

# Reyhan Durmaz

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## CURRENT POSITION

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2019 – Present Assistant Professor of Religious Studies, University of Pennsylvania

## EDUCATION

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2019 Doctor of Philosophy, Religious Studies, Brown University, Providence, RI  
2012 Master of Arts, Medieval Studies, Central European University, Budapest  
2010 Master of Arts, Anatolian Civilizations and Cultural Heritage Management, Koç University, Istanbul  
2007 Bachelor of Arts, Middle East Technical University, Ankara

## PUBLICATIONS

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### Books

Durmaz, Reyhan. *Stories between Christianity and Islam: Saints, Memory, and Cultural Exchange in Late Antiquity and Beyond*. Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2022.

Reviewed in *Theological Studies*, *Church History*, *Mythos*, *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations*, *Reading Religion* (AAR), and the *English Historical Review*.

Honorable Mention by the Middle East Medievalists' Book Prize Committee (2023). Shortlisted for AAR's Best First Book in the History of Religions Award and the Award for Excellence in the Study of Religions, Historical Studies (2023).

Ashbrook Harvey, Susan, **Reyhan Durmaz**, Michael Payne, Daniel Picus, and Noah Tetenbaum, ed. and trans. *Three Persian Martyr Acts: The Acts of Miles, Bishop of Susa, the Priest Abursam, and Deacon Sinai, the Martyrdom of Zebina and His Companions, and the Martyrdom of the Forty Martyrs of Beth Kashkraye*. Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2023.

Ashbrook Harvey, Susan, Sebastian Brock, **Reyhan Durmaz**, Michael Payne, Daniel Picus, and Rebecca Stephens Falcasantos, ed. and trans. *Jacob of Sarug's Homilies on Women Whom Jesus Met*. Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2016.

### Articles in peer-reviewed journals and volumes

"Place, practice, patron: Making of religious communities in the early medieval Middle East." *Studies in Late Antiquity*. Forthcoming [2025].

"Religion, race, and letterpress: Orthodox Christians in 19<sup>th</sup>-century New York City through the lens of *Kawkab America*." *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 91, no. 4 (2023): 854–74.

- “Religious diversity in the early medieval Middle East through the lens of the Syriac *Chronicle of Zuqnin*.” *Church History and Religious Culture* 103, no. 2 (2023): 158–79.
- “Five hundred bones from Constantinople: Monks, manuscripts, and memory at the eastern borders of Byzantium.” *Harvard Theological Review* 115, no. 3 (2022): 363–86.
- “Recent research in Syriac Studies and the recurring question of identity.” *Method and Theory in the Study of Religion*, Special Volume on “Identity and Power,” 34 (2022): 1–22.
- “Patronage and prestige in the countryside: The case of the Church of Mār Domet in northern Mesopotamia.” *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 80, no. 1 (2021): 101–21.
- “Saints, stories and sanctity between Christianity and Islam: The conversion of Najrān to Christianity in the *Sīra* of Muḥammad.” In *Syriac Christian Culture: Beginnings to Renaissance*. Edited by Aaron Butts and Robin Darling Young, 174–97. Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2021.
- “Hearing sanctity: Oral performance and aural consumption of hagiographical stories in the late antique and medieval Syriac milieu.” In *Syriac Hagiography: Texts and Beyond*. Edited by Flavia Ruani and Sergey Minov, 56–88. Brill, 2021.

#### **Publications in reference works, encyclopedias, and online venues**

- “How a religious minority in NYC presented the first Parliament of the World’s Religions in 1893,” *Association for Public Religion & Intellectual Life, The Commons*, August 2023. <https://www.aprilonline.org/how-a-religious-minority-in-nyc/>
- “Visualizing Countryside: Syriac Orthodox Architecture of Northern Mesopotamia.” Photograph archive publicly available at: <https://www.jstor.org/site/upenn/orthodoxchristianchurchesinturkey>
- “Christian-Muslim relations in the Middle Ages.” Lesson Plan. *Bloomsbury Medieval Studies*. Available online at <https://www.bloomsburymedievalstudies.com/research-and-learning-tools>
- “‘Mirror, mirror!’ Speaking objects and speaking to objects in the classroom.” *Ancient Jew Review*, January 2021. <https://www.ancientjewreview.com/articles/2021/1/11/mirror-mirror-speaking-objects-and-speaking-to-objects-in-the-classroom>
- “St. George/Jirjis between Christianity and Islam.” *The Encyclopedia of the Global Middle Ages*. Edited by Aaron Hollander and Massimo Rondolino. ARC Humanities Press, 2019.
- “Jacob Baradeus,” “Karka d-Beth Slokh,” “the Blessed Virgin Mary,” “Porphyry of Gaza.” *Oxford Dictionary of Late Antiquity*. Edited by Oliver Nicholson et al. Oxford University Press, 2018.
- “Sacred spaces and sacred lives: Hierotopical perceptions in Tur ‘Abdin in the Middle Ages reconstructed through local hagiographical traditions.” *Annual of Medieval Studies at CEU* 19 (2013): 33–46.

**Work in progress**

Monograph in preparation: “*Do Prophets Come with a Sword?*”: *Soldiers, Paramilitary Action, and Religion in the Late Antique and Medieval Middle East*.

Translation: The *Life of Aho of Rish ‘ayno*, Ms: Vatican Syriac 37, fol. 173v–191v, Syriac to English.

“Horizons of the infinite scripture.” In *The Qur’an – Literary Dimensions*. Edited by Shawkat Toorawa. Edinburg University Press. In preparation.

“Material culture.” In *The Cultural History of the Middle East and North Africa, 450–750*. Edited by Nancy Khalek. Bloomsbury Academic. In preparation.

“From the city of Abgar to the city of Abraham: Nobility, clergy, and relics in late antique and medieval Edessa.” In *Cities and Relics*. Edited by Christopher MacEvitt and Cecilia Gaposchkin. In preparation.

“Armed men, notables, and the church in the late antique and early medieval Middle East.” Article in preparation.

**ACADEMIC AWARDS, FELLOWSHIPS, AND GRANTS**

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- 2023            Shortlisted for the American Academy of Religion’s Best First Book in the History of Religions Award [*Stories between Christianity and Islam: Saints, Memory, and Cultural Exchange in Late Antiquity and Beyond* (2022)].
- 2023            Shortlisted for the American Academy of Religion’s Award for Excellence in the Study of Religions, Historical Studies [*Stories between Christianity and Islam: Saints, Memory, and Cultural Exchange in Late Antiquity and Beyond* (2022)].
- 2023            Middle East Medievalists Book Prize, Honorable Mention for *Stories between Christianity and Islam: Saints, Memory, and Cultural Exchange in Late Antiquity and Beyond* (2022).
- 2023–24        School of Arts and Sciences Research Opportunity Grant, University of Pennsylvania. Project title: “Visualizing Countryside: Rural Christianities in the Medieval Middle East.”
- 2022–23        NEH Faculty Research Fellow, Center for Orthodox Christian Studies, Fordham University.
- 2023            Delaware Valley Medieval Association, Digital Project Prize for *Visualizing Countryside* <https://www.jstor.org/site/upenn/orthodoxchristianchurchesinturkey>
- Spring 2023    Visiting Fellow, Institute for Religion and Critical Inquiry, Australian Catholic University, Melbourne, Australia.
- 2022–23        University Research Foundation Award, University of Pennsylvania. Project title: “Publishing Piety: Syrian Orthodox Community and *Kawkab Amrika* in 19<sup>th</sup>-Century New York City.”

- 2022–23 School of Arts and Sciences Research Opportunity Grant, University of Pennsylvania.  
Project title: “Visualizing Countryside: Rural Christianities in the Medieval Middle East.”
- 2021–22 Penn Faculty Fellow, Wolf Humanities Center, Forum on “Migration.”  
Project title: “Publishing Piety: Syrian Orthodox Community and *Kawkab Amrika* in 19<sup>th</sup>-Century New York City.”
- 2021 Hershey Humanities Manuscript Development Grant for Assistant Professors, Wolf Humanities Center, University of Pennsylvania.
- 2019 Joukowsky Outstanding Dissertation Prize in Humanities, Brown University.
- 2019 Phi Beta Kappa, Brown University.
- 2018–19 Junior Fellow in Byzantine Studies, Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, Washington, DC.
- 2018–19 Charlotte W. Newcombe Doctoral Dissertation Fellow in Religion and Ethics, Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation.
- 2018–19 Mellon/ACLS Dissertation Completion Fellowship (Received and declined).
- 2015 Summer Fellow in Byzantine Studies, Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, Washington, DC.
- 2014–15 Graduate International Colloquium Fund, *Borders and Boundaries in the Late Ancient and Medieval Mediterranean*, Brown University.
- 2012 Gorgias Press Book Grant.
- 2011 Pro-rector’s Excellence Award, Central European University, Budapest.

#### **INVITED LECTURES, INTERVIEWS, AND SELECTED CONFERENCE PAPERS**

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- Dec 2024 Conversation with Gabriel Said Reynolds on “Stories between Christianity and Islam,” in the [Exploring the Quran and the Bible](#) Channel.
- Nov 2024 “Syriac sources on the making of religious communities in the ‘Abbāsīd Jazīra,” Conference on Group Formation in the Abbasid Era, Aga Khan University (online).
- Oct 2024 “Paramilitary and religion in the early medieval Near East: Revisiting the boundaries of religious authority and expertise,” The Newman Institute Research Seminar in Late Ancient and Byzantine Cultures.
- Sep 2024 “May your fasting be armour to our country”: Soldiers, paramilitary action, and religion in Late Antiquity,” Philadelphia Seminar on Christian Origins, Philadelphia, PA.

- May 2024 “Between class, clan, confession: Reflections on social mobility,” Workshop on Medieval Middle Eastern Diversity, co-organized by Reyhan Durmaz and Thomas Carlson.
- Mar 2024 “Public exegesis in Late Antiquity through the lens of the Qur’an,” Workshop on Late Antiquity Lecture Series, University of Texas, Austin.
- Jan 2024 “Christianities in the medieval Middle Eastern countryside,” Annual Meeting of the American Society of Church History, San Francisco, CA.
- Dec 2023 “Visualizing countryside: A digital photograph archive,” Delaware Valley Medieval Association Prize Winners Webinar.
- Nov 2023 “Who makes a religious community?” SBL Annual Meeting, San Antonio, TX.
- Oct 2023 “Rural lives and global visions between Syria, Armenia, and Rome in the *Life of Aho of Rish ‘ayno*: Introductory notes on a new translation project,” [Texts and Transmission Joint Research Seminar](#).
- Oct 2023 “Daughter, healer, soldier, spy: Finding communities in the medieval Middle Eastern countryside,” [East of Byzantium Workshop](#).
- Oct 2023 “The complex religious world of simple believers in the medieval Middle East,” Smith College.
- Sep 2023 “Immigrant voices on paper: Representations of religion, race, and home in the first Arabic newspaper in America,” Workshop in the History of Material Texts, University of Pennsylvania.
- Jul 2023 “Christian-Muslim relations in the early Middle Ages / Erken Orta Çağ’da Hristiyan-Musulman ilişkileri,” [Baska Ulke Channel](#) [lecture in Turkish].
- Jun 2023 “Religion and religious pluralism in the early medieval Middle East through the lens of Syriac historiography,” 9<sup>th</sup> North American Syriac Symposium, Yale University.
- Jun 2023 “From Edessa to South Arabia and back: The Syriac story of Bishop Paul and Priest John and the models of sanctity in the medieval Middle East,” Oxford Interfaith Forum.
- May 2023 “From the city of Abgar to the city of Abraham: Nobility, clergy, and relics in late antique and medieval Edessa,” Workshop on Cities and Relics, Dartmouth University.
- May 2023 “Stories between Christianity and Islam,” Interview by Zalman Newfield in the [New Books Network](#).
- Apr 2023 “Stories between Christianity and Islam – A Conversation with Dr. Ashley Purpura,” [Women Scholars of Orthodox Christianity Series](#), Center for Orthodox Christian Studies, Fordham University.

- Mar 2023 “Religious pluralism in the early medieval Middle East through the lens of the Syriac *Chronicle of Zuqnān*,” Institute for Religion & Critical Inquiry, Australian Catholic University, Melbourne.
- Nov 2022 “Antony of Egypt in Baghdad: Translocation of a saint from Byzantium to the Abbasid court,” Christian Muslim Forum, London.
- Nov 2022 “Stories between Christianity and Islam,” New Books in the Field, [Models of Piety](#) in Late Antiquity.
- Sep 2022 “Exegetical world of Late Antiquity,” *Rethinking Arab History, Society, and Culture – A Conference in Honor of Aziz al-Azmeh*, Central European University, Vienna, Austria.
- Mar 2022 “The end of tree worship in South Arabia: Re-narrations of a story across confessional, linguistic, and generic boundaries,” *Retracing Connections* Seminar, Uppsala University, Sweden.
- Nov 2021 “Ritual and rhetoric of the deathbed in late antique and medieval Syriac hagiography,” SBL Annual Meeting, San Antonio, TX.
- Nov 2021 “Late Antiquity and early Islam on display,” AAR Annual Meeting, San Antonio, TX.
- May 2021 “Family, fame, and faith: The making of Christian communities in medieval Northern Mesopotamia,” London Society for Medieval Studies.
- May 2021 “Beyond the boundaries of Late Antiquity,” Late Antiquity Reading Group, Yale University.
- Mar 2021 “Syriac architecture,” Ptarmigan Mini-Lecture Series, Religious Studies Department, Stanford University.
- Sep 2020 “St. Antony of Egypt between Christianity and Islam,” *Ways of Perfection and Devout Lives: Saintliness Across Traditions* Conference, University of Notre Dame.
- Jan 2020 “Traveling the Middle Ages with Paul and John: Saints, stories, and scholars between Christianity and Islam,” Templeton Honors Forum, Eastern University, St. Davis, PA.
- Nov 2019 “Competing for prayers: Patronage and monastic identity in late antique and early medieval northern Mesopotamia,” SBL Annual Meeting, San Diego, CA.
- Jun 2019 “‘And there he obtained a piece of the True Cross’: Representations of relics from Constantinople in medieval Syriac hagiography,” 8<sup>th</sup> North American Syriac Symposium, Providence, RI.
- May 2019 “Remembering Antony in Ibn Abi al-Dunyā’s *Wajal*: Revisiting memory and pseudepigraphy,” *Memory and Forgetting: Theorizing from Late Antique and Medieval Middle East* Workshop, New York University.
- Nov 2018 “Narrating the ascetic Jesus: Collections of prophetic anecdotes as symbols of family status in early Islam,” SBL Annual Meeting, Denver, CO.

- Nov 2018 “Stories, saints and sanctity between Christianity and Islam in the Middle Ages,” New Graduate Research in Islamic Studies, AAR Annual Meeting, Denver, CO.
- Nov 2017 ““This is what was related in the *tash ʿith*’: Muslim historians’ use(s) of Syriac hagiography,” MESA Annual Meeting, Washington, DC.
- May 2017 “Beasts, demons and the demonic in Syriac hagiography: An expedition into late antique imagination,” NAPS Annual Meeting, Chicago, IL.
- Nov 2016 “‘Relate to the people what you saw on the two sheets:’ The role of *hagiodiegesis* in the formation of Islamic notions of sanctity,” MESA Annual Meeting, Boston, MA.
- Aug 2016 “Hearing sanctity: Oral performance and aural consumption of hagiographical stories in the late antique and medieval Syriac milieu,” XII Symposium Syriacum, Rome.
- Jun 2015 “Saints, stories and sanctity between Christianity and Islam: Conversion of Najrān to Christianity in the Sīra of Muḥammad,” 7<sup>th</sup> North American Syriac Symposium, Catholic University of America.
- Feb 2015 “From Paul and John to Faymiyun and Salih: Holy men between Christianity and Islam,” Oxford Byzantine Society International Graduate Conference.
- Mar 2014 “Grief, tears and lamentation in the Life of Mor Aho of Rish ʿayno: A hagiographical discourse analysis,” 5<sup>th</sup> Dorushe Graduate Student Conference on Syriac Studies, Duke University.
- Feb 2013 “Remembering Byzantium: Emperor and royal city in the medieval hagiographic literature of Tur ʿAbdin,” Oxford Byzantine Society International Graduate Conference.

## COURSES

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### Undergraduate

Religions of the West  
 Satan: History, Poetics, and Politics of the Archenemy  
 From Jesus to Muhammad: History of Early Christianity  
 Eastern Christianities  
 Virtual Religion: Religion in the Digital Age  
 Orthodox America (an SNF Paideia designated course)  
 Material Christianities: The First Millennium (co-taught with Ivan Drpic)

### Graduate

Syriac Christianity Past and Present  
 Orthodox America  
 Worlds of Late Antiquity (co-taught with Cam Grey and Kim Bowes)

## **GRADUATE RESEARCH SUPERVISION**

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### **Supervisor**

Austin McCredie, Department of Religious Studies, University of Pennsylvania (2024 – present)

### **Dissertation Committee Member**

Ali Noori, Department of Religious Studies, University of Pennsylvania (2021 – 2024)

### **Examiner**

Malki Malki, Institute for Religion and Critical Inquiry, Australian Catholic University (Spring 2023)

Hallie Swanson, Department of Religious Studies, University of Pennsylvania (Spring 2021)

Ali Noori, Department of Religious Studies, University of Pennsylvania (Spring 2020)

## **UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH SUPERVISION**

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### **Senior Thesis Supervisor**

Nick Brenner, “Receiving food from the Church in Antioch,” Department of Classical Studies, University of Pennsylvania (Fall 2022, co-supervised with Cam Grey).

Rachel Winicov, “Relationships of power in the sixth-century CE Syrian religious milieu,” Department of Classical Studies, University of Pennsylvania (Fall 2020, co-supervised with Cam Grey) (received Distinction)

### **Independent Study Instructor**

Madison Hynson, Warton Business School, University of Pennsylvania (Fall 2021)

## **PROFESSIONAL SERVICE**

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### **Wolf Humanities Center, University of Pennsylvania**

Advisory Board Member (AY2022–23)

Post-doctoral Fellows Selection Committee Member (AY2022–23)

### **Philadelphia Seminar on Christian Origins, University of Pennsylvania**

Co-chair (Jun 2020 – present)

### **Middle East Center, University of Pennsylvania**

Faculty Member (Sep 2020 – present)

FLAS Selection Committee Member (AY2021–22)

### **Penn Museum**

Consulting Scholar (Jan 2020 – present)

### **School of Arts and Sciences, University of Pennsylvania**

Pre-Major Advisor (2020–2022)

### **Religious Studies Graduate Group, University of Pennsylvania**

Core Faculty (2019 – present)



**Ancient History Graduate Group, University of Pennsylvania**

Faculty Member (Nov 2020 – present)

**Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations Graduate Group, University of Pennsylvania**

Faculty Member (Sep 2023 – present)

**Global Medieval and Renaissance Studies Program, University of Pennsylvania**

Faculty Member (Sep 2019 – present)

Juror for the Penn Press Prize (Spring 2024)

**American Academy of Religion, Traditions of Late Antiquity Unit**

Steering Committee Member (Sep 2019 – present)

**American Academy of Religion, Comparative Hagiology Seminar**

Steering Committee Member (Dec 2019 – present)

**American Academy of Religion, Middle Eastern Christianity Unit**

Steering Committee Member (Sep 2022 – present)

**Society of Biblical Literature, Syriac Studies Unit**

Steering Committee Member (Sep 2022 – present)

**Dorushe Graduate Conference in Syriac Studies**

Advisory Board Member (Jun 2019 – present)

**Committee for the Museum of Syriac History, Batman, Turkey**

Consultant (Oct 2023 – present)

**Center for Eastern Mediterranean Studies, Central European University, Budapest**

Academic Coordinator (AY2015–16)

**Peer-reviewed articles at:**

Journal of Late Antiquity  
Journal of Near Eastern Studies  
Studies in Late Antiquity  
Journal of Orthodox Christian Studies  
Journal of the American Oriental Society  
Journal of Social Archaeology  
Journal of the Intellectual History of the Islamicate World  
Journal of Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations  
Advances in Ancient, Biblical and Near Eastern Research

**Peer-reviewed books at:**

De Gruyter Press  
Hackett Publishing  
Pennsylvania State University Press  
Edinburgh University Press

### **CONFERENCES AND WORKSHOPS ORGANIZED**

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- May 2024 Co-organizer, Medieval Middle Eastern Diversity Workshop [online].
- Feb–Mar 2022 Organizer, Boardman Symposium “Destabilizing Religion in the Medieval Middle East,” Religious Studies Department, University of Pennsylvania [online].
- 2020–21 Co-organizer, Religious Studies Department Colloquium, University of Pennsylvania.
- 2020–21 Organizer, Religious Studies Graduate Workshop, University of Pennsylvania.
- May 2018 Organizer, Diverse Pedagogies Workshop, Department of Religious Studies, Brown University.
- May 2016 Co-organizer, Dorushe Graduate Student Conference in Syriac Studies, Brown University.
- Mar 2015 Organizer, Harvard-Yale-Brown Day, Brown University. For doctoral students and faculty in early Christianity and ancient Judaism.
- 2014–15 Coordinator, International Graduate Student Colloquium “Borders and Boundaries in the Late Ancient and Medieval Mediterranean,” Brown University.
- Mar 2014 Co-organizer, 31<sup>st</sup> Annual New England Medieval Studies Consortium Graduate Student Conference “Islands of the Medieval World: Stories of Isolation and Connectivity,” Brown University.
- Mar 2014 Organizer, Religious Studies Departmental Colloquium “Mongols and the Church of the East” by Prof. Joel Walker, Brown University.

### **OTHER INVITED WORKSHOPS AND ACADEMIC ACTIVITY**

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- Mar 2024 Presenter, Workshop on teaching “religion” in the pre-modern world, CETLI, University of Pennsylvania.
- Nov 2023 Respondent, “Pushing the boundaries of the late antique east” Panel, AAR Annual Meeting, San Antonio, TX.
- Nov 2021 Respondent, “New directions in Samaritan Studies” Panel, SBL Annual Meeting, San Antonio, TX.
- Jun 2021 Respondent, “Book discussion: *Antioch: A History*,” with Andrea De Giorgi and Asa Eger, Dumbarton Oaks Byzantine Studies Podcast.
- Apr 2021 Discussant, “The Persian and Classical Worlds” Roundtable, University of Pennsylvania.
- Oct 2019 Presenter, Workshop on Syriac culture and language, Middle East Center, University of Pennsylvania.

- Apr 2019      Discussant, New Testament and Early Christian Studies Day, Pedagogy Roundtable, Yale University.
- May 2017      Participant, “Mapping Ancient Lives and Social Networks” Digital Humanities Workshop, Marquette University.
- Jun 2013      Discussant, “20 Years of Medieval Studies at CEU” Workshop, Hagiography Roundtable, Central European University, Budapest.

### **ACADEMIC AFFILIATIONS**

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American Academy of Religion  
American Society for Church History  
Byzantine Studies Association of North America  
Delaware Valley Medieval Association  
Medieval Academy of America  
Mediterranean Seminar  
Middle East Studies Association  
North American Patristics Society  
Society of Biblical Literature

### **LANGUAGES**

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Ancient Greek || Classical Arabic || French || German || Latin || Syriac || Turkish

### **FIELDWORK**

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2013      Garzan - Ilisu Dam Rescue Excavation Project, Batman, Turkey.  
2008–9      Kucukyali Arkeopark Project, Istanbul.  
2008–9      Survey and documentation of Syriac architecture, Mardin, Turkey.

Updated: December 2024