Beyond hierarchies: Heterarchy and gender

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Topic

It is useful to research social relationships from the perspective of how elements were ordered from top to bottom or from bottom to top, i.e. hierarchically. However, alternative ways of conceptualizing relations between elements leads to alternative and more complex interpretations. In this respect the application of the concept of heterarchy to archaeological source material as well as to ancient texts is fruitful. Carole Crumley defined the term as follows: “heterarchy may be defined as the relation of elements to one another when they are unranked or when they possess the potential for being ranked in a number of different ways” (Crumley 1995, 3). Therefore, the aim of this workshop is to discuss a specific conceptual approach, “heterarchy”, within the framework of gender and ancient Near Eastern studies.

A recent excellent discussion on the topic of gender and heterarchy from an archaeological perspective is found in Janet E. Levy’s paper “Gender, Heterarchy and Hierarchy” (2006). An assyriological example would be Saana Svärd’s article “Women, Power and Heterarchy in the Neo-Assyrian Palaces” (2012).

For this workshop we invite papers that reflect on the concept “heterarchy” as a potentially fruitful category of analysis for studying gender in the ancient Near East. For example, how do heterarchical relationships manifest between gender and other categories such as age, status and ethnicity? Or: by analyzing sexual division of labor with the help of the concept “heterarchy”, do we gain a different interpretation on the topic?

We ask those interested in the topic to send us a short abstract (maximum 300 words) before 15th February 2014. Acceptance for the workshop will be delivered by end of February. Please note that all expenses for the conference will have to be covered by the participants. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you require further information.

References
