

**Friday lunch talk  
Yale linguistics  
12pm Dow 201**

**30  
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Near Eastern Languages &  
Civilizations**



### **Meter and Meaning in Akkadian Poetry**

The Akkadian literary tradition is one of the oldest in the world and was productive over three millennia. It has given us well-known classics such as the *Epic of Gilgamesh*, the *Babylonian Creation Epic*, and the *Babylonian Flood Story* as well as hundreds of other myths, epics, narratives, hymns, poems, and prayers. Much has been said about the content of these literary texts, but discussions on the formal characteristics of Akkadian literature are comparatively scarce. What is Akkadian poetry and what can distinguish it from prose? One of the most salient features of Akkadian poetry is meter. In this talk, basic rules for a metrical system in Akkadian poetry will be presented, and its implications for the construction and conveying of meaning in the composition will be discussed. Rather than counting syllable lengths like in Greek and Latin, Akkadian meter counts units of stress that are grammatically and semantically self-sufficient. It will also be argued that meter is used to formulate elements of parallelism within verses, in couplets, and at the strophic level.