

## Nederlands Instituut voor het Nabije Oosten

### Vooraziatisch-Egyptisch Genootschap 'Ex Oriente Lux'

#### Jaarprijs Cuijpers-Opdenakker 2022

This is the second presentation of the Annual Prize for the best scientific article in the fields of the history, archaeology, languages and cultures of the ancient Near East by an early career academic. The prize was made available by mr. drs. Carin Cuijpers and dr. Raymond Opdenakker.

The Jury assessed seven entries. All articles were of excellent quality, and had been published in renowned scientific journals. The topics were diverse, including entries in the fields of Hebrew, Cultural Heritage Studies, Egyptology and Bible Studies/old Sabaic.

The judging consisted of two rounds. In the first, the Jury assessed the scientific quality of each article. Each article was assessed independently by three jury members who in addition to overall quality, commented on innovation, presentation, scholarly impact and argument structure. The results were then discussed and a shortlist of three finalists drawn up.

The three highly commended articles are:

**Russell, J.**, Sun, M., Liang, W., He, M., Schroën, Y., Zou, W., Pommerening, T., & Wang, M. (2021). An investigation of the pharmacological applications used for the Ancient Egyptian systemic model '*ra-ib*' compared with modern Traditional Chinese Medicine. *Journal of Ethnopharmacology*, 265, 113115.

**Tafferner, M.** (2021). The Literary History of 2 Sam 8: 1b–14 and the Old Sabaic Royal Summary Inscription RES 3945/3946. *Vetus Testamentum*, 1(aop), 1-25.

**De Crom, D.** (2020). A Polysystemic Perspective on Ancient Hebrew-Greek Translation. *Journal of Ancient Judaism*, 11(2), 163-199.

The articles can be described, partly on the basis of the reports of the Jury members, as follows.

The first article is a fine study of 33 texts, mainly from the Ebers papyrus c. 1550 BCE, focused on medicinal prescriptions related to the *ra-ib*. The aim of the study is to investigate the *ra-ib* and the explanatory models of illness from the Egyptian perspective, and to explore the link between these and the prescribed selection of materia medica. In comparing the conceptual mechanics of these treatment strategies with those of another non- Western tradition, namely Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM), the authors provide further insights into potential conceptual frameworks. The interdisciplinary nature, working with scholars specialising in traditional Chinese medicine is highly original as well as informative in elucidating the research questions posed. The authors clearly introduce the topic, the methods and the research questions. The result is a refreshing picture of Egyptian medicine, on both the conceptual and the practical (pharmacological) level.

The second article compares the Israelite royal summary account of David from 2 Sam 8:1b-14 with the Old Sabaic royal summary account of Karib'il Watar (RES 3945+3946). The study finds that significant structural and rhetorical parallels between the two accounts suggest a shared literary repertoire for narrating the royal story in ancient Israel and Ancient South Arabia. In particular, the analysis discovers shared strategies for outlining the narrative, a shared usage of stereotypical language, and a number of shared motifs. These results indicate that scribes from ancient Israel and Ancient South Arabia participated in historically related literary practices. Therefore, they further highlight the need to portray pre-Islamic Arabia as participating in the cultural changes which marked the southern Levant during the Iron Age. The article is a very well written piece of excellent scientific quality. The comparison of two royal accounts from diverse sources, a Sabaic inscription and a passage from the Hebrew Bible is a highly original approach in the field of Biblical Hebrew studies.

The third article describes the main ideas and concepts of polysystem theory, and explores the question to what extent this theoretical framework can contribute to a good understanding of the position of translators and translations in the different literatures of the Hellenistic period. The emphasis is on the interaction between the (dominant) Greek literary system and the (peripheral) literatures of the Ancient Near East, especially Hebrew literature. The central thesis is that the Hebrew-Greek translation tradition must be understood as an autonomous literary system, with its own normativity and discursivity that are separate from the talk about translation that we know from the Roman tradition and its aftereffects. The article is a study of high scholarly quality, well documented and interesting to read. It proposes a new look at Hebrew-Greek translation practices in antiquity.

An important motive of the prize is to popularise our subjects to the wider community. Therefore the winner is selected not only on the basis of their article, but the finalised were invited to submit a proposal for an outreach activity explaining how they would popularise their research. The Jury members deliberated a second time and the winner was selected on the basis of both the written paper and the outreach proposal.

The choice of the popularisation proposal played a decisive role in our final decision for the overall winner of the prize. We congratulate Dries De Crom.

Dries' proposal is to develop a series of lessons for students. Dries De Crom writes: "The article that I submitted for the 'Jaarprijs Cuijpers-Opdenakker' raises questions concerning the interaction of different languages and literatures, cultural hierarchies and how translations can both reflect and influence such hierarchies. These are fascinating topics to study, from the perspective of both the Hellenistic age and our own time. The lesson series will, first of all, present texts (in Latin, Greek and/or in translation) illustrating the interactions of Latin, Greek and minority languages of the Hellenistic world, e.g. fragments from the Septuagint (Hebrew/Greek), bilingual inscriptions (Aramaic/Greek, Latin/Greek) or papyri (Greek/Demotic). These texts will of course be presented in a way that is suited to high school students, with sufficient historic and literary background and, for the non-curricular languages, a transcription and translation. Next, a number of learning activities will be presented that invite students to reflect on the significance of these texts.

In the opinion of the Jury, he elaborates this very nicely and the lessons promise to be inspiring. If there is one effective method to increase interest in our subjects, it is education. Because he is a teacher himself, he seems the suitable candidate for this. He writes: “The didactic material will allow students to discover texts and worlds that are not usually covered in high school GLTC curricula, which are still very much centered on the canon of “high” Greek and Latin literature. Hopefully, students will become aware that the languages and cultures they are studying were deeply embedded in the wider context of the ancient Mediterranean and Near East. Furthermore, the proposed lesson series is entirely in line with the central emphasis of the GLTC subjects, which is “reflecting on the own through the foreign” (“reflecteren op het eigene via het vreemde”) (cf. the 2019 VCN report *Selfie met Sappho*).

Not only education, but also the National Museum of Antiquities, which is also strongly committed to arousing interest among young people, can benefit from his project. And we assume that it will also be possible for Ex Oriente Lux to benefit from his expertise and, in the long term, NINO, when young enthusiasts start studying our subjects. The Jury wishes Dries De Crom every success with his project. Finally, we would like to congratulate the runners-up and all of the entrants for their outstanding contributions and wish them lots of success in their academic career.

The Jury:

- dr. Lucy Bennison-Chapman (NINO)
- mr. drs. Carin Cuijpers (Prize instigator)
- dr. Jan Gerrit Dercksen (EOL)
- dr. Jaap van Dijk (EOL)
- Prof. dr. Jacques van der Vliet (NINO)
- *Guusje van der Meij (NINO, acting as Secretary to the jury)*