

# Bestiarium Mesopotamicum ERN 2020

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# Tieromina | Animal Omens

“If a sow carries a palm leaf into the house of its owner, it means that the man will become rich.”

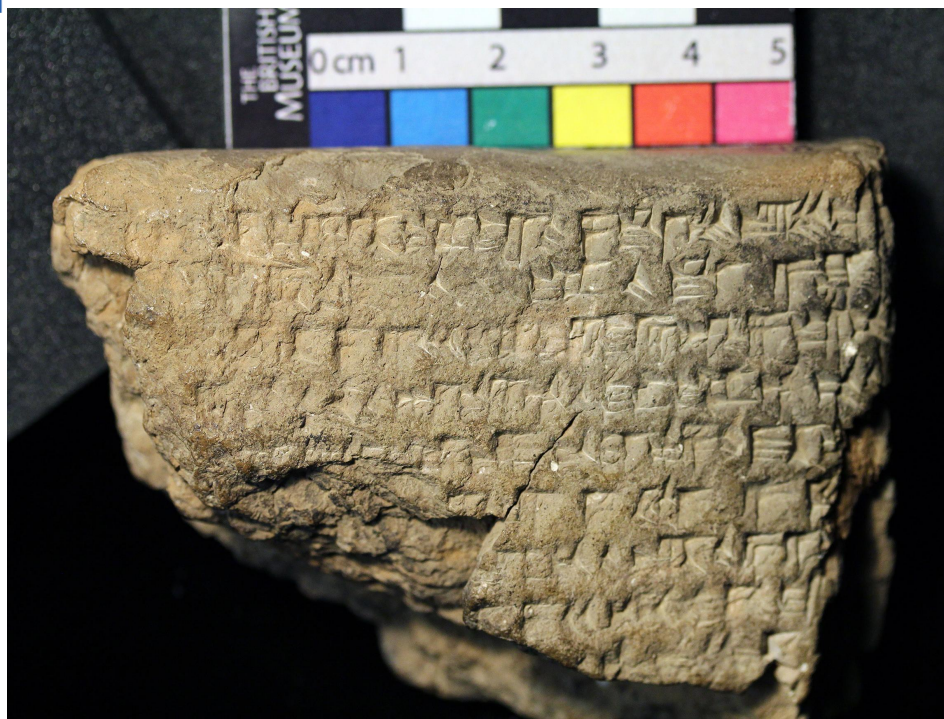
“If a dog scratches the dust in front of its owner and then lies down, it means that the man's wife will turn out to be a habitual adulteress.”

# Clay Tablets

Clay tablets in cuneiform script from the 1st millennium BCE contain thousands of sentences like these.

# Clay Tablets

Fragment of a tablet containing omens about lizards from The British Museum



A 15cm x 7cm tablet could contain as many as **40** lines!

It contains **wedged** impressions made by a **stylus** on soft clay.

This script is **cuneiform** (derived from *cuneus*, meaning wedge).

# Cuneiform



It is used to write  
ancient Semitic  
languages.  
Signs are used to  
represent both words  
and syllables.

A single sign may have one  
to a dozen wedges.

# Ancient Mesopotamians

They believed that the **gods**  
sent them **signs** about the  
**future.**

# Ancient Mesopotamians

They thought that certain animal behaviours were messages from the gods.

They also looked for signs in the movements of stars and planets in the sky.

But this project focuses on the **omens** about **animals**.

# Animal Omens

These omens are a reflection of what they thought of themselves in relation to the animals.

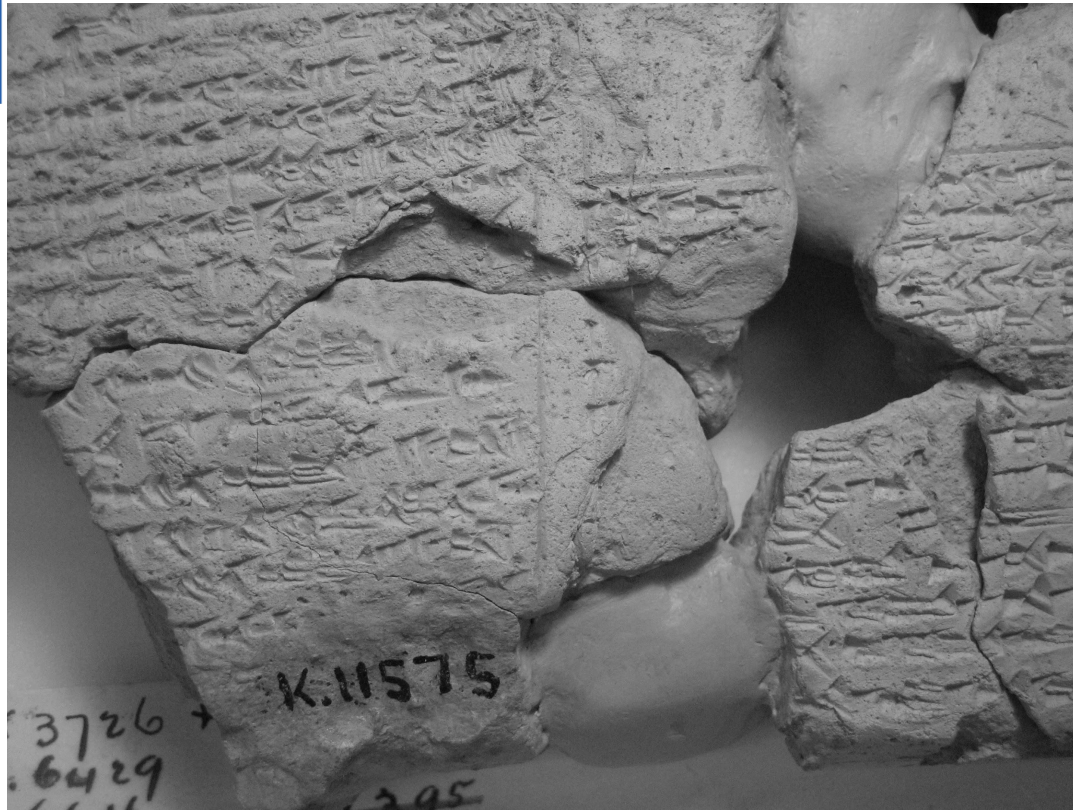


# Animal Omens

We can also learn how they perceived the animals.

- Are **snakes** always **bad**?
- Is the **right** side **good** and the **left** side **bad**?
- Is **entering** of an animal connected to **financial gain** and **exiting** of an animal connected to **financial loss**?

# Animal Omens



They are grouped into chapters.

A chapter deals with one animal with occasional guest appearances by some other animals.

# Animals

There are **thousands** of omens about all kinds of animals, including **small animals** such as **ants**, **scorpions**, **reptiles** like **lizards**, **geckos** and **snakes**, and bigger **farm animals** like **sheep**, **oxen**, **pigs**...

# Methodology

	A	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P
3	K 02925+	<i>1</i>				[...]	N]A	šá	di-na	g[i-ru-ú	...]				
4	K 02935+.1	<i>r. 13</i>						[...]	di-nam	gi-ru-ú	ŠUB-ut	di-in-šú			GÍD.D[A-ik]
5	K 09130+.1	<i>18'</i>												[...]	GÍD.DA-ik
6	K 09130+.1	<i>18'</i>												[...]	GID <sub>2</sub> .DA GAL <sub>2</sub>
7	SU 51/49+	<i>ii 17</i>												[...]	G]ÍD-ik
8	SU 51/49+	<i>ii 17</i>												[...]	G]ID <sub>2</sub> GAL <sub>2</sub>
9	VAT 10523+.2	<i>ii 1</i>	‘DIŠ’	‘MUŠ’	‘a’-[na	UGU	LÚ	ša	di-na	gi-r]u-ú	ŠUB-ut	DI	BI	[0]	GÍD.DA.MEŠ

By studying several tablets containing the same set of omens (i.e. a chapter) the researchers build a **score**.

# Methodology

	A	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P
3	K 02925+	<i>1</i>				[...]	N]A	šá	di-na	g[i-ru-ú	...]				
4	K 02935+.1	<i>r. 13</i>						[...]	di-nam	gi-ru-ú	ŠUB-ut	di-in-šú			GÍD.D[A-ik]
5	K 09130+.1	<i>18'</i>												[...]	GÍD.DA-ik
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8	SU 51/49+	<i>ii 17</i>												[...]	G]ID <sub>2</sub> GAL <sub>2</sub>
9	VAT 10523+.2	<i>ii 1</i>	·DIŠ·	·MUŠ·	·a·-[na	UGU	LÚ	ša	di-na	gi-r]u-ú	ŠUB-ut	DI	BI	[0]	GÍD.DA.MEŠ
10															
11															
12	Copy Text (trl)		DIŠ	MUŠ	a-[na	UGU	N]A	šá	di-na	gi-ru-ú	ŠUB-ut	di-in-šú			GÍD.DA-ik
13	Copy Text (trs)		šumma	šēru	a[na	muḥḥi	a]mēli	ša	dīna	girû	imqut	dīnšu			irrik
14	Copy Text (en)		If a snake falls o[n top of a m]an who is litigating – his lawsuit will be long.												

The best version of the transliterated text is inferred from the score - CopyText.

# Methodology

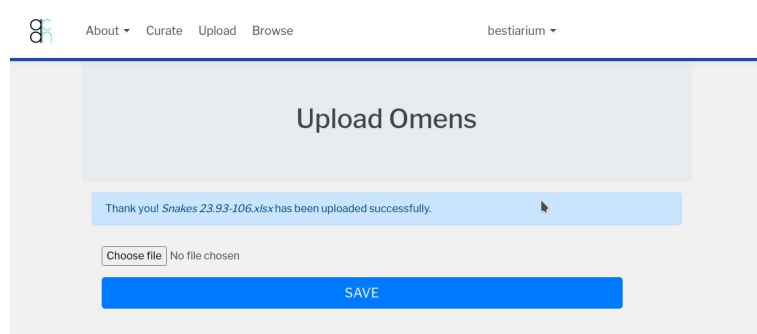
	A	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P
3	K 02925+	<i>1</i>				[...]	N]A	šá	di-na	g[i-ru-ú	...]				
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14	Copy Text (en)		If a snake falls o[n top of a m]an who is litigating – his lawsuit will be long.												

This text is then transcribed and then translated into English.

# Methodology

The finalised omens are then uploaded into ACDH-CH databases via a web portal.

It is stored in a standard TEI format, with every omen containing the score, Copy Texts, alternate readings and philological commentary.



```

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  <head/>
  <div type="score">
    <ab>
      <lb ed="wit K-02925-_" n="1"/>
      <w xml:id="Omen-23-1_wG">
        <app>
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            <anchor type="breakStart" xml:id="Omen-23-1_G3_0"/>
            ...
          </rdg>
          <rdg wit="wit VAT-10523_2">UGU</rdg>
        </app>
      </w>
      <w xml:id="Omen-23-1_wH">
        <app>
          <rdg wit="wit K-02925-_">
            N
            <anchor corresp="Omen-23-1_G3_0" type="breakEnd" xml:id="Omen-23-1_H3_1"/>
            A
          </rdg>
          <rdg wit="wit VAT-10523_2">LÚ</rdg>
        </app>
      </w>
      <w xml:id="Omen-23-1_wI">
        <app>
          <rdg wit="wit K-02925-_">šá</rdg>
          <rdg wit="wit K-02925_1">

```

# Protasis

the **clause expressing the condition** in a conditional sentence

“If a snake falls from above onto a man’s **leg** – a mortally ill person will die in that man’s house, the master of the house will experience misery and (then) he will die.”



# Apodosis

the **main clause** of a conditional sentence

“If a snake falls from above onto a man’s leg, **a mortally ill person will die in that man’s house, the master of the house will experience misery and (then) he will die.**”

# Linguistic Analysis

Word senses are disambiguated via a curation process (using data from WordNet®)

If ants kill one another : engage in a battle – uprising of an enemy,

**fall** of a large army will occur.

[fall.n.06] a sudden decline in strength or number or importance

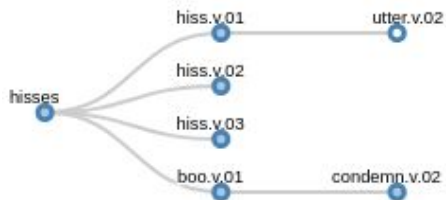
If many lizards **fall** in a man's house – abandonment of the house.

[fall.v.01] descend in free fall under the influence of gravity

# Linguistic Analysis

**Hypernym trees** are associated with the disambiguated terms.

This helps us to find **similarities** in the text even when **different words** are used to describe a **similar concept**.



**hiss.v.01** make a sharp hissing sound, as if to show disapproval

**hiss.v.02** move with a whooshing sound

**hiss.v.03** express or utter with a hiss

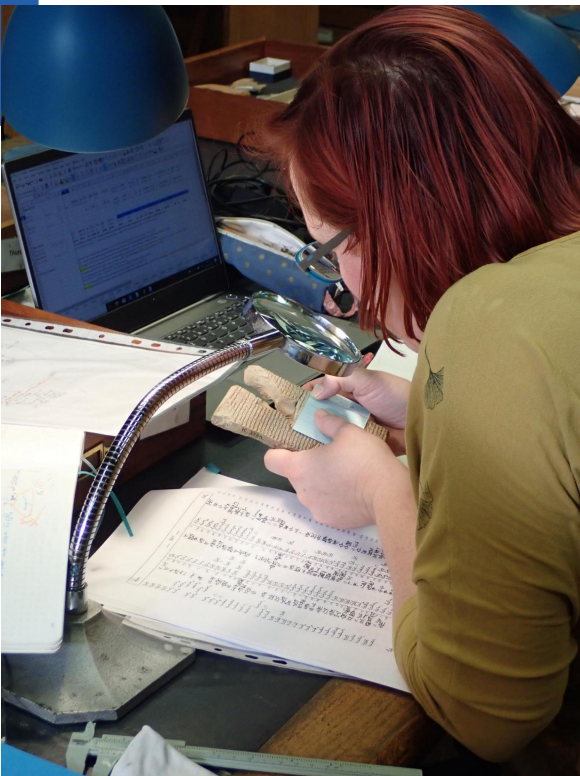
**boo.v.01** show displeasure, as after a performance or speech

# How well do you know the animal omens?

Take our quiz to find out!

<https://acdh-oeaw.github.io/tieromina/>

# Meet the Assyriologists!



# Meet the Assyriologists!



(from L - R)

- Maya Rinderer
- Dr. Judith Pfitzner
- Dr. Nicla De Zorzi (PI)
- Nicole Adrienne  
Lundeen-Kaulfus



# ACDH-CH



Daniel Schopper



Saranya  
Balasubramanian

# Thank you!