solely in physical terms, but as moral disruption, spiritual imbalance, or karmic consequence. Edo-period prints depicting talismanic images, demon-quelling deities, and protective charms exemplify a visual grammar of affliction and cure rooted in belief and social order.

Rather than isolate disease within a clinical narrative, these visual forms participate in an older, broader understanding of the body as porous to unseen forces—social, emotional, and supernatural. This approach aligns with recent scholarship (Rotermund and Tyler; Gramlich- Oka) that reads premodern Japanese responses to epidemics as shaped by a continuum of religious, communal, and ritual interventions. The anime *Mononoke* carries these themes forward, presenting the Medicine Seller as a ritual specialist who restores equilibrium by identifying the narrative, emotional, and spiritual causes of affliction. His process—naming the *Mononoke*'s Form, Truth, and Reason—resonates with earlier practices where healing required both recognition and resolution.

In dialogue with the conference's call to reconsider medicine beyond its modern frame, this paper positions visual culture as a crucial site in which ancient medical beliefs and practices are both preserved and reimagined. This research critically views folkloric practices and talismanic art and its repurposing through anime and Instagram trend of Amabie, during the COVID-19 Pandemic, thereby depicting the relevance of Ancient Studies in the contemporary age.





Session 2: Environment and Health

I

Leon Corneille Cowell: *Climate Change and Health During the Little Ice Age: The Skeletal Evidence*

Contemporary clinical studies have shown the negative effect climate change has on health, despite this, in-depth bioarchaeological studies on the subject are few. Historical and Paleoclimatic data show the Little Ice Age (LIA) began in Europe in 1300 CE and lasted until 1850 CE, following a climatic optimum known as the Medieval Warm Period (MWP), 900 CE-1300 CE. Respiratory conditions and Sinus infections are particularly noted for being affected by changes in temperature and humidity through more particles in the air and dryer mucosa in warmer climates, or increased pathogenic rates in colder, wetter climates. This research is a data-based literature review of the paleopathology, Maxillary sinusitis in Britain and Ireland, which manifests in skeletal populations through new bone growth in the sinuses in response to infection. Literature was sourced from the Archaeological Data Service (ADS), BAR Publishers Online Archive, and the University of York Library. Material from over 131 sites (n=41,460) found overall, a higher CPR (Crude Prevalence Rate) in the LIA (1.22%) to the MWP (1.06%) with even higher percentages when only adult remains were considered. MWP Females (n=63) were more prevalent than males (n=50), whereas in the LIA, males (n=144) had it more commonly than females (n=137). Chronological analysis found the 19th century had the highest number of infections overall, and urban sites had higher rates than rural ones in both periods. These rates are lower than previous CPR for the later Medieval (13.8%) and post-Medieval (6.88%) periods. Theories such as syndemics, the osteological paradox, and ONEhealth have all been considered in the interpretation as well as other factors including industrialisation and urbanisation. This is the first research of this scale and with this method done on British populations.

The Emperor Ming Huang Travelling in Shu
Circa: 8th Century CE
Culture/Region: China



III

Nermine Ahmed: *Visualizing Water, Sanitation and Environmentally Related Hygiene in the Ancient Hellenic Arts*

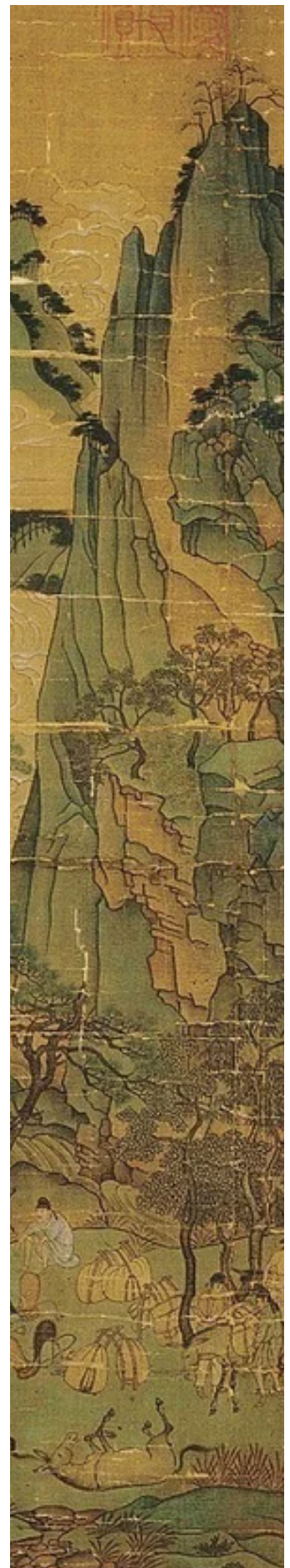
Art raises awareness, and its initial role can be categorized as an educational tool regarding specific topics, as demonstrated by the representation of water facilities and their impact on human health and sanitation throughout ancient Hellenic art. Hellenic art prominently depicted hygiene customs, which included water quality principles that were observed in ancient

Mediterranean cities. The natural environment provided access to significant aquifers year-round, particularly benefitting from rainwater, which was considered the most favorable and natural. Public baths were significant structures in major cities, built to meet the health and sanitation needs of specific social groups, such as athletes. They were designed to accommodate

large numbers of people, offering steam baths and heated washrooms. A number of artistic scenes from ancient Greece provide significant insight into daily health care practices, particularly in gymnasiums and palaestrae. Basins (both portable and fixed), fountains, and vessels were utilized for bathing and washing by young Athenians, who valued their personal hygiene as early as the prehistoric period and continued these customs into the Hellenistic

period. The previous studies on the architectural remains related to water supply greatly emphasized the importance of sanitation, water supply and drainage and sewerage systems for human survival and well-being, and how this was significantly understood in the Hellenic world to achieve water resource sustainability. This study brings together literary, archaeological, and

artistic evidence—primarily from minor arts—to present a comprehensive and integrated view of the topic. The artistic works, including vessels, wall paintings, and mosaics, along with architectural remains, provide insights into the cultural influences on healthcare and sanitary practices in both everyday life and the afterlife.



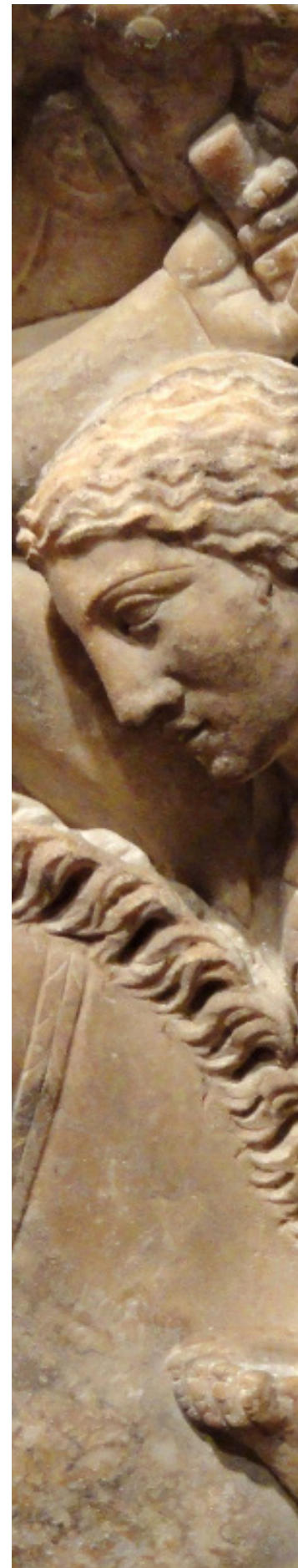
III

Alaa Abana: Healing in the Desert: Medical Practices and Healthcare Knowledge of the Nabateans

The research investigates the healthcare practices and medical knowledge of the Nabateans, an ancient Arab civilization renowned for their trade routes and cultural exchanges in Petra. Through a comprehensive analysis of archaeological evidence, ancient texts, and inscriptions, this research highlights the unique integration of indigenous medicinal practices with influences from surrounding cultures, particularly Hellenistic and Roman traditions.

Past scholarship has primarily focused on the Nabateans' architectural achievements and trade dynamics, with limited attention given to their medical practices. However, recent studies have begun to uncover the complexities of Nabatean healthcare, revealing a holistic approach encompassing herbal remedies, surgical techniques, and spiritual healing methods. This paper aims to fill this gap by providing a detailed examination of the role of Nabatean physicians and their contributions to the broader landscape of ancient medicine.

The significance of this research lies in its potential to enhance our understanding of the interplay between culture and medicine in antiquity. By exploring how the Nabateans addressed health and illness within their socio-cultural context, this study contributes to a more nuanced appreciation of ancient medical practices and their relevance to contemporary discussions on healthcare and cultural identity.



Amazonomachy Detail on Roman Sarcophagus
Circa: 2nd–3rd Century CE
Culture/Region: Greco-Roman



Session 3: *Ancient Medical Texts*

I

Ratrayee Bhowmick: *Ayurveda: A Study of Ancient Indian Healing Tradition*

The Ayurvedic medical tradition of the ancient Indian subcontinent represents a sophisticated and holistic system of healthcare, deeply intertwined with philosophical and cosmological frameworks. This paper examines the foundational texts, particularly the Samhitas, to elucidate the core principles of Tridosha, Panchamahabhuta. By analyzing these concepts, we can understand how Ayurveda sought to maintain equilibrium within the individual and between the individual and their environment. the transmission of this knowledge continued through oral and written traditions, as well as its interaction with other medical systems over time, an great degree of similarities of healing approach can be found in Unani medicine traditions of Iran. Ayurveda is not simply a historical relic, but a complex and nuanced system that continues to offer valuable insights into holistic health, demonstrating a remarkable continuity between ancient wisdom and contemporary discourse on integrative medicine. It also investigates the socio-cultural context in which Ayurveda flourished, considering its relationship with other intellectual traditions and its role in shaping ancient Indian society. Ultimately, this research aims to demonstrate that Ayurveda is not merely a historical artifact, but a complex and nuanced system that continues to offer valuable insights into health and well-being, demonstrating a remarkable continuity between ancient knowledge and contemporary discourse on holistic medicine.

I have had the opportunity to do course work in my post-graduation on contemplative traditions and ancient knowledge systems of Indian subcontinent. While approaching transcultural links of Indo-Iran for a paper presentation, I have had the opportunity to gain knowledge about the similar approach of healing traditions of Ayurveda and Unani medicine.

II

Tanya Blake: *"It is Truly Effective": Rethinking Efficacy in the Magical and Medical Texts from the Pharaonic Egypt*

When we feel unwell, we visit a doctor who diagnoses the issue and prescribes a treatment. This universal desire to maintain good health and recover from illness or injury transcends cultural boundaries and epochs. While in modern times the efficacy of a treatment is well- documented, in an ancient context it is somewhat challenging to determine which remedies were considered the most efficacious. Of the surviving recipes and spells from Pharaonic Egypt, only a small number include annotations that purportedly indicate their efficacy. Surprisingly, while there is an awareness of these efficacy markers in scholarship, there has apparently been no research (outside my own) devoted to them.

My research investigates how efficacy is marked in ancient Egyptian healing texts, examines the placements of these endorsements, and interrogates the potential significance they may have held for those who interacted with them. While it would be simple to dismiss these textual markers as nothing more than a throwaway comment confirming that the remedy worked, it does not explain why there are differing ways of communicating this. By analysing these textual markers, my research seeks to provide a richer understanding of their role in shaping ancient healing practices and to stimulate discussion on d their broader cultural implications.

— END OF DAY ONE —



Ashoka Riding a Chariot In a Relief From The Sanchi Stupa
Circa: 3rd Century, BCE
Culture/Region: India



THE ABSTRACTS: DAY TWO

Session 4: *Care for and by the Marginalized*

I

Katherine Petrasek: *Aspasia the Doctor: Exploring Women's Pseudonyms in Greco-Roman Drug Works*

Publishing a medical recipe or text under the name of another author was commonplace in the ancient Greco-Roman world. The names of famous individuals in the Greco-Roman world could lend authority to a medical text and some of that individual's aura. These famous individuals included Aspasia and Cleopatra VII, whose names would make these recipes reputable to women, who might trust the authority of another woman over that of a man. Women practitioners and originators of recipes could draw on their own bodily experiences, particularly for gynaecological cures. Large passages of gynaecological text associated with an Aspasia is quoted by Aetius in his *Tetrabiblos*. The name Cleopatra is associated with recipes relating to *kosmetika* in Galen's text, *On Compound Pharmaka According to Place*, recipes for curling and dyeing the hair in Paul of Aegina's text *Epitome Of Medicine* and a recipe for an unguent in a chapter focusing on facial applications in Aetius' *Tetrabiblos*. What can these women's names tell us about female authorship of scientific and medical texts in Greco-Roman antiquity? What can the pseudonymization of women's names tell us about gender divisions in Greco-Roman medicine? What evidence is there for the possibility that male authors used female pseudonyms to write about matters pertaining to women's health? Previous studies on the topic include Rebecca Flemming's "Women, Writing and Medicine in the Classical World," Max Wellman's "Beiträge zur Quellenanalyse des Älteren Plinius", and Sophia M Connell's chapter "Women's Medical Knowledge in Antiquity: Beyond Midwifery." The purpose of this paper is to explore the use of women's names as pseudonyms in Greco-Roman pharmacological works, such as Aetius' *Tetrabiblos*, Paul's *Epitome of Medicine* and Pliny's *Natural History*. This topic is important to shed greater light upon women's authority in pharmacological works.

II

Charlotte Rose: *Call the Midwife: Women in Ancient Egyptian Medical - Magical Practices*

The study of ancient Egyptian medical-magical texts has offered a view into daily religious practice beyond the temple cult. Previous work has focused on the religious underpinnings of the spells, the role of the dead, and the use of amulets. Likewise, other research has examined the possibility of nonprofessional magical practitioners. However, there has been little to no examination of the agency of women in healing/medical rituals, with the scholarly literature largely considering women in these texts as patients passively receiving treatment. Were women's roles in these texts similar or different from men's functions, and, if so, why? Did Egyptian society restrict the types of spells which women would appear?

This research examines the functions of women in medical-magical rituals, primarily focusing on hieratic written sources. Whereas this evidence is predominantly medical-magical texts, other material includes mentions of titles such as midwife and nurse. The women in these sources ranged from Egyptians, foreigners, and various dead spirits. Preliminary findings have indicated that women in these spells sometimes held active roles, such as enacting the role of the goddess Isis or providing ingredients for treatments via her body.

III

Jasmine Sahu-Hough: *Disability and the Dynamics of Healing in Ancient Egypt*

This paper scrutinises the role of healing institutions (including but not limited to medical writing) in the social construction of disability in ancient Egypt. Two opposing assumptions have often been made about disability in antiquity: that disabled people, if they were not killed at birth, lived persecuted, stigmatised existences, or that 'disability' was simply not a meaningful category before modern statistical science. In recent years, scholars of antiquity have pushed back, rightly demonstrating that the picture was far more complex, dependent on context and identity. These studies, however, have tended to minimise





the role of healing institutions in defining disability, arguing that the approach embodied by the medical model (which locates disability in individual bodies and privileges treatment by medical practitioners) was absent from ancient societies. Although we may accept this argument, the fact remains that many individuals with impairments are only visible to us through the medical texts which describe their bodies or the votive inscriptions and objects they left behind in healing sanctuaries. Ancient disabled people interacted regularly with healing institutions but we have yet to fully analyse what part those institutions played in defining their experiences. In this paper, I consider this question through a case study on infertility, an impairment which some have characterised as a specifically female disability in ancient times. My paper will focus on my findings from ancient Egyptian material but will also offer some preliminary analysis of how comparison with ancient Greek healing institutions nuances our understanding of the conditions of disablement in antiquity.

IV

Patryk Grancow: *The Use of Selected of Seafood in Ancient Gynecology (4th century BCE - 5th century CE)*

My research, which I would like to present at the conference, concerns ancient medicine. Ancient medicine used a variety of natural resources to create medicines. Marine fauna also found its place among materia medica and was readily used by ancient physicians for medicinal purposes. Among the various ailments treated with remedies containing seafood, alongside diseases of the digestive system or dermatological conditions, so-called "women's diseases" are also mentioned, encompassing gynecological disorders and those related to pregnancy, childbirth, and the puerperium. This paper aims to analyze the use of selected marine fauna in ancient gynecology. Specifically, this study investigates the significance of marine fauna in ancient medicine, the prevalent gynecological conditions, and the methods of treatment, preparation, and application of seafood-based remedies.

My previous experience researching the history of ancient medicine includes writing a thesis entitled. "Aquatic fauna in the culinary art and medicine of Antiquity in the light of select literary sources" (2024), in which I analysed the use of marine animals in ancient medicine. In addition, I was twice (in 2022 and 2023) awarded a "Student Research Grant" at the University of Lodz, through which I researched ancient medicine and food. In addition, I have spoken at several scientific conferences (international and Polish) in which I presented the results of my research on seafood.

I believe that my research is extremely important because of the possibility of showing the importance of selected seafood species in ancient pharmacotherapy and therapeutic procedures. In addition, my research concerns a subject hitherto poorly researched by Polish and international scientists, thus filling a research gap in the history of ancient medicine.

Session 5: *Recontextualizing Ancient Poetry*

I

Vartika Kushwaha: *Antiquity of Ayurveda: it's Alliedness and Scope of Positive as Positive Health Sciences*

A healthful long life of hundred years has been the cherished wish of human race from antiquity. This has been considered essential to achieve the four principal instincts of life namely Dharma, Artha, Kama and Moksha. For preservation of health in all its dimensions, the stalwarts in Hindu traditions have evolved comprehensive methods of positive health.

Ayurveda is an ancient Indian medical science with its origins traced back to the Vedas, the oldest available classics in the world. Ayurveda is a holistic healing science that combines two words: Ayu (life) and Veda (knowledge). In Ayurveda, three crucial factors are Indian medical science, medicinal herbs/plants, and nadi vigyan (pulse diagnosis). When we visit a doctor, they use a stethoscope to examine us, check our tongue and eyes, and sometimes perform nadi pariksha.



Sappho of Lesbos: 1904 Painting by John William Goodward
Circa: 630–570 BCE
Culture/Region: Greece



Ethnopharmacological Importance Medicinal plants have been used by humans for centuries to treat their health conditions, making them one of the oldest known remedies. They have a significant role in the formulation of indigenous systems of medicine in various countries. Furthermore, they are now being incorporated into products such as herbal teas, health supplements, and nutraceuticals. There has been a global resurgence of interest in medicinal plants, including in India, which has led to extensive research and activities in this field. The archaeological evidence from Mohenjo-daro and Harappa reveals the high level of civilization in matters of sanitation and hygiene. A study of the Vedas indicates that all four texts contain numerous references to various aspects of medicine. The Atharva Veda, in particular, is considered an encyclopedia of medicine. Additionally, Ayurveda, known as the science of life, is regarded as an UpaVeda or subsidiary subject of the Atharva Veda.

This research paper will provide glimpses of the medical science that prevailed in ancient India. The proposed research aims to justify the concepts of ancient Indian medical sciences.

II

Menna Salal: *The Double Diamond Framework in Ancient Public and Private Healthcare*

The paper explores the complex interaction of private and public healthcare in the ancient world through an analytical lens provided by the Double Diamond Theory, a four-phase model of design thinking comprised of Discover, Define, Develop, and Deliver. While most ancient medical studies are either written-source or archaeologically driven on fragmentary terms, the model facilitates the re-analyses on formal yet new terms how healthcare was conceptualized, accessed, and delivered in Greco-Roman and Egyptian societies.

In (the Discover) phase, a broad corpus of ancient medical texts (the Ebers Papyrus, Hippocratic Corpus, and Galenic texts) is compared to archaeological data in the form of healing temples, surgical tools, and physicians' inscriptions. The phase maps the multicolored landscape of care and tracks how curing was accomplished through public

institutions (temple sanctuaries, state doctors) and the household (domestic medicine, itinerant healers).

The Define stage concentrates this wide scope into particular themes, for example, class- and gender-based disparities in access to medical care, legitimation of medical power, and epistemological clashes between religious, magical, and empirical healing. This works to recognize the systemic arrangements that underpinned public and private health in the ancient world.

In (the Develop) stage, creative reconstructions of healing spaces and patient interactions are used to model how ancient people may have differently experienced health care in relation to social class and geographical setting. The reconstructions focus on the symbolic and sensual dimensions of medical care. Finally, (the Deliver) phase proposes pedagogy and interpretive resources—such as museum exhibitions, computer-aided reconstructions, and interdisciplinary modules for learning—that synthesize Classical models of healthcare with arguments that remain relevant to public health today, such as privatization and equity.

By applying the Double Diamond Theory, this article deconstructs our understanding of Classical healthcare systems far more deeply while also illustrating their applicability to medical infrastructure and access issues that exist today.

III

Shrangi Mishra: *From Tradition to Technique: Rise of Surgery in Ancient India*

Surgery is often seen as a modern advancement, closely linked with technology and scientific development. However, historical records reveal that the roots of surgical knowledge go much deeper, reaching back to Ancient India. Texts like the Sushruta Samhita show that surgical practices were already in use centuries ago, with techniques that were remarkably advanced for their time. Scholars like Sir John Marshall have highlighted how Indian medicine not only led the way in its own era but also influenced other cultures through trade and cultural exchange. Yet, despite its significance, the history of surgery in Ancient India remains underexplored in mainstream medical studies. This research seeks to trace the development of surgical practices in Ancient India from their traditional beginnings to more refined



The Canopus, Hadrian's Villa, Tivoli
Circa: 2nd Century CE
Culture/Region: Roman



methods and to understand how these early innovations contributed to the broader evolution of surgery. The study will use a mixed-methods approach, blending both qualitative and quantitative research to offer a well-rounded perspective on this important part of ancient history.

Past scholarship has significantly contributed to understanding ancient Indian medical practices. The Sushruta Samhita, as discussed in the Journal of Anatomy (2010), shows how advanced surgery was even in ancient times. Zimmer (1948) and Sigerist (1951) studied the structure and influence of Hindu medicine, while Bolling and Boning looked at how diseases were understood in the Vedic period. Hoernle focused on bones and practical healing methods. Karambelkar (1961) explored how the Atharva Veda connects with Ayurveda. Meulenbeld (1999) gave a detailed overview of Indian medical texts. Together, their work shows how rich and organized this ancient knowledge truly was.

IV

Mahsa Najafi: *The Intersection of Burial Rituals and Public Health in Sassanian Zoroastrianism*

In the Sassanian period, Zoroastrian beliefs profoundly influenced burial practices, reflecting a complex interplay between religion, health, and environmental stewardship. This abstract explores the unique Zoroastrian approach to death and the afterlife, particularly the practice of exposing corpses in Dakhmas, or Towers of Silence, to avoid polluting the earth. Central to this ritual was the belief that a corpse, once the soul had departed, became a source of pollution that could contaminate water, soil, and air, leading to disease outbreaks. The meticulous design of Dakhmas—constructed with strict adherence to religious laws—ensured that the remains could be purified by nature while safeguarding the sanctity of the land.

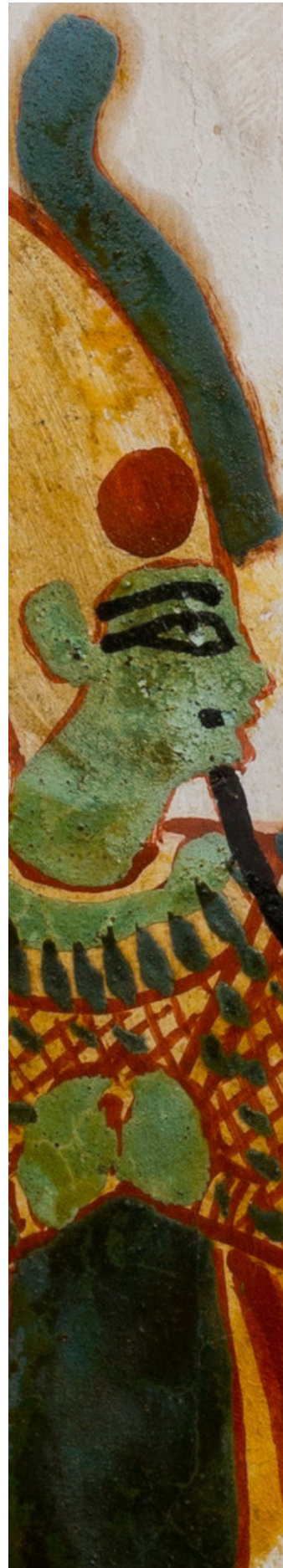
The Zoroastrian texts emphasize the importance of maintaining environmental purity, which was considered a divine mandate. Rituals surrounding the treatment of the dead, including the washing and shrouding of bodies and the subsequent exposure to scavengers, were not only spiritual acts but also practical public health measures aimed at minimizing contamination.

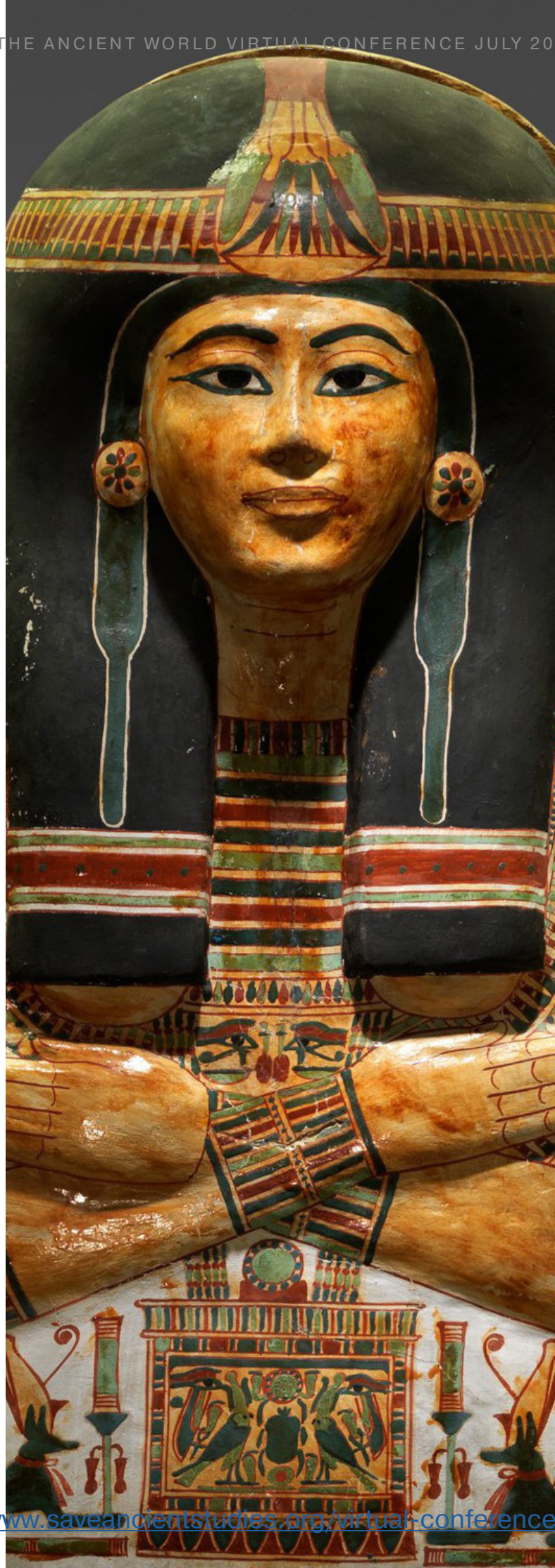
In this research, the human remains from a cave in Iran will be investigated as an example of this burial ritual and the function of the cave, as tower of silence.

Moreover, the Sassanian emphasis on preventing pollution was evident in broader public health policies, which prioritized cleanliness and ritual purity as vital components of community well-being. By examining the burial practices of the Sassanian era through the lens of Zoroastrian beliefs, this study highlights the intricate relationship between ancient traditions, religious doctrines, and environmental management, showcasing how these elements collectively shaped the health and hygiene practices of the time. Such insights not only deepen our understanding of ancient Iranian society but also challenge contemporary perceptions of health care as a solely modern phenomenon.

— END OF DAY TWO —

Coffin of Amun-Re Henettawy
Circa: 10th Century BCE
Culture/Region: Egyptian







ABOUT SASA

SASA was founded in reaction to the devaluation of the study of the ancient world in universities and high schools. A group of graduate students and early career scholars came together to expand exposure and access to the ancient world and re-envision how the ancient world is studied. Our founding Director, David Danzig, sought out those who shared this frustration and the commitment to make change. Together, we began to reach out and develop our strategic vision for SASA.

Over the spring and summer of 2020 we took our first steps to engaging the public with our passion for the ancient world and Ancient Studies. Our first major initiative, free virtual Text-in-Translation Reading Groups, was a smashing success, as 13 group leaders engaged over 200 participants. This summer, with the help of our amazing interns and volunteers, we developed “SASA Inspire,” a year-long social media campaign with a goal of inspiring 100,000 people about the ancient world and Ancient Studies. In recognition of our early success, the Society for Biblical Literature and the Society for Classical Studies have expressed their support for SASA with a donation and grant.

We are working on introducing new and varied programming, extending our reach among students, and attracting individuals committed to contribute their time and energy to further our effort. As we work toward meeting our future goals, we continue to seek to partner with academic organizations and financial contributors to support SASA's growth and development.

INDEX OF PRESENTERS

Ababneh, Alaa.....	14,24
Ahmed, Nermine.....	14, 23
Bhowmick, Ratrayee.....	15, 25
Blake, Tanya.....	15, 26
Cowell, Leon Corneille.....	14, 22
Danzig, David.....	3, 8, 14
Grancow, Patryk.....	16, 29
Kampourelli, Vasiliki.....	14, 20
Kirkpatrick, Casey.....	9, 15, 18
Kushwaha, Vartika.....	16, 30
Levy, Julie.....	3, 8
Mishra, Shranghi.....	16, 32
Najafi, Mahsa.....	16, 33
Nandy, Rimi.....	14, 21
Nguyen, Anh.....	3, 8
Petrasek, Katherine.....	16, 27
Rose, Charlotte.....	16, 28
Sahu-Hough, Jasmine.....	16, 28
Salal, Menna.....	16, 31
Wickkiser, Bronwyn.....	9, 16, 19

Image Attribution

All images and artwork adapted to the layout and design of this document were sourced from the web. The following attributions are for images licensed under various versions of Creative Commons licensing. These licenses allow others to adapt and share upon an existing work—even commercially. The specific license version for each individual image is included. Hyperlinks and URLs linking to the appropriate license, and original content source are also included. All other images not attributed here are in the Public Domain.

Pages 8–9

Image: *Confucius presenting the young Gautama Buddha to Laozi, China, Qing Dynasty*. Author: Lucas
License: [CC BY 2.0](#). Image URL: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/ancientartpodcast/8040371009/>

Pages 16–17

Image: *Piedra del Sol*. Author: INAH, Canon. License: [CC BY-SA 4.0](#). Image URL: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Piedra_del_Sol.png. Changes Made: *Cropped and integrated in document layout*

Pages 18–19

Image: *Persian warriors from Berlin Museum*. Author: mshamma. License: [CC BY 2.0](#). Image URL: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Persian_warriors_from_Berlin_Museum.jpg.

Pages 20–21

Image: *Issyk kurgan (Golden Man belt)*. Author: eggry. License: [CC BY-SA 2.0](#). Image URL: <https://flic.kr/p/2bbsfUJ>

Pages 26–27

Image: *Ashoka's visit to the Ramagrama stupa Sanchi Stupa 1 Southern gateway*. Author: Photo Dharma
License: [CC BY 2.0](#). Image URL: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Ashoka%27s_visit_to_the_Ramagrama_stupa_Sanchi_Stupa_1_Southern_gateway.jpg

Pages 28–29

Image: *Roman ruins at Umm Qais, Jordan*. Author: David Bjorgen License: [CC BY-SA 4.0](#), Image URL: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Umm_Qais-14.jpg, Changes Made: *Cropped and integrated in document layout*

Pages 32–33

Image: *The Canopus, Hadrian's Villa, Tivoli*. Author: Carole Raddato. License: [CC BY-SA 2.0](#). Image URL: <https://flic.kr/p/oenayQ>



Want to get involved and help Save Ancient Studies?
Follow us and check out the opportunities available at
saveancientstudies.org/get-involved.



@SaveAncientStudies



@SaveAncientStudies



@saveancientstudies.bsky.social



Save Ancient Studies Alliance



SaveAncientStudies

For inquiries, please contact

info@saveancientstudies.org



OPENING THE ANCIENT WORLD