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Reader in Assyriology

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About

My research is on Ancient Near Eastern Studies with special reference to Iraq and Syria and a concentration on cultural history and literature. I also have interests in Pre-Islamic Arabia.

Biography

I studied Assyriology, Classical Arabic and Biblical Hebrew at Cambridge and then completed a doctorate in Assyriology at Birmingham under the supervision of W.G. Lambert. I was a research fellow for two years in Munich, where I also studied with D.O. Edzard and C. Wilcke. There followed a four year stint as Archaeological Adviser in the Department of Antiquities and Museums in Riyadh with intensive involvement in the Comprehensive Archaeological Survey of Arabia then being carried out. After teaching Assyriology for eight years at Heidelberg I joined the University of Birmingham in 1993.

Teaching

I regularly teach Akkadian (Babylonian and Assyrian) and Sumerian at the postgraduate level as part of the MPhil Programme in Cuneiform and Near Eastern Studies that I set up when I joined the University. Cuneiform has also proved popular as an undergraduate subject as well as courses on the cultural history, literature and mythology of the Ancient Near East. Over the years a wide range of Near Eastern topics has been covered in numerous third year dissertations under my supervision.

Postgraduate supervision

The MPhil Programme in **Cuneiform and Near Eastern Studies (/postgraduate/courses/combined/caha/cuneiform-ancient-near-eastern-studies.aspx)** directed by me includes an introduction to Akkadian and Sumerian, research training in the cuneiform script and a Masters' thesis on a topic of the student's choice. I have also supervised many PhD theses on a variety of topics ranging from Sumerian market gardening in the twenty-first century BC to the impact of the world-wide web on Ancient Near Eastern studies. However, the main focus of the postgraduate research that I supervise at both masters' and doctoral level is on the literary and cultural history of Assyria and Babylonia from the late second millennium BC down to the fall of Babylon in 539 BC.

Research

My research centres on the cultural history of the Ancient Near East. I also have close research links with the Department of the Near East in the British Museum and a major focus of my research involves the edition and publication of cuneiform tablets from the Museum's vast holdings. My most significant project at the moment involves a comprehensive study and edition of the Assyrian and Babylonian literary calendar texts in which many cuneiform tablets from both Assyria and Babylonia will be published for the first time.

At the centre of interest in these texts is not only religion but also the daily life of the Mesopotamians and the texts supply much new information about Babylonian social history. I have also worked extensively on Assyrian and Babylonian literature and am currently preparing a volume elucidating the historical and political context of Neo-Assyrian Literature.

I am particularly interested in ritual and a project that I am developing aims to place the study of Ancient Near Eastern ritual within a wider context of ancient and modern interpretation. I have also researched and published on Pre-Islamic Arabia, especially the North-western Hejaz and hope to make a detailed study of the Arabs as attested in cuneiform documents. From 2003 to 2007 I directed a project on cuneiform palaeography funded by The Leverhulme Trust that has resulted in an open access resource, **www.cuneiform.net (http://www.cuneiform.net/)** .

Other activities

I am a permanent member of the Steering Committee of the British Association for Near Eastern Archaeology. Extramurally, I am interested in folklore and musicology, especially that of South-east Africa and the Western Highlands of Scotland.

Publications

Books

Mystical and Mythological Explanatory Works of Assyrian and Babylonian Scholars (Oxford 1986, reprinted by OUP in1987 and by Eisenbrauns in 2007)

Court Poetry and Literary Miscellanea (State Archives of Assyria 3) (Helsinki 1989).

I am currently preparing an edition of literary calendar texts and a volume on the context of Neo-Assyrian literature and mythology.

Selected articles

Near Eastern Mythologies, in *A Companion to Greek Mythology*. K. Dowden and N. Livingstone (eds.) (Malden, MA/Oxford: 2011): 357-382 (with B. Haskamp).

Remembrance at Assur: The Case of the Dated Aramaic Memorials, in *Of God(s), Trees, Kings, and Scholars: Neo-Assyrian and Related Studies in Honour of Simo Parpola*. M. Luukko, S. Svärd and R. Mattila (eds.), Studia Orientalia 106 (Helsinki 2009): 151-157.

"Ashurbanipal: literate or not?" *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie und Vorderasiatische Archäologie* **97** (2007): 98-118.

The pitter-patter of tiny feet in clay: aspects of the liminality of childhood in the ancient Near East, in *Children, Childhood and Society*. S. Crawford and G. Shepherd (eds.), IAA Interdisciplinary Series: Studies in Archaeology, History, Literature and Art 1/B.A.R. International Series 1696 (Oxford 2007)**:** 15-27.

The Babylonian Almanac: A Text for Specialists?, in *Die Welt der Götterbilder*. B. Groneberg and H. Spieckermann (eds.), Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft 376 (Berlin/New York 2007)**:** 85-101.

"A Neglected *kudurru* or Boundary Stone of Marduk-nādin-aḫḫē." *Revue d'Assyriologie* **100** (2006): 75-80.

The Digital Classification of Ancient Near Eastern Cuneiform Data, in *Virtual Archaeology: Proceedings of the VAST Euroconference, Arezzo 24-25 November 2000*. F. Niccolucci (ed.), B.A.R. International Series S1075 (Oxford 2002): 65-70 (with T. Arvanitis, T. Davis, J. Pinilla-Dutoit and S. Woolley).

"Communication cuneiform: The Evolution of a Multimedia Cuneiform Database." *Visible Language* **36** (2002): 308-324 (with S. I. Woolley, T. R. Davis, N. J. Flowers, J. Pinilla-Dutoit and T. N. Arvanitis).

On the Organized Release of Doves to Secure Compliance of a Higher Authority. *Wisdom, Gods and Literature. Studies in Assyriology in Honour of W. G. Lambert*. A. R. George and I. L. Finkel (eds.) (Winona Lake, IN 2000)**:** 375-387.

The Magic of Time. *Mesopotamian Magic. Textual, Historical, and Interpretative Perspectives*. I. T. Abusch and K. van der Toorn (eds.), Ancient Magic and Divination 1 (Groningen 1999)**:** 131-137.

Taimāʾ: A nexus for Historical Contact and Cultural Interchange within the Desert Borders, in *Languages and Cultures in Contact: At the Crossroads of Civilizations in the Syro-Mesopotamian Realm. Proceedings of the 42th RAI*. K. Van Lerberghe and G. Voet (eds.), Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta 96 (Leuven 1999)**:** 233-236.

"The Akkadian Word for Barley: A Note from the Schoolroom." *Journal of Semitic Studies* **42** (1997): 1-5.

"An Early Attestation of the Arabic Definite Article." *Journal of Semitic Studies* **42** (1997): 259-261.

New Dimensions in the Study of Assyrian Religion, in *Assyria 1995: Proceedings of the 10th Anniversary Symposium of the Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project Helsinki, September 7-11, 1995*. S. Parpola and R. M. Whiting, Jr. (eds.) (Helsinki 1997)**:** 165-177.

How the common man influences the gods of Sumer, in *Sumerian Gods and Their Representations*. I. L. Finkel and M. J. Geller (eds.), Cuneiform Monographs 7 (Groningen 1997)**:** 215-220.

New light on the ancient town of Taimāʾ, in *Studia Aramaica. New Sources and New Approaches. Papers Delivered at the London Conference of The Institute of Jewish Studies, University College London, 26th-28th June 1991*. M. J. Geller, J. C. Greenfield and M. P. Weitzman (eds.), Journal of Semitic Studies Supplement 4 (Oxford 1995)**:** 133-143.

The Case of the Hemerologies: Official Cult, Learned Formulation and Popular Practice, in *Official Cult and Popular Religion in the Ancient Near East. Papers of the First Colloquium on the Ancient Near East - The City and its Life held at the Middle Eastern Culture Center in Japan (Mitaka, Tokyo), March 20-22, 1992*. E. Matsushima (ed.) (Heidelberg 1993)**:** 97-113.

"*Šērtu*, "ring", *šeršerratu*, "chain"." *N.A.B.U.* (1990): 87) 64-67.

Arabians in Babylonia/Babylonians in Arabia: Some reflections à propos new and old evidence, in *L'Arabie préislamique et son environnement historique et culturel. Actes du Colloque de Strasbourg 24-27 juin 1987*. T. Fahd (ed.), Université des sciences humaines de Strasbourg, Travaux du Centre de Recherche sur le Proche-Orient et la Grèce Antiques 10 (Leiden 1989): 97-105.

"The Isin "Dog House" Revisited." *Journal of Cuneiform Studies* **40** (1988): 54- 60.

"At the Cleaners" and Notes on Humorous Literature, in *Ad bene et fideliter seminandum. Festgabe für Karlheinz Deller zum 21. Februar 1987*. G. Mauer and U. Magen (eds.), Alter Orient und Altes Testament 220 (Kevelaer/Neukirchen-Vluyn 1988): 175-187

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