

## PEW RESEARCH PROPOSAL

### 1. Title of the project.

“The Strange Upper Sea: Assyrian Views of the Mediterranean”

### 2. Statement of the end product(s) (book, chapter, article, play composition, exhibit, or other dissemination means appropriate to your discipline).

I will publish the results of this research as a peer-reviewed academic journal article in one of the major journals in the field of Ancient Near East studies or Neo-Assyrian studies. I will also present the results of this research at the annual meeting of either the American Society of Overseas Research (ASOR) or the Society of Biblical Literature (SBL).

### 3. Explanation of the scholarly activity.

#### I. Statement of the scholarly activity.

The Assyrian empire ruled much of what is now the Middle East between 1350 and 612 BC. This project is a study of how its rulers conceived of the relationship between their empire and the natural world. I will argue that Assyrian imperial propaganda, as expressed in relief sculptures displayed in palaces and in royal inscriptions, deliberately depicted the Mediterranean Sea as an exotic landscape. They did so by presenting it as a space filled with exotic and terrifying animals, over whom the Assyrian king triumphed and extended imperial control.

#### II. Description of the activity and its goals.

My project relies on two groups of sources. The first are a series of Assyrian royal inscriptions, starting with those of the king Tiglath-pileser I (r. 1114-1076 BC) and ending with those of Esarhaddon (r. 681-669). Kings such as Tiglath-pileser I and Assur-bel-kala (r. 1076-1075) bragged about hunting exotic wildlife such as a mysterious animal called the *nāhiru*, likely to be identified with the hippopotamus (Elayi and Voisin 2014). Assur-bel-kala further bragged about receiving Mediterranean animals such as a crocodile and a monk seal as gifts (Nahm 2022). Ashurnasirpal II (r. 883-859) later spoke of receiving tusks of the *nāhiru* as tribute, possibly indicating that the creature was now rare or extirpated from the coast of Syria. Later Assyrian kings such as Sargon II (r. 722-705) and Esarhaddon boasted of receiving tribute from peoples who lived across the sea, extending the reach of the empire. The sea was depicted as a boundary, marking the end of the empire and the beginning of the domain of seafaring peoples such as the Greeks and Phoenicians who could bring tribute from even more distant lands. By hunting exotic aquatic wildlife, Assyrian kings symbolically recreated the battle of Marduk against the water monster Tiamat in the Babylonian creation myth *Enuma Elish*, establishing order over previously chaotic territory.

The second set of sources are a series of relief sculptures formerly displayed in Assyrian royal palaces. The largest of these is a five-panel relief from Sargon II's palace at Khorsabad which is now in the collection of the Louvre Museum in Paris. This relief depicts a fleet of boats transporting logs from Mount Lebanon along the Mediterranean coast. The relief contains numerous small details which would have communicated to an Assyrian audience that this was an exotic foreign space. There are snakes and unidentified reptiles swimming in the sea alongside mermen and winged bulls. In other cases the artists appear to have depicted exotic fauna using more familiar forms: sea turtles, for example, are rendered so as to resemble the Euphrates Softshell Turtle (*Rafetus euphraticus*) – the largest aquatic turtle species known from the Assyrian heartland.

Several other seascape reliefs are found in the collections of the British Museum in London. A fragmentary relief dating from the reign of Sargon's father Tiglath-pileser III (r. 745-722) depicts a Phoenician city along the Mediterranean coast, accompanied in the water by a ship, a giant tortoise, a snake or eel, and what appears to be a gigantic chicken (Barnett and Falkner 1962, 17). Other reliefs held in the British Museum which depict the Tigris and Euphrates rivers do not contain such strange and fantastic creatures and instead depict the local fauna with a high degree of naturalism and accuracy.

While line drawings and photographs of the Khorsabad relief have been published, other scholars have noticed significant differences in details between the drawings and the relief itself (Albenda 1983). The photographs which have been published are not of sufficiently high resolution to properly examine details of the scene such as how animals are portrayed. Some sections of the relief have been reconstructed; however, the published photographs of the relief are not of sufficiently high resolution to identify which sections are reconstructed and which are original. The Khorsabad relief is currently on public display in Gallery 229 of the Louvre Museum. Since my argument relies on closely examining the details of the relief, I will need to travel to Paris to examine it in person and take detailed high-resolution photographs. Although this part of the project will not require special access, I will coordinate with the staff of the Louvre's Department of Near Eastern Antiquities in order to ensure a smooth visit.

I will also need to access the relief sculptures in the British Museum, including the fragmentary seascapes from the reign of Tiglath-pileser III and other reliefs depicting the swamps of southern Mesopotamia for comparative purposes. The British Museum's collections are open for access and several of the reliefs depicting seascape scenes and swamp scenes are on public display in the museum's Assyria galleries. I will make an appointment to view the reliefs which are not on public display and will examine the others in the same manner as at the Louvre. I have previously worked at the British Museum in the fall of 2018 and I will easily be able to make a researcher appointment in order to view the relevant reliefs.

### **III.-IV. Theoretical framework and Brief examination of scholarly literature or context of the activity within your discipline.**

Previous scholarship on these reliefs has focused on attempting to identify the species and geographic locations depicted in the reliefs. Studies by Pauline Albenda (1983) and Elisha Linder (1986) have debated the location depicted on the Khorsabad relief. More recent work (Reade 2018) has challenged the notion that the Khorsabad reliefs depict naturalistic scenes, arguing that they serve an ideological purpose depicting the vast territory controlled by the empire and the tribute it provided to the Assyrian heartland. Allison Thomason (2001) has likewise argued that Assyrian kings attempted to reconstruct the landscape of northern Syria in their royal gardens, symbolizing the reach of the empire and the conquest of formerly wild spaces.

My article will build on these works to argue that the depictions of the Mediterranean in both textual and artistic sources represent a deliberate and ideological strangifying. Studies of the Khorsabad relief have generally not considered the more bizarre depictions of the Mediterranean found in the reliefs of Tiglath-pileser III, nor have they compared depictions of the Mediterranean to the relatively muted depictions of the fauna of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. By presenting the Mediterranean as an exotic space which Assyrian kings were in the process of subduing and conquering, the Assyrian kings sought to demonstrate the vast power of the empire through both its geographic breadth and its conquest and taming of the natural world.

This article represents some of the first steps towards a larger project with the goal of writing a book offering a new and ambitious interpretation of the environmental history of the ancient Near East in the first half of the first millennium BC (1100-500 BC). This time period is often called "the age of empires,"

as the Near East was ruled by a succession of larger and larger empires from Assyria to Babylon to Persia. The expansion of empires' control over the natural world was enabled by technology. During this period, new technologies such as waterproof cisterns, underground irrigation channels, and aqueducts allowed farmers to cultivate previously inarable land from Judah to eastern Syria to Arabia. At the same time, the Near East underwent a localized extinction of large quadrupeds such as elephant, hippopotamus, aurochs, and hartebeest (Tsahar, et al. 2009). The *nāhiru* hunted by Assyrian kings in Syria was likely one of the last of its kind in the region outside of Egypt.

While vanishing wildlife was a predictable consequence of hunting and the expansion of human settlement, I will argue that the process of settlement and associated extirpation was accompanied by a cultural and intellectual shift away from understanding human beings and the gods as components of the natural world and towards a cosmology which separated the divine from the physical world and which grants human beings a special and divinely mandated role to play within it. In this new conception of the relationship between man, cosmos, and the divine, the natural world was seen as a chaotic space to be conquered, subdued, and harnessed for productive use. This work will draw upon Assyrian royal inscriptions which speak of cutting roads through mountains, redirecting rivers, and otherwise reshaping nature for human benefit. Assyrian eco-imperial views of the natural world stand in contrast to the biblical texts of Genesis, Job, Isaiah and Psalms, which also depict the natural world as separate from the divine yet depict Yahweh, rather than the Assyrian king and his divine protectors, as the one who gives a natural order to the world while still commanding human beings to subdue, and rule over it.

There has been little research on views of the natural world in the Assyrian empire or in the broader Near East during the first millennium BC. This paper's argument concerning Assyrian views of the Mediterranean will therefore be an important first step towards developing this larger argument about changing views of the natural world in the Near East under Assyrian domination.

## References:

- Albenda, Pauline. 1983. "A Mediterranean Seascape from Khorsabad." *Assur* 3 (3): 1-34.
- Barnett, R. D., and M. Falkner. 1962. *The Sculptures of Aššur-našir-apli II (883-859 B.C.), Tiglath-pileser III (745-727 B.C.), Esarhaddon (681-669 B.C.) from the Central and South-West Palaces at Nimrud*. London: Trustees of the British Museum.
- Elayi, Josette, and Jean-François Voisin. 2014. "Quelques précisions sur le *nāhiru* pêché au sud d'Arwad." *Aula Orientalis* 32 (1): 71-77.
- Linder, Elisha. 1986. "The Khorsabad Wall Relief: A Mediterranean Seascape or River Transport of Timbers?" *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 106 (2): 273-281.
- Nahm, Werner. 2022. "Tiglath-pileser's River-Man." *Nouvelles Assyriologiques Brèves et Utilitaires* (2022-3): 236-237.
- Reade, Julian Edgeworth. 2018. "Ships Bringing Timber for the Palace of Sargon: Alternative Presentations of Reality." In *Text and Image: Proceedings of the 61e Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale, Geneva and Bern, 22-26 June 2015*, edited by Pascal Attinger, Antoine Cavigneaux, Catherine Mittermayer and Mirko Novák, 355-368. Leuven: Peeters.
- Thomason, Allison Karmel. 2001. "Representations of the North Syrian Landscape in Neo-Assyrian Art." *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 323: 63-96.
- Tsahar, Ella, Ido Izhaki, Simcha Lev-Yadun, and Guy Bar-Oz. 2009. "Distribution and Extinction of Ungulates during the Holocene of the Southern Levant." *PLoS ONE* 4 (4): 1-13.

## V. Connection to Ernest Boyer's Model of Scholarship.

In Boyer's classification, this work primarily falls under the category of "Scholarship of Discovery," that is, it contributes new knowledge to the fields of ancient history and Assyriology. However, as it also

involves interdisciplinary research spanning the fields of assyriology, art history, and biblical studies, it could also be classified as “Scholarship of Integration,” taking information from several disciplines and giving it a broader meaning by integrating into one piece of scholarship.

**4. An essay (500 - 1000 words) describing how the Christian faith relates to your understanding of your discipline and how it relates to this scholarly endeavor.**

As a historian specializing in the history of the ancient Near East, I study some of the times and places where God chose to reveal Himself through special revelation. I view this as a great privilege, a heavy responsibility, and a unique opportunity to make the world of the Bible come alive and to further our understanding of the biblical text. Understanding the cultural background of the world in which the Old Testament was written can illuminate obscure passages or reveal new understandings of the messages of scripture.

The paper I intend to write from this grant represents one more brick in the structure of our understanding of the Near East. Furthering our understanding of how Assyrian propaganda presented the Mediterranean as an exotic and foreign territory contrasts with other Assyrian propaganda in 2 Kings 18:31-32, where an Assyrian official promises the people of Jerusalem that they will experience a land of material abundance if they allow themselves to be deported to the Assyrian heartland – a formerly arid land which had been transformed by the Assyrian empire’s irrigation projects into a fertile and heavily populated plain.

The larger project of which this paper represents the first effort has much broader implications for our understanding of the biblical text and for developing a robust theology of creation. My project posits that a change took place in people’s cosmology, in which they moved away from what John Walton calls “the Great Symbiosis” between gods and human beings where both are mutually dependent components of the same world towards a cosmology where the divine being created the world and established a hierarchical relationship which placed the divine at the top, humans underneath, and the natural world beneath humans.

This new cosmology was not wrong on its face. Mankind is made in the image of God and commanded to “fill the earth and subdue it” (Genesis 1:27-28). However, in Assyria in particular this cosmology manifested in an ideology of imperial domination over nature. In 2 Kings 19:23-24, the prophet Isaiah uses language reminiscent of Assyrian royal inscriptions to mock the Assyrian king Sennacherib for claiming to have conquered nature. Isaiah sought to remind Hezekiah that Yahweh remained the supreme ruler over all the nations and that Sennacherib’s claims to have “ascended the heights of mountains” and “dried up all the streams of Egypt” were blasphemous attempts to usurp the place of Yahweh as lord over all creation.

Isaiah strikes a similar tone in Isaiah 14:8, in which the great cedars of Lebanon celebrate the downfall of the king of Babylon by saying that “now that you have been laid low, no one comes to cut us down.” Divine judgement in Isaiah is associated with devastation of agriculture and the natural environment (24:4; 27:10-12), while redemption is presented as the renewal of a desolate land to become productive again (35:1-2).

The Behemoth and Leviathan in Job 40-41 (as well as Isaiah 27:1 and Psalms 74:14 and 104:26) likewise engage with the themes of “chaos-battle” found in myths such as Marduk’s defeat of Tiamat in *Enuma Elish*. This myth was ritually re-enacted by Assyrian and Babylonian kings both in hunting expeditions and at the annual *Akitu* festival in Babylon. Yet in the Biblical accounts, the great creatures of land and sea are subservient to Yahweh, who created them and placed them in their natural habitats as a part of the natural world (Psalm 104:26; see also Jonah 1:17).

Psalms 8, 19, 65, 74 and 139 likewise offer a sharp contrast with the Great Symbiosis, instead depicting Yahweh as the creator of and ruler over the natural world, who nevertheless exists separately from it. In the Psalms, the natural world is not a chaotic space in need of imperial domination to make it productive, but instead possesses a natural order established by its Creator. Seen against this theology of creation, the blasphemous nature of the Assyrian kings' claims to dominate, control, and transform the natural world from something chaotic to something productive become readily apparent.

Unearthing the eco-imperial cosmologies which Isaiah denounced has tremendous implications for developing a robust theology of creation. The problem with the Assyrian cosmology is fundamentally one of disordered hierarchy. Assyrian kings placed themselves in the place of God through pursuing the conquest and domination of nature for its own sake and for their own glory. A proper understanding of the hierarchy between God, human beings, and the natural world is not based solely on those higher dominating the lower. Rather than a chaotic space, nature already has an order which reflects the order of its creator. Human development of the natural world should be conducted in such a way as to point towards the creator rather than to glory in domination for its own sake.

#### 5. A time frame for the completion and a plan for the dissemination of the project.

Fall 2024/Spring 2025 – Purchase books for research as specified in the budget. Confirm dates for research appointments with the Louvre and British Museum. Book flights and accommodations.

June or July 2025 – Travel to Paris and London in order to conduct research in the collections at the Louvre and the British Museum.

November 2025 – Present results at the ASOR or SBL Annual Meetings, both of which will be held in Boston, MA.

Fall/Winter 2025 – Submit an article based on this research to an academic journal for peer review and publication.

#### 6. A brief budget (For example, funds may be used for purchasing equipment, travel, conference attendance, etc. If requesting funds as a stipend, please justify the need for a stipend to complete the project.)

Item:	Cost:
Airfare (multi city flight to Paris > London > return)	\$2000
Accommodations – Paris	\$600
Accommodations – London	\$600
Public Transportation	\$100
Food	\$350
Books – <i>Royal Inscriptions of the Neo-Assyrian Period</i> series.	\$650
Image permissions for publication	\$200
<b>Total Budget:</b>	<b>\$4,500</b>

#### 7. A current curriculum vitae.

See attached below.

8. **Two letters of recommendation should be submitted directly to chair of the Research Committee attesting to the worth of the project, the candidate's scholarly competence, and his/her ability to complete the project with distinction in a timely fashion.**

Letters have been solicited from the following recommenders:

Prof. Marc Van De Mierop, Department of History, Columbia University.

Prof. Scott Huelin, The Honors Community, Union University

9. **Two letters of support (from Department Chair and Dean) should be submitted directly to the chair of the Research Committee stating their approval of the proposed project, sharing any potential departmental/college/school support the candidate may receive if the Pew Grant is awarded for their proposal (e.g., course release time or allocation of professional development funds) and confirming their confidence in the candidate's ability to complete the proposed project in a timely manner.**

Letters have been solicited from the following recommenders:

Prof. Keith Bates, Chair, Department of History.

Prof. Mark Bolyard, Interim Dean, College of Arts and Sciences.

**Dr. Christopher W. Jones**  
**Curriculum Vitae**

**Email:** [cjones@uu.edu](mailto:cjones@uu.edu)

**Phone:** 336-316-9204

**Mailing Address:**

UU 1908  
1050 Union University Drive  
Jackson, TN 38305

## **EDUCATION**

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- 2021     **Ph.D – History**, Columbia University.  
          ○ Dissertation: “Power and Elite Competition in the Neo-Assyrian Empire, 745 to 612 B.C.”  
          ○ Advisor: Marc Van De Mieroop.  
          ○ Committee: Daniel Fleming, Saana Svärd, Richard Billows, Sailakshmi Ramgopal.
- 2017     **M.Phil – History**, Columbia University.
- 2016     **M.A. – History**, Columbia University.
- 2014     **M.A. – Biblical Archaeology**, Wheaton College.
- 2011     **B.A. – Peace, War & Defense, History**, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

## **ACADEMIC EMPLOYMENT**

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- 2023-present     Assistant Professor, Department of History, Union University, Jackson, TN.
- 2022-23     Postdoctoral Researcher, Centre of Excellence in Ancient Near Eastern Empires, University of Helsinki.
- 2021-22     Visiting Professor of History and Political Science, Warren Wilson College, Swannanoa, NC.
- 2020-21     Doris G. Quinn Fellow.
- 2019-20     Adjunct Instructor, Warren Wilson College Department of History, Politics, and Economics, Swannanoa, NC.
- 2019     Adjunct Instructor, Montreat College Department of History, Montreat, NC.
- 2015-18     Teaching Assistant, Columbia University Department of History, New York, NY.
- 2013-14     Museum Associate, Wheaton College Archaeology Museum, Wheaton, IL.

## **HONORS, GRANTS AND AWARDS**

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- 2024     International Association for Assyriology Prize for Best First Article, awarded for my article “Failed Coup: The Assassination of Sennacherib and Esarhaddon’s Struggle for the Throne, 681-680 B.C.”

- 2023 Research Grant, Kon-Tiki Museum, Oslo, Norway.
- 2022-23 Postdoctoral Research Associate, Department of Egyptology and Assyriology, Brown University (declined).
- 2022 Faculty Teaching Excellence Award, Warren Wilson College (nominated).
- 2020-21 Doris G. Quinn dissertation completion fellowship.
- 2020 Bernard and Muriel Bloom Fellowship, Columbia University Institute for Israel and Jewish Studies (declined due to the COVID-19 pandemic)
- 2019 Travel Grant, Columbia University Institute for Israel and Jewish Studies.
- 2019 Columbia University Arts and Sciences Graduate Council Student Travel Grant.
- 2018 Fellow at the Robert Anderson Research Charitable Trust, London.
- 2017 Brebner Travel Award, Columbia University Department of History.
- 2017 Bernard and Muriel Bloom Fellowship, Columbia University Institute for Israel and Jewish Studies.
- 2017 Eric and Carol Meyers Excavation Fellowship, American Schools of Oriental Research.
- 2016 Summer Pre-Prospectus Research Travel Grant, Columbia University Department of History.
- 2016 Robert Stigler Fellowship for Archaeological Fieldwork, Columbia University Department of Anthropology.
- 2016 Summer Research Grant, Columbia University Institute for Israel and Jewish Studies.
- 2015 Ackerman Fellowship, Tell es-Safi/Gath Excavations.
- 2014-19 Richard J. Hofstadter Fellow, Columbia University Department of History.
- 2011 Graduated with Distinction, UNC-Chapel Hill.
- 2011 Russell S. Cowell Academic Excellence Award, Curriculum in Peace, War & Defense, UNC-Chapel Hill.
- 2011 Undergraduate senior thesis awarded Highest Honors, UNC-Chapel Hill.
- 2011 Phi Beta Kappa.
- 2010 Dunlevie Honors Undergraduate Research Award, UNC-Chapel Hill.

## PUBLICATIONS

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### Books

*The Structure of the Late Assyrian State, 722-612 BC.* Under contract with SBL Press for their Ancient Near East Monographs series. Estimated completion 2025.



With Jonathan Gardner, eds. *Collapse from the Ground Floor: The Transition from the Neo-Assyrian to the Neo-Babylonian Empires Viewed from Below*. Edited volume publishing papers from two years of sessions chaired by the editors at the American Society of Overseas Research from 2022-23. Accepted for publication by Harrassowitz Verlag for their series *Studia Chaburensia*. Estimated completion early 2025.

### **Journal Articles and Book Chapters (Peer Reviewed)**

- “Assyria and Babylonian Identity in the Seventh and Sixth Centuries BC.” In preparation for *Collapse from the Ground Floor: The Transition from the Neo-Assyrian to the Neo-Babylonian Empires Viewed from Below*. Edited by Christopher Jones and Jonathan Gardner, volume accepted for publication by Harrassowitz Verlag.
- “The Beginnings of Indian Ocean Trade in the First Millennium from Assyria to Babylon.” In preparation for *Collapse from the Ground Floor: The Transition from the Neo-Assyrian to the Neo-Babylonian Empires Viewed from Below*. Edited by Christopher Jones and Jonathan Gardner, volume accepted for publication by Harrassowitz Verlag.
- “Communication – Elite Contexts.” In *The Routledge Handbook of the Ancient Near East and the Social Sciences*. Edited by Jason Silverman and Emanuel Pfoh. London: Routledge, forthcoming 2024.
- “The Decline and Fall of the Assyrian Court Scholar: A Social Network-Based Examination.” *Avar: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Life and Society in the Ancient Near East* 2, no. 2 (2023): 297-354.
- “Failed Coup: The Assassination of Sennacherib and Esarhaddon’s Struggle for the Throne, 681-680 B.C.” *Journal of Ancient Near Eastern History* 10, no. 2 (2023): 293-369.
- “Media Narratives, Heritage Destruction, and Universal Heritage: A Case Study of Palmyra.” 207-217 in *The Routledge Handbook of Heritage Destruction*. Edited by Antonio Gonzalez Zarandona, Emma Cunliffe and Melathi Saldin. London: Routledge, 2023.
- “The Literary-Historical Memory of Sargon of Akkad in Assyria as the Background for Nimrod in Genesis 10:8-12.” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 141, no. 4 (2022): 595-615.
- “Understanding ISIS’s Destruction of Antiquities as a Rejection of Nationalism.” *Journal of Eastern Mediterranean Archaeology and Heritage Studies* 6, No. 1-2 (2018): 32-58.

### **Short Notes and Chapters**

- “Merodach-baladan II’s Escape to Turtle Island.” *Nouvelles Assyriologiques Brèves et Utilitaires* no. 1 (March 2023): 56-59.
- “Identifying Centers of Domestication.” 106-108, 203-205 in *An Educator’s Handbook for Teaching About the Ancient World, Volume 1*. Edited by Pinar Durgun. Oxford: Archaeopress, 2020.
- “New Light on the Assassination of Sennacherib.” *Nouvelles Assyriologiques Brèves et Utilitaires* no. 2 (June 2019): 88-90.

## Book Reviews

- Weiershäuser, Frauke and Jamie Novotny. *The Royal Inscriptions of Amēl-Marduk (561-560 BC), Neriglissar (559-556 BC), and Nabonidus (555-539 BC), Kings of Babylon*. The Royal Inscriptions of the Neo-Babylonian Empire 2 (University Park, PA: Eisenbrauns, 2020), in *Review of Biblical Literature*, forthcoming 2024.
- Elayi, Josette. *Tiglath-pileser III, Founder of the Assyrian Empire*. Archaeology and Biblical Studies 31 (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2022), in *Review of Biblical Literature*, forthcoming 2024.
- “Origins of the Just War: Does Belief in an Independent Moral Standard Aid or Hinder Justice?” Review of Rory Cox, *Origins of the Just War: Military Ethics and Culture in the Ancient Near East* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2023), in *Current*, July 18, 2024. Available online at: <https://currentpub.com/2024/07/18/review-origins-of-the-just-war/>
- Frame, Grant and Simo Parpola. *The Correspondence of Assurbanipal, Part II: Letters from Southern Babylonia*. State Archives of Assyria XXII (Helsinki: Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project, 2023), in *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 391 (May 2024): 233-236.
- Testing the Canon of Ancient Near Eastern Art and Archaeology*. Edited by Amy Gansell and Ann Shafer (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), in *Ancient Near Eastern Studies* 58 (2021): 357-358.
- Culture in Crisis: Preserving Cultural Heritage in Conflict Zones* (Washington, DC: The Antiquities Coalition/Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies, 2017), in *Future Anterior: Journal of Historic Preservation, History, Theory, and Criticism* 15, No. 1 (Summer 2018): 68-77.

## Non-Peer Reviewed Articles (Print)

- “The *qurbūtu*: The Assyrian King’s Elite Bodyguard.” *Ancient Warfare* 14, no. 6 (May-June 2021): 24-25.
- “İşid Neden Yok Ediyor?” *Aktüel Arkeoloji* No. 52 (Temmuz-Ağustos [July-August] 2016): 14-23 [in Turkish].

## Non-Peer Reviewed Articles (Online)

- “Rehumanizing the Classroom.” *Current* forum on “AI and Education,” [September 3, 2024](#).
- “How Lyotard Predicted the Decline of the Humanities.” *Current*, [January 9, 2024](#).
- “Zenobia in Damascus: The Role of Classical Archaeology in Syrian Politics.” *Centre of Excellence in Ancient Near Eastern Empires*, [July 24, 2023](#).
- “Hatra’s Embattled History, from the Romans to ISIS.” *Apollo: The International Art Magazine*, [May 23, 2017](#).
- “What Central Africa’s War on Poaching Can Teach Us About Fighting the Plunder of Antiquities.” *HyperAllergic*, [July 5, 2016](#).
- “The Centre of Learning Destroyed by ISIS in Iraq.” *Apollo: The International Art Magazine*, [June 17, 2016](#).

“Another Treasure Lost in Iraq: The Story of Mar Behnam Monastery.” *HyperAllergic*, June 23, 2015.

“In Battle Against ISIS, Saving Lives or Ancient Artifacts.” *HyperAllergic*, April 17, 2015.

“What ISIS Destroys, Why, and Why We Must Document It.” *HyperAllergic*, March 6, 2015.

## **Data Sets**

“Social Network Data for Jones, The Decline and Fall of the Assyrian Court Scholar.” *Zenodo*, published October 25, 2023. URL: <https://zenodo.org/records/10041178>

## **CONFERENCES AND PRESENTATIONS**

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### **Conference Papers**

“Recovering the Archaeological Context of the Kuyunjik Archives.” November 20-23, 2024, American Society of Overseas Research Annual Meeting, Boston, Massachusetts [upcoming].

“The Case for Global Assyria.” November 18, 2023, American Society of Overseas Research Annual Meeting, Chicago, Illinois.

“‘The Haters who Hate Assyria’: Empire, Propaganda, and Identity Formation in Babylonia during the 7th-6th Centuries BC.” January 27, 2023, Finnish Conference on Ancient Studies, Helsinki, Finland.

“The Rise and Fall of the Assyrian Court Scholar.” November 21, 2022, Society of Biblical Literature Annual Meeting, Denver, Colorado.

“Neo-Babylonian Imperial Propaganda and the ‘Evil Empire’ of Assyria.” November 18, 2022, American Society of Overseas Research Annual Meeting, Boston, Massachusetts.

“The Neo-Assyrian Background of Genesis 10:1-4 and its Implications for Dating the Priestly Source.” November 21, 2021, Society of Biblical Literature Annual Meeting, San Antonio, Texas.

“The Decline and Fall of the Assyrian Empire in Babylonia: An Organizational Communication Perspective.” November 19, 2021, American Society of Overseas Research Annual Meeting, Chicago, Illinois.

“A Great King Without Rival: The Literary Memory of Sargon of Akkad in 8th-7th Century Assyria as a Background for Nimrod in Genesis 10:8-12.” November 24, 2019, Society of Biblical Literature Annual Meeting, San Diego, California.

“Power and Elite Competition in the Neo-Assyrian Empire: Towards a Social Network-Based Model.” November 23, 2019, American Schools of Oriental Research Annual Meeting, San Diego, California.

“Removing *shirk* and *jahiliyyah*: ISIS’s Destruction of the Pre-Islamic Past as a Rejection of Nationalism.” November 18, 2017, special panel on “The Past in Peril and the Perils of the Past: Ancient History in Modern Near Eastern Politics,” Society of Biblical Literature Annual Meeting, Boston, Massachusetts.

“Warlords and Entrepreneurs: The Origins of Guerrilla War in Civil War North Carolina.” April 16, 2014, Public Culture Association/American Culture Association Conference, Chicago, Illinois.

### **Invited Lectures**

“Becoming Romans.” July 19, 2023, Department of History, Union University, Jackson, Tennessee.

“Using the Bonacich Centrality Measure to Analyze Neo-Assyrian Social Networks.” August 12, 2021, Center of Excellence in Ancient Near Eastern Empires, University of Helsinki, Helsinki, Finland.

“Illuminating the Bible through the World of the Ancient Near East: The Case of Nimrod in Genesis 10:8-12,” September 23, 2019, Montreat College Honors Program Lecture Series, Montreat, North Carolina.

“The Destruction of Antiquities in the Middle East: Why did ISIS do it?” April 8, 2019, Appalachian State University, Boone, North Carolina.

Guest speaker, MALS 74400 “Debates in Cultural Heritage.” May 1, 2018, The Graduate Center, City University of New York.

Guest lecture, HIST UN2026 “Roman Social History.” November 27, 2017, Columbia University, New York, New York.

Guest lecture, PWAD 352 “History of Intelligence Operations.” February 9, 2012, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

“John N. Whitford’s War: Confederate Guerrilla Warfare in Craven and Carteret Counties, 1862-1865.” November 9, 2011, New Bern Civil War Round Table, New Bern, North Carolina.

“Confederate Intelligence Gathering.” April 26, 2011, Triangle Institute for Security Studies, Undergraduates in Security Studies Honors Thesis Presentations, Chapel Hill, North Carolina.

### **Workshops and Colloquia**

“Man versus Hippopotamus in the Ancient Near East.” November 20-23, 2024, “Crafting and Creating in Response to Cultural Collision,” American Society of Overseas Research Annual Meeting, Boston, Massachusetts [upcoming].

“Reflections on Teaching Environmental History.” November 16, 2023, Workshop “Defending the Past in the Present: Making the Case for the Study of the Ancient World,” American Society of Overseas Research Annual Meeting, Chicago, Illinois.

“Seagoing Reed Ships: Heyerdahl’s *Tigris* Expedition Revisited.” April 28, 2023, Center of Excellence in Ancient Near Eastern Empires, Team 1, Helsinki, Finland.

“Social Networks and the Assyrian Court Scholars.” December 16, 2022, Center of Excellence in Ancient Near Eastern Empires Forum Meeting, Helsinki, Finland.

“What did Ashurbanipal want with that library, anyways?” September 12, 2022, Center of Excellence in Ancient Near Eastern Empires, Team 1, Helsinki, Finland.

“Power and Elite Competition in the Neo-Assyrian Empire, 745-612 BC.” April 18, 2018, Columbia Center for Archaeology, New York, New York.

“Excavating the Lower City of Tell es-Safi/Gath.” October 5, 2017, Columbia Center for Archaeology, New York, New York.

“The Weaponization of History: ISIS, Crimea and the Use of Archaeology as a Tool for Deconstructing the International System.” April 1, 2016, History Across Borders Workshop, Columbia University, New York, New York.

## Conference Organization

- 2023-2026      Member of the Program Committee, American Society of Overseas Research.
- 2023      Session chair, “The Transition from the Neo-Assyrian to the Neo-Babylonian Periods.” American Society of Overseas Research Annual Meeting.
  - **Year 2 topic:** “The Transition Beyond Mesopotamia”
- 2023      Organizing committee member, Annual Meeting of the Center of Excellence in Ancient Near Eastern Empires.
- 2022      Session chair, “The Transition from the Neo-Assyrian to the Neo-Babylonian Periods.” American Society of Overseas Research Annual Meeting.
  - **Year 1 topic:** “The Transition in Babylonia”
- 2016      Panel chair, “Reflections on Exile,” *Refuge and Refugees in the Ancient World* (held at Columbia University, November 11-12).
- 2016      Planning committee member, *Refuge and Refugees in the Ancient World* (held at Columbia University, November 11-12).

## TEACHING EXPERIENCE

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### Courses Taught as Instructor of Record

#### *Union University*

HIS 101 World Civilization to the 18<sup>th</sup> Century

HIS 102 World Civilization from the 18<sup>th</sup> Century

HIS 245 History and Historians

HIS 301 Ancient History: The Mediterranean World c. 1100-300 BC

HIS 397 The World of Rome [upcoming Fall 2025]

HON 225 Justice

#### *University of Helsinki*

KIK-LI214 Akkadian 4 Reading Colloquial Neo-Assyrian: Letters, Legal Documents, Proverbs.

#### *Warren Wilson College*

PSC 2903 Ancient Imperialism: Assyria, Rome, China

HIS 1200 European History to 1450.

HIS 1900 World History: From the Stone Age to 1500.

HIS 2904 History of the Modern Middle East from 1870 to the Arab Spring.  
HIS 2905 Environmental History of the Pre-Modern World.  
HIS 4800 Senior Seminar: History & Political Science.

*Montreat College*

HS 101 World Civilization I: to 1500

*University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill*

SPCL 400 003 History of Nuclear Weapons: Politics, Strategy, Technology, and Culture  
(University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill C-START undergraduate teaching program).

**Courses Taught as a Teaching Assistant**

*Columbia University*

HIST UN 1002 Ancient History of Mesopotamia and Asia Minor.  
HIST UN 1010 The Ancient Greeks, 800-146 BCE.  
HIST W1020 The Romans and their Empire, 754 BCE to 641 CE.  
HIST UN 2004 The Mediterranean World After Alexander the Great.  
HIST UN 2611 Jews and Judaism in Antiquity.  
HIST W3020 Roman Imperialism.

**Other Teaching Experience and Training**

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| 2018 | Completed the Inclusive Teaching Seminar, Columbia University Center for Teaching and Learning.  |
| 2017 | Completed the Interdisciplinary Teaching and Learning Workshop, Columbia University Center for Teaching and Learning.                    |
| 2017 | Completed the Reflective Teaching Seminar, Columbia University Center for Teaching and Learning.   |
| 2014 | Worked to develop educational modules to enable Wheaton College professors to use artifacts from the museum collection as teaching aids. |
| 2013 | Worked to develop museum displays, Wheaton College Archaeology Museum.   |

**RESEARCH EXPERIENCE**

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**Archaeological Excavations**

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|------|---|
| 2020 | Square Supervisor, The Tel Burna Excavation Project (postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic). |
| 2017 | Square Supervisor, Area K, The Bar-Ilan University Expedition to Tell es-Safi/Gath.           |
| 2016 | Volunteer, The Bar-Ilan University Expedition to Tell es-Safi/Gath.                           |
| 2015 | Volunteer, The Bar-Ilan University Expedition to Tell es-Safi/Gath.                           |

- 2012 Volunteer, Israeli Antiquities Authority excavation at Jerusalem University College.
- 2012 Volunteer, Temple Mount Antiquities Salvage Operation, Jerusalem, Israel.
- 2012 Volunteer, Leon Levy Expedition to Ashkelon, Ashkelon, Israel.
- 2009 Volunteer, Excavation at Town Creek Indian Mound, Mt. Gilead, North Carolina.
- 2009 Volunteer, UNC Catawba Project, Van Wyck, South Carolina.

## **Archival Research**

- 2023 Research in the Thor Heyerdahl Collection, Kon-Tiki Museum, Oslo, Norway.
- 2022 Studied cuneiform tablets in the Elon University Art Collections, Elon, North Carolina.
- 2018 Conducted research in the collections of the Department of the Middle East, British Museum, London (September-November).
- 2011 Conducted research in the National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, DC and College Park, Maryland.
- 2011 Conducted research at the Special Collections of the J.Y. Joyner Library, East Carolina University. Greenville, North Carolina.
- 2010 Conducted research in the Southern Historical Collection, Louis Round Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.
- 2010 Conducted research in the State Archives of North Carolina, Raleigh.
- 2010 Conducted research at the Carteret County Historical Society, Morehead City, North Carolina.
- 2010 Conducted research at the Rare Book, Manuscript, and Special Collections Library, Duke University, Durham, North Carolina.

## **SERVICE ACTIVITIES**

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### **Institutional Service**

- 2024-present Member of the Library Resources Committee, Union University.
- 2024 Began serving as faculty adviser for three undergraduate history majors of the class of 2028.
- 2024-present Manage social media accounts (Facebook, Instagram) for the Department of History at Union University.
- 2024 Recruited potential majors for the Department of History at Accepted Students Day, Union University.
- 2024 Participated in the Rutledge Honorary History Club Round Table, Union University, March 25.

- 2023      Serving on the planning committee for the 2023 Annual Meeting of the Center of Excellence in Ancient Near Eastern Empires.
- 2021      Recruited visiting students for the Department of History & Political Science at Discovery Day, Warren Wilson College.
- 2021      Recruited potential majors for the Department of History & Political Science at the Fine Arts & Humanities Division Fair, Warren Wilson College.
- 2020      Respondent to a lecture by Eduardo Escobar, “Technology and Procedural Knowledge in Cuneiform Cultures,” Columbia Center for the Ancient Mediterranean, October 23.

### **Service to the Profession**

- 2024-present      Member of the Editorial Board of *Avar: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Life and Society in the Ancient Near East*.
- 2023-2026      Member of the Program Committee, American Society of Overseas Research.
- 2023      Peer reviewer, *Journal of Computer Applications in Archaeology*.
- 2022      Peer reviewer for an edited volume of papers presented at the Graduate Archaeology at Oxford Conference “Art in Archaeology: Production, Transmission, and Reception” held on March 11-13, 2022.
- 2018      Workshop organizer, Columbia Center for Archaeology.
- 2018      Paper reviewer, Undergraduate Judaic Studies Conference.
- 2017      Workshop organizer, Columbia Graduate Workshop in the Ancient Near East.
- 2017      Peer reviewer, *The International Review of the Red Cross*.
- 2011-20      Maintained blog about cultural heritage issues at *Gates of Nineveh: An Experiment in Blogging Assyriology* (<http://gatesofnineveh.wordpress.com/>).

### **Media Appearances**

- 2024      Interviewed by *It Means What It Means Podcast*, episode “Sargon of Akkad and Nimrod,” July 29.
- 2023      Interviewed by *Parallax Views* podcast episode “The Calculus of Hamas and the Strategy of Atrocity in Warfare,” October 11.
- 2022      Interviewed by *Zenith* magazine, October 19.
- 2016      Interviewed on *Audio Files Podcast* episode “Revival,” October 5.
- 2016      Interviewed on *Up All Night*, BBC Radio 5, September 28.
- 2015      Interviewed at HistoryBuff.com, December 10.
- 2015      Interviewed on CJAD Radio Montreal, August 26.
- 2015      Interviewed on *The Loopcast*, March 16.



2015 Interviewed on *World Brief with Josh Epps*, Huffington Post Live, February 27.

## OTHER EDUCATION AND EXPERIENCE

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### Comprehensive Examinations

- 2017 *Columbia University:*  
Ancient Assyria (Old, Middle, and Neo-Assyrian Periods)  
Roman Imperialism  
Ancient Egypt  
Ancient Mesopotamia (General)
- 2014 *Wheaton College:*  
Archaeology of Ancient Israel

### Language Examinations

- 2017 Akkadian  
2017 German  
2016 Sumerian  
2014 French  
2014 Biblical Hebrew
- Other Formal Study:** Modern Arabic, Attic Greek, Ugaritic, Biblical Aramaic, Jewish Babylonian Aramaic, Jewish Palestinian Aramaic, Qumran Aramaic.

### Other Experience

- 2023 Consulting work for Aramaic language dialogue for Visual Artefact Ltd., carried out for the TV series *Small Town, Big Story* on Sky TV.
- 2021 Created maps for Marc Van De Mierop, *Before and After Babel: Writing as Resistance in Ancient Near Eastern Empires* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022).
- 2021 Created index for Marc Van De Mierop, *The Practice of Ancient Near Eastern History: Opera Minora* (Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2022).
- 2017 Study trip to Greece (Crete and Rhodes) with Columbia University's Center for the Ancient Mediterranean.
- 2015 Study trip to Greece (Attica, the Peloponnese, and Delos) with Columbia University's Center for the Ancient Mediterranean.
- 2012 Studied at Jerusalem University College in Jerusalem, Israel (Fall Semester).
- 2010 Museum Volunteer, North Carolina Aviation Museum, Asheboro, North Carolina.
- 2009 Laboratory Volunteer, UNC Research Labs of Archaeology.

## **Membership in Professional Societies and Organizations**

American Historical Association (Institutional Member)

American Society of Overseas Research

Associate, Centre of Excellence in Ancient Near Eastern Empires

International Association for Archaeological Research in West & Central Asia