

Saturday Seminar Series

Great Cities of the Ancient Near East



The seminars will be held online on Zoom.

Members	
Individual lecture	\$20
Entire series	\$80
Non Members	
Individual	\$30
Entire series	\$120

Great Cities of the Ancient Near East

Cities have played a crucial role in the rise of civilisation and complex society since their development almost 5,000 years ago in Mesopotamia. Their role as centres of administration, cult, specialist services and trade meant they were the drivers of progress and the unfolding state societies of the Bronze and Iron Ages. But what constitutes a 'Great City' in the Ancient Near East?

In this lecture series, come with us on a tour through some of the 'Great Cities' of the Ancient Near East, from the rise of the first cities at Neolithic Jericho to the centre of empire in Achaemenid Susa. These lectures will describe the city in question and discuss its key features as revealed by archaeological exploration. The individual brilliance and historical

importance of the great cities that lay at the heart of the earliest empires will be a particular feature of these talks - including the great city of Akhetaten (modern Tell el Amarna) in Egypt, the rival Hittite capital of Hattuša (modern Bogazköy) in Anatolia, and the Persian Imperial capital of Persepolis in Iran.

These online lectures will be delivered via Zoom and will start at 10am and last for approximately two hours for each individual study day. A short 5-minute introduction will start each Saturday series, followed by a two-hour lecture by a single speaker, all except for Saturday 17 July, which will have two presentations broken into two 45-minute lectures. There will be a ten-minute coffee-break between the two sessions and there will be time for questions at the end of the presentations.

Date	Time	Lecturer	Topic
17 July 2021	10am	Dr Anna Stevens Monash University	Amarna Urban life in Egypt's city of the sun
	11 am	Dr Anna-Latifa Mourad Macquarie University	Tell el-Dab'a Becoming a City of the Hyksos
24 July 2021	10 am	Dr Amanda Dusting University of Sydney	The Great City of Susa
	11 am	Dr Amanda Dusting	Persepolis: Great City or Not?
31 July 2021	10–12pm	Dr Ross Burns University of Sydney	Aleppo, Ain Dara, Ebla and Ugarit In the Land of the Weather God
7 August 2021	10–12pm	Dr Peta Seaton University of Sydney	Jericho and Teleilat Ghassul The Beginnings of Settled Life
14 August 2021	10–12pm	Dr Joseph Lehner University of Sydney	Kültepe-Kaneš and Bogazköy-Hattuša Land of a Thousand Gods: The Bronze Age Cities of Anatolia



The Aleppo citadel. Photo by Dr Ross Burns.

17 July 2021

Lecture 1: Amarna: Urban life in Egypt's city of the sun

Dr Anna Stevens | Monash University
Sydney: Saturday 17 July 10am-11am

Abstract: In this talk, we'll take an armchair tour of Amarna – the ancient city of Akhetaten, founded by the so-called heretic king Akhenaten in the late second millennium BCE. Akhetaten was a city of open-air temples dedicated to the sun god Aten, the deity Akhenaten promoted to the exclusion of most others. Amarna is our best source of evidence for Akhenaten's religious reforms, but is also the most extensively excavated city from ancient Egypt, offering a wealth of information on past urban life. We will visit the temples, palaces, houses and burial grounds of ancient Akhetaten to ask: how was the city structured to support the Aten cult, and what was it like to live there?

Lecture 2: Tell el-Dab'a: Becoming a City of the Hyksos

Dr Anna-Latifa Mourad | Macquarie University
Sydney: Saturday 17 July 11am-12pm

Abstract: Among the few well-explored settlements of ancient Egypt is the site of Tell el-Dab'a in the Eastern Delta. Over 50 years of excavation and research have revealed the intriguing history of an early Second Millennium BC district that developed into one of the largest cities of its time. Its inhabitants witnessed the rise and fall of a number of Egyptian dynasties, from the heights of the Middle Kingdom to the elusive Hyksos Period. This lecture introduces Tell el-Dab'a and its rich material culture, offering an overview of how it became a harbour city of the Eastern Mediterranean.

24 July 2021

Lecture 1: The Great City of Susa

Dr Amanda Dusting | University of Sydney

Sydney: Saturday 24 July 10am-11am

Abstract: Susa aka Shushan, from the Books of Esther and Daniel in lowland Khuzestan region of Iran, was one of the most important cities of the Ancient Near East. A multi-period tell site, Susa served as a capital of Elam (Susiana), administrative capital of the Achaemenid Empire (539–333 BCE) and remained a strategic centre during the Parthian (247 BCE–224 CE) and Sasanian (224–561 CE) periods. Susa was the subject of extensive investigation from the late 19th century up to the 1970s with a French monopoly on excavation. Evidence for the so-called Proto Elamite, Early, Middle and Neo Elamite cultures (2400–539 BCE) were uncovered including temples, a ziggurat, royal palaces, and a residential quarter dubbed the ‘Ville Royale’ by its excavators, along with war booty such as the stele of Naram-Sin and the Code of Hammurabi. However, the most visible extant architecture of the city is that of the later Achaemenid period. Here, Darius I, built a monumental gateway, a vast palace, and a massive columned hall, known as the Apadana (c. 522 BCE). This talk will explore the rich cultural depth of this extraordinary city, revealed through the over 130 years of excavation.

Lecture 2: Persepolis: Great City or Not?

Dr Amanda Dusting | University of Sydney

Sydney: Saturday 24 July 11am-12pm

Abstract: Persepolis, in Fars Province Iran, was a royal centre in the Achaemenid heartland from the 5th century BC until sacked by Alexander in 330 BC. A site with a myriad of architectural and sculptural wonders, all manifestations of the might of the great Achaemenid kings. Excavated by the Oriental Institute of Chicago by such colourful characters as Ernst Herzfeld and Frederich Krefter (1931-1934) and Erich Schmidt (1935-1939), interrupted by World War II with excavations and restoration work then carried out by the Italian Institute for the Middle and Far East in Rome (IsMEO) by Giuseppe Tilia and Ann Britt Tilia from 1964 until the 1970s. More recently further excavation, conservation and exploration has been undertaken by the Iranian-Italian Archaeological Mission to South-east Iran. Whether Persepolis was a city, or a ceremonial centre is a matter of debate. This talk will explore the extant ruins of the site and the history of its rediscovery and excavations as well as introduce its most recent revelations, including geo-physical survey, which help to inform this discussion.

31 July 2021

Aleppo, Ain Dara, Ebla and Ugarit: In the Land of the Weather God

Dr Ross Burns | University of Sydney

Sydney: Saturday 31 July 10am-12pm

Abstract: What do these sites in Northern Syria have in common—Aleppo, Ain Dara, Ebla and Ugarit? What do these places tell us that we didn’t know before? Explore some new perspectives on the Bronze and Iron Ages in an area which for millennia was the fulcrum of trade, religious and political exchanges across the Eastern Mediterranean. Ross has been looking again at these sites in the process of preparing a new volume which will complement, not replace, *Monuments of Syria*—tracing the main themes in Syria’s history through 40 chosen monuments.

7 August 2021

Jericho and Teleilat Ghassul: The Beginnings of Settled Life

Dr Peta Seaton AM | University of Sydney
Sydney: Saturday 7 August 10am-12pm

Abstract: Jericho (Tel es Sultan) has long been called one of the oldest cities in the world. For more than two centuries scholars have been drawn to it - initially because it was thought to be the city who the Biblical Joshua caused the 'walls to come tumbling down'. In the 1950's Dame Kathleen Kenyon, using rigorous stratigraphic methods, brought to light prehistoric Jericho - with breathtaking plastered skull burials, and an enormous 'defensive' stone tower. This lecture will cover the history of excavation of this great site in the Southern Jordan Valley, and it's Early and Middle Bronze Age, occupation, palaces and tombs.

Jericho has deep connections with the University of Sydney, as Basil Hennessy was a young archaeologist on Kenyon's field team. We will take the opportunity to overview nearby Chalcolithic Teleilat Ghassul, where excavations were directed by Hennessy and Stephen Bourke, and which fills out some of the story of pre-urban settlement in the Southern Levant.

14 August 2021

Kültepe-Kaneš and Bogazköy-Hattuša: Land of a Thousand Gods: The Bronze Age Cities of Anatolia

Dr Joseph Lehner | University of Sydney
Sydney: Saturday 14 August 10am-12pm

Abstract: From the emergence of a mosaic of distinct urban traditions in the Early Bronze Age to the sudden rise and fall of the core of the Hittite Empire in the Late Bronze Age, the cities of central Anatolia defy traditional definitions. In this lecture, we will explore two of the largest cities of the region, including Kültepe-Kaneš and Bogazköy-Hattuša, to tell the story of the rise of one of the largest territorial states in the ancient Near East – the Hittite Empire. As the centre of a vast mercantile system, Kaneš thrived during the beginning of the 2nd millennium BC and developed into one of the largest cities of its kind, only to be destroyed and abandoned by the mid 18th century BC – a pattern reflected across many of the large cities of the time. Out of the ashes of this urban phenomenon emerged the remotely located Hittite capital of Hattuša, an incredible monumental space of palaces, temples, granaries, and water management facilities. Lacking the traditional definition of a city as we know it, Hattuša was a complex of ceremonial institutions of city-scale proportions.



A view over Bogazköy-Hattuša.

HOW TO BOOK

Please go to book via our NEAF website.

https://sydney.onestopsecure.com/onestopweb/V9P/tran?UDS_ACTION=DEFAULT&UDS_ACTION_DATA=988

You can register for the whole series at a discount, or book for specific Saturdays.

- NEAF Members: \$20 per session All 5 sessions: \$80
- Non-Members \$30 per session All 5 sessions: \$120
- All Students are free

Please note – a minimum of 20 attendees is required for each lecture for this series to run – our upper limit is 300 per lecture.

All lectures will be delivered by Zoom.

ZOOM MEETING ID

Once payment is received a receipt, Meeting ID and non-transferrable password will be sent to you.

On admission to the Zoom lecture, participants will be matched to names of financial participants. Please ensure your zoom log-in screen name correctly identifies you. If you are dialling in via telephone, please ensure the number listed when booking on our website is the same used when connecting via telephone.

FORMAT

Our Introduction will start at 9.55am.

The lecture will start at 10am and the second lecture will begin at 11.05am and finish at 12 noon.

There will be opportunity for questions following the lectures, time permitting.



Persepolis, Wikimedia Commons.