REALLY DEAD LANGUAGES AND THEIR EPIGRAPHY II

Sponsored by

THE CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF AMERICA | School of Arts and Sciences

Organizers:
Sarah Ferrario and Lilla Kopár

February 6-8, 2025
McMahon Hall Room 201

Schedule

RSVP here:

- **Thu, Feb. 6th, 4:00-6:30 PM**

  4:00-5:15 PM
  Welcome (S. Ferrario & L. Kopár) *and*
  Manichaean Middle Persian
  Nathan Tilley

  5:30-6:30 PM
  The Celtic Languages
  Jennifer Paxton

- **Fri, Feb. 7th, 4:00-6:30 PM**

  4:00-5:30 PM
  Mayan Languages and Script
  Frauke Sachse and Joanne Baron

  5:45-6:30 PM
  Tour of ICOR (Session 1)
  Monica Blanchard

- **Sat, Feb. 8th, 10:00-12:30 PM**

  10:00-11:00 AM
  Sanskrit
  Andrew Merritt

  11:15 AM-12:15 PM
  Phoenician
  Andrew Litke

- **Sat, Feb. 8th, 1:00-4:30 PM**

  1:00-1:45 PM
  Tour of ICOR (Session 2)
  Monica Blanchard

  2:00-3:00 PM
  Iron-Age Hebrew Funerary Inscriptions
  Matthew Suriano

  3:15-4:30 PM
  Runes: There & Back Again
  Kerstin Majewski

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Manichaean Middle Persian: Manichaean Middle Persian is the form of Middle Persian and its script found in Manichaean texts within Central Asia, dating from the 4th to 9th c. CE. Here, we will discuss the discovery of these texts, introduce the script, and look at examples with significance for Iranian linguistics and the history of Manichaeism.

The Celtic languages: The Celtic languages are a branch of the Indo-European family of languages consisting of two main living sub-branches spoken today in Ireland, Britain, and France: Goidelic (Irish, Scots Gaelic, and Manx) and Brythonic (Welsh, Cornish, and Breton). However, this language family also includes several extinct continental languages, from Gaulish to lesser known languages from Spain (Lusitanian) and Italy (Lepontic), whose relationship to neighboring Iberian and Italic languages remains a matter of debate. This talk will introduce the Celtic languages and explore some of the current unsolved problems in Celtic linguistics, as well as examine several continental Celtic inscriptions.

Mayan: The Ancient Maya script is the most complex writing system of the Americas. Its decipherment is an ongoing epigraphic achievement that draws on modern Mayan languages to reconstruct "Classic Mayan." In this talk, we will tell the fascinating story of the decipherment and explain how the hieroglyphic system worked.

Tour of the Semitics Department and ICOR Library: Wonder at the collection of manuscripts, papyri, and inscriptions of Semitic and Egyptian languages and literatures. You might also encounter Armenian, Coptic, Ge'ez Ethiopic, Old Georgian, Old Nubian, and Syriac. (This is the Indiana Jones portion of RDL II.)

Sanskrit: Sanskrit is the classical language of Indian civilization. As a member of the Indo-European family, it shares descent with, for example, Greek, Latin, and English from the parent language Proto-Indo-European (PIE). This session will provide an overview of Sanskrit, including its writing system, and proceed to examine the language itself in comparative and historical perspective, tracing the development of its grammar and vocabulary from PIE vis-à-vis Greek, Latin, and other cognate languages.

Phoenician: Phoenician was a Northwest Semitic language of crucial importance throughout the Mediterranean, from the Iron Age well into the Common Era. The Phoenician alphabet spread to, among others, Greek, Aramaic, and Hebrew. After discussing the language's cultural importance, we will decipher the script of one inscription and read another.

Iron Age Hebrew funerary inscriptions: This session will focus on the genre of funerary inscriptions in Epigraphic Hebrew. The term is used for extra-biblical Hebrew from the Iron Age II–III (1000/980–586/540 BCE). We will examine the genre's features and discuss the meanings of inscriptions from monumental tombs on the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem.

Runes: There and back again: In early medieval England (c. 450–1100 CE) the runic script (the so-called *fuþorc*) and the Roman alphabet co-existed as writing systems up until the Norman Conquest. This talk will give an overview of the Old English runic corpus and will also address the interest in and the (re-)uses of the runic script in post-medieval times.