

Sargon George Donabed

Professor

Department of History

Roger Williams University

Visiting Scholar, Middle East Studies, Brown University, 2018-2019

Visiting Scholar, Harvard Divinity School, 2016-2017

Co-founder and member of board of directors

Assyrian Studies Association

www.assyrianstudiesassociation.org

Research Specialization and Interests

Assyrian Studies, Middle East/West Asian History, Assyrian Language and Literature, Syriac Studies, Aramaic and Syriac Language and Literature, 19th and 20th Century Assyrian History and Culture, Mesopotamian History, Indigenous Societies Under Islam, Marginalized Communities in the Ottoman Empire and Turkey, Middle Eastern Diasporas, Eastern Christianity, World Religious Traditions, Mythology and Folklore, Identities, Near Eastern Wisdom Literature, Comparative Semitics, Genocide Studies, Wildlife Conservation, Ecological Ethics and Animal Studies, Science Fiction/Fantasy Film and Literature

Education

- M.S. Canisius College, Anthrozoology, 2019
- Ph.D. University of Toronto, Department Near and Middle Eastern Civilizations, 2010
- M.A. University of Toronto, Department Near and Middle Eastern Civilizations, Cultural History of the Middle East, Semitic Languages, Religion 2003
- B.A. Stonehill College, History and Religious Studies 2000

Selected Bibliography: Books

- (Under contract) *The Assyrians: A Cultural History from Empire to Endangered Existence* (Cambridge University Press)
- (Contract offered and declined) *Immigration from the Middle East to the United States* (Palgrave Macmillan)
- (Contract offered and declined) *Historical Dictionary of the Assyrians* (Rowman and Littlefield)
- *Reforging a Forgotten History: Iraq and the Assyrians in the 20th Century*, (University of Edinburgh Press, 2015)
- ed. W/ Autumn Quezada-Grant, *Decentering Discussions on Religion and State: Emerging Narratives, Challenging Perspectives*, (Lexington Books, 2015)

- ed. w/ Önvér A. Cetrez and Aryo Makko, *The Assyrian Heritage: Threads of Continuity and Influence*, Studies in Religion & Society 5, Volume I, (Uppsala: Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis, 2013)
- ed. w/ Joshua B. Stein, *Religion and the State: Europe and North America in the 17th and 18th centuries*, (Lexington Books, 2012)
- w/ Ninos Donabed, *The Assyrians of Eastern Massachusetts* (Portsmouth, NH: Arcadia Publishing, 2006)

Book Series Editor *Alternative Histories: Narratives from the Middle East and Mediterranean* (Edinburgh University Press)

(forthcoming) Bashkin & Ben-Dor Benite eds, *The Jews of Iraq: Networks, Migration and Everyday Life, 1830–2004*
 Abed Mshihó Neman Qarabash, *Sayfo-An Account of the Assyrian Genocide*, Translated by Michael Abdalla with Łukasz Kiczko (March 2021)
 Makram Rabah, *Conflict on Mount Lebanon: The Druze, the Maronites and Collective Memory* (August 2020)
 Virginie Rey ed, *The Art of Minorities: Cultural Representations in Museums of the Middle East and North Africa* (July 2020)
 Manar H. Makhoul, *Palestinian Citizens in Israel: A History Through Fiction, 1948-2010* (March 2020)
 Oliver Scharbrodt and Yafa Shanneik, *Shia Minorities in the Contemporary World: Migration, Transnationalism and Multilocality* (July 2020)
 Tsolin Nalbantian, *Armenians Beyond Diaspora: Making Lebanon their Own*
 Deanna Ferree Womack, *Protestants, Gender and the Arab Renaissance in Late Ottoman Syria*

Selected Peer Reviewed Articles/Chapters

- “The Existential Threat of Academic Bias: The Institutionalization of Anti-Assyrian Rhetoric,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* (IJMES), Volume 54, Issue 3 (August 2022)
- (invited and declined) special issue of *Middle East Information and Research Project* (MEIRP) editors Nabil al-Tikriti, Shamiran Mako, and Marsin Alshamary
- “Una Breve Historia Del Pueblo Asirio,” in Carlos Antaramian ed., *Asirios: Una historia de cinco milenios*, *ISTOR*, Año XX, Numero 79, Invierno De 2019-2020, *Revista De Historia Internacional* (pp.11-34)
- “Earth, Rocks and Blood: A Wandering Home,” *Testing the Canon of Ancient Near Eastern Art and Archaeology* (Oxford University Press, 2020)
- “Persistent Perseverance: A Trajectory of Assyrian History in the Modern Age,” in Paul Rowe edited, *Routledge Handbook on Minorities in the Middle East*, Routledge 2018
- w/ Daniel Joseph Tower, “Reframing Indigeneity: The Case of Assyrians in Northern Mesopotamia,” *Perspectives on History*, January 2018
- “Neither Syriac-speaking nor Syrian Orthodox Christians: (K)Harputli Assyrians in the United States as a Model for Ethnic Self-Categorization and Expression” in:

- Teule, H., Keser-Kayaalp, E. Akalin, K., Doru, N., Toprak, M.S. (eds), *Syriac in its Multi-Cultural Context*, Eastern Christian Studies 23, Louvain: Peeters, 2017.
- w/ Alda Benjamen, *Rural Violence versus Urban Intellectualism: A Paradox of Integration and Emancipation*, in: Isakhan, B., Mako, S., and Dawood, F., *Evolving State Society Relations in Iraq: Negotiating Citizenship under Occupation, Authoritarianism and Democratization* (IB Tauris 2017)
 - w/Shamiran Mako, *Between Denial and Existence: Situating Assyrians within the Discourse on Cultural Genocide*, in, Öner A. Cetrez, Sargon Donabed, and Aryo Makko, *The Assyrian Heritage: Threads of Continuity and Influence*, Studies in Religion & Society 5, Volume I, (Uppsala: Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis, 2012)
 - “Rethinking Nationalism and an Appellative Conundrum: Historiography and Politics in Iraq,” *National Identities*, 14.4, (Taylor & Francis, 2012)
 - w/ Shamiran Mako, “Harput, Turkey to Massachusetts: Notes on the Immigration of Jacobite (“Syrian”) Christians” *Chronos*, number 23, (Beirut: University of Balamand, Summer 2011)
 - w/ Shamiran Mako, “Ethno-Cultural and Religious Identity of Syrian Orthodox Christians,” *Chronos*, number 19, (Beirut: University of Balamand, Spring 2009): 69-111.
 - w/ Hannibal Travis, Foreword of Hirmis M. Aboona’s, *Assyrians, Kurds, and Ottomans: Intercommunal Relations on the Periphery of the Ottoman Empire*, (Amherst, NY: Cambria Press, 2008)
 - “The Assyrian Heroic Epic of Qatine Gabbara: A Modern Poem in the Ancient Bardic Tradition,” *Folklore* 118, (Taylor & Francis, 2007): 342-355.

Public Engagement

- Assyrian Studies Symposium: *Formative History, Challenges, and New Directions*, organizing committee and presenter, Stanford University, Stanford Humanities Center, August 11-13, 2023 (<https://www.asasymposium.com>)
- Genocide Awareness Week Speaker, “The Assyrians, Simele, and its Aftermath: A Narrative of Resilience” Arizona State University (April 2023)
- 30th Sabbagh Lecturer, “Rethinking the Middle East from the Margins: Creating Space for Minoritized Narratives,” University of Arizona, (March 2023)
- Metropolitan Museum of Art, Friends of the Ancient Near East appreciation event, in conversation with curator Sarah Graff, *Keeping Culture Alive: Assyrians, Then and Now*, November 3, 2022
- (invited) University of the Peloponnese, Greece *Christianity and Religious Pluralism in the Modern Middle East: International Politics and Religion at the turn of the 20th and 21st century* (<http://www.christianitymiddleeast.gr>)
- Moderator and translator for the Metropolitan Museum of Art and Assyrian Studies Association present “The Story of Art and the Art of Stories: Living Culture from Mesopotamia to New York” August 27, 2022
- Assyrian Policy Conference (June 9-12, 2022) Guest Panelist for “Replanting Roots, Rebuilding Community: Assyrians in America” and session “Telling Assyrian Stories: An Oral History Workshop and Discussion”

- **Metropolitan Museum of Art, Ancient Near Eastern Art (audio/video production) - Featured Expert**

(October 2021), I was invited by the Metropolitan Museum of Art (The Met) producer/editor in digital content, Sarah Cowan, to participate in a new web series (coupled with audio clips for museum guests) that will focus on objects in the collection each month, raising questions about the pieces through an open conversation between MET curators and experts. I recorded a two-hour conversation with Associate Curator of Ancient Near Eastern Art Dr. Sarah Graff concerning ancient Assyrian reliefs and their ownership, dispossession of cultural artifacts and parallels with the Assyrian community, tangible and intangible cultural heritage, the Mesopotamian/Assyrian Tree of Life and Jewish Kabbalah, hybridity and human-animal relationships, and the importance of the decolonization of museums by re-centering marginalized indigenous peoples like the Assyrians.

- **Euronews TV, *Good Morning Europe* Coverage of Pope Francis's Visit to Iraq – Featured Expert**

Featured expert to discuss the visit of Pope Francis to Iraq on Euronews TV – *Good Morning Europe* (March 8, 2021). The channel is available in 430 million households in 166 countries worldwide. It reaches more than 170 million European households on sat, digital, and cable TV. (<https://www.euronews.com>) The Papal visit between March 5-8, 2021, was the first of its kind and seen as a major celebration as it became a message of solidarity with ancient Christians and Yazidis facing continued persecution. I was asked about the importance of this visit, what negatives—if any—might there be, the security and Covid situation, and the importance of Pope Francis's meeting with Shia cleric Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani.

- **Institute for the Study of the Ancient World (ISAW) – Guest Lecturer**

I was the invited guest lecturer for an event (March 7, 2020) held at the Institute for the Study of the Ancient World (ISAW) in NYC in conjunction with the grand opening of the exhibition *A Wonder to Behold: Craftsmanship and the Creation of Babylon's Ishtar Gate* (November 6, 2019–May 24, 2020.) I gave two talks, both based on my chapter “Earth, Rocks, and Blood: A Wandering Home” in Gansell and Shafer's edited work *Testing the Canon of Ancient Near Eastern Art and Archaeology* (Oxford University Press, 2020). The event was also a celebration of the Assyrian New Year, a 12-day festival which begins on the vernal equinox and is a response of indigenous continuity and agency amidst an existential threat. The lectures were in front of an audience of approximately 150-200 people.

For more information, ISAW “is a center for advanced scholarly research and graduate education, which aims to encourage particularly the study of the economic, religious, political and cultural connections between ancient civilizations.” (<https://isaw.nyu.edu/>)

- **Fan Expo Boston, *The Wheel of Time: From Jordan's Page to Amazon's Screen* – Panel Creator and Presenter**

I created and presented on a panel at Fan Expo Boston (formerly Boston Comic Con) with two former students, Kyla Yates and Emily Craig. The panel was entitled *The Wheel of Time: From Jordan's Page to Amazon's Screen* and held on September 4, 2021. We discussed the epic fantasy series written by Robert Jordan and completed by Brandon Sanderson in over 14 books and its forthcoming screen adaptation. Additionally, we spoke of major plot points, feasibility of adjustment to the screen, magic systems, casting, identity/representation, and the importance of myth and fantasy today. Most of this content was sparked by *HIST380 Magic and Myth*, the topical course I teach at Roger Williams University (Bristol, RI).

- **Milton Times** – Various articles

Dissertation Committees - Academic Dissertations – External Reader

Coming to America: Understanding the Perspectives of Assyrian Iranian Refugees During their Transition Experience in the US Education System, California State University, Stanislaus (Ed D)

The Assyrian Collective Identity in light of ISIS's Destruction of Assyrian Archaeological Artefacts, University of Sydney, Australia (Near Eastern Studies)

Formation of Ethnic and Cultural Identity of Syrian Orthodox Christians (Jacobites) of Kerala: An Ethnographic Analysis, Pondicherry University, India (Anthropology)

Selected Book Reviews

- Review of Fawaz Gerges. *A History of ISIS. Genocide Studies International* (GSI), Vol. 11, No. 1, 2017

Speculative Fiction/Fantasy-Oriented Work

- Various panels, 2022, *Jordancon*
- Various panels, 2023, *Jordancon*
- “Teaching Children Through Fantasy: The Importance of Fablehaven,” October 18-20 Atlanta, 2019, Georgia, *Multiverse*
- “Learning and Writing the Near East: Myth, Memory, and Assumptions, Using History Mercilessly,” etc. 2019, *Jordancon*,
- Various panels, 2018, *Jordancon*
- “Faith in Uncertain Times: Fashioning Hope Through Comic Mythopoeia” 2017, *The Comics and Popular Arts Conference (CPAC)/Dragoncon*
- “Subtle and Evident Influences and Derivations of Robert Jordan in the Wheel of Time Mythos,” 9th Annual meeting in Atlanta, Georgia, September 2-5, 2016, *The Comics and Popular Arts Conference (CPAC)/Dragoncon*

Selected Conference Organization, Papers, and Lectures

- (accepted panel) Roundtable creator and presenter, *Cultural Production and New Directions in Assyrian Studies* Nordic Society Middle East Studies Conference Reykjavik September 2022
- Nineveh Academic Chair, First International Congress, Assyrian Language, History and Culture, *An Overview of Assyrian History Through a Lens of Assyrian Studies: Obstacles, Theories, and Narrative*, 23-25 May 2022, University of Salamanca, Spain
- Middle East Studies Association, MESA Annual Meeting, November 2021, Thematic Conversation Organizer: *De-centering the Middle East: Challenging the Status Quo* (year 3)
- Invited Lecture, *The Growth and Importance of Assyrian Studies and Cultural Preservation*, Centre for Canadian-Assyrian Relations (CCAR) Toronto, ON, CA June 12, 2021
- Invited Lecture, *Greek Independence and the Ottoman Empire*, March 25, 2020, Saints Anargyroi Church, Marlborough, MA
- Middle East Studies Association, MESA Annual Meeting 2020, Thematic Conversation Organizer/Participant: *De-centering the Middle East: Challenging the Status Quo* (year 2)
- Middle East Studies Association, MESA Annual Meeting 2019, New Orleans, Thematic Conversation Organizer/Participant: *De-centering the Middle East: Challenging the Status Quo* (year 1)
- Middle East Studies Association, MESA Annual Meeting 2018, November, Denver, Colorado *Persistent Perseverance: A Trajectory of Assyrian History in Panethnic Context*
- *Ritual landscape and performance*, “Assyria through the Ages: contemporary continuity of ritual in theory and praxis,” Department of Near Eastern Languages & Civilizations (NELC) at Yale University, September 24-25, 2016.
- Invited Talk/Panel, *The Future of Religious Minorities in the Middle East*, Center for Middle Eastern Studies, University of Chicago, April 9, 2016
- Invited Paper, *Lines of Identity: Middle Eastern Diasporas in North America: An Interdisciplinary Workshop*, Paper Presenter: “Assyria in America: Reflections on Micro- Macro-Community Relations,” University of Manitoba, sponsored by the Jarislowsky Chair in the Modern History of the Middle East & North Africa, December 4-5, 2015
- Middle East Studies Association, MESA Annual Meeting 2015, November, Denver, Colorado, Panel Discussant: *The Ottoman Genocide of Christian Minorities: The Armenians and Assyrians*
- Invited Lecture/Roundtable Discussion, Trinity Western University, *The Middle East, Minorities, and the Islamic State: past, present, and future*, October 28, 2015
- Invited Lecture/Roundtable Discussion, Harvard University, *Ancient Christian Communities and Current Events*, March 25, 2015

- Middle East Studies Association, MESA Annual Meeting 2014, November, Washington DC, Panel Organizer: *From Margin to Mainstream: Geographical Transformation of Community in Rural and Urban Histories of the Other from WWII to the Arab Spring* Presenter: “Ethnic Shifts in an Ecclesiastical Community: A Visual Dialogue of Jacobite Nomenclature in 20th and 21st Century Israel/Palestine”
- Middle East Studies Association, MESA Annual Meeting 2014, November, Washington DC, Panel Organizer and Discussant: *Seen and Heard: Making Visible Assyrians and Middle Eastern Minorities*
- “The Historical and Current Situation of Religious Minorities in Iraq,” Invited Lecture/Workshop, August 19, 2014, Saints Anargyroi Greek Orthodox Church, Marlborough, MA
<http://www.stsanargyroi.org/photo-gallery-template?setID=72157646660598622>
- “Situationalism? Reasons for and Aspects Of Non-Conformist Identity,” Panel: Diaspora and Homeland, Nordic Society for Middle Eastern Studies Ninth Nordic Conference on Middle Eastern Studies, Lund, Sweden, September 19-21, 2013
- Co-organizer Roger Williams University Conference on *Religion and the State: Narrative and Negotiation: Agency* April 12-14, 2013
- Middle East Studies Association, MESA Annual Meeting 2012, November, Denver, Colorado: Panel Presenter: “Assyrian and Minority Studies”
- 3rd Global Conference on Genocide by the International Network of Genocide Scholars at San Francisco State University, San Francisco, USA June 28th – July 1st, 2012 *Genocide: Knowing the Past, Safeguarding the Future*, Presenter: “The Mendacity, Atrocity, and its Corollary: Revisiting Simele, Iraq”
- (accepted paper) 11th Symposium Syriacum, University of Malta, Valletta, Malta, (16-18 July 2012), Presenter: “Ethnic shifts in an ecclesiastical community: A visual dialogue of the nomenclature of the Jacobites in 20th and 21st century Israel/Palestine”
- International Syriac Studies Symposium: Syriac in its Multi-Cultural Context, Mardin Artuklu University 20-22 April 2012, Mardin, Turkey, Presenter: “Neither “Syriac-speaking” nor “Syrian Orthodox Christians”: (K)Harputli Assyrians in the United States as a Model for Ethnic Self-Categorization and Expression
- Middle East Studies Association, MESA Annual Meeting 2011, December, Washington D.C.: Presenter: “The Mendacity, Atrocity, and its Corollary: Revisiting Simele, Iraq (2011)”
- Co-organizer Roger Williams University Conference on *Religion and the State, “Religion and the State in the 17th and 18th centuries in Europe and America,”* April 1-3, 2011
- Middle East Studies Association (MESA) Annual Meeting 2010, November, San Diego, CA: Misconceptions and Politics: “Reconceptualizing 'Historic Realities' in Iraq 1960-1990”
- Middle East Studies Association (MESA) Annual Meeting 2009, November, Boston, MA: Panel Organizer: *Ottoman Minority Diasporas in New England: Community Formation and Evolution* Presenter: “Evolving Identity: Religion and the Secularization of Assyrians in Massachusetts in the Early 20th Century”

- Symposium Syriacum September 2008 Grenada, Spain: *Historical, Political, and Religious Transformation in Iraq* (accepted paper)
- Middle East Studies Association, MESA Annual Meeting 2007, November, Montréal, Quebec: *Ethno-Cultural and Religious Identity of Syrian Orthodox Christians*
- North American Syriac Studies Symposium V, University of Toronto, Canada, June 2007: *Transparent Assyria: Ethno-Cultural or Religious Reasons for Devastation in Iraq 1961-1990?*
- Middle East Studies Association, MESA Annual Meeting 2006, November, Boston, MA, Panel Organizer: (1) *An Intellectual Outlet: Assyrian Literary and Cultural Reactions to Major 20th Century Events*, and, (2) *Expressions of Liberty in Conflict Regions: The Assyrians in an Age of Transition*; Presenter: “The Assyrian Heroic Epic of Qatīne Gabbara through Bard and Poet: Evolution, Structure, and Influence”
- Boston Public Library, September 2005, *Recovering Immigration History: Personal Photographs and Naturalization Records of the Massachusetts Assyrians*
- Middle East Studies Association, MESA Annual Meeting 2004 November 20, 2004 San Francisco, California *Rabban Hormizd Monastery*
- The Canadian Society for Syriac Studies Annual Symposium IV Saturday November 13, 2004: *The Monastery of Rabban Hormizd: A Scholarly and Scribal Centre*
- Middle East Studies Association, MESA Annual Conference 2003 November 6-9, 2003 Anchorage, Alaska: *The Assyrian Legacy of Kharput Transplanted in New England: The Ideology of Ashur Yousuf*

Teaching Experience

- Roger Williams University, Professor of History and Cultural Studies, 2022-present
- Roger Williams University, Associate Professor of History, 2016-2022
- Roger Williams University, Assistant Professor of History, 2009 – 2016
- Stonehill College, Adjunct Professor of Religious Studies, Spring 2009
- Teaching Assistantship, U Toronto, 2007-2008 - Course: *Introduction to the Ancient Near East - Mesopotamia*
- Research Assistantship, U Toronto, 2007, *Syriac Chronicle of Zuqnin*
- Teaching Assistantship, U Toronto, 2007, Course: *Introduction to the Ancient Near East – Mesopotamia*
- Pierce Middle School, 2001-2002 - Substitute Teacher
- Milton High School, 2000-2001
- English/Writing Instructor/Special Education

Selected Affiliations and Academic Organizations

- *The Assyrian Studies Association*, founding member, board member
- *American Historical Association*

- *The Academic Research Institute Iraq* (TAARII) – contributing member/grant recipient
- *Middle East Studies Association* (MESA) – contributing member
- *Mythopoeic Society* – member

Research Languages

- ❖ *Ancient*: Aramaic/Syriac, Phoenician, Hebrew, Akkadian, Ugaritic
- ❖ *Modern*: English (native), Assyrian (native: multiple dialects), Arabic, French, German, Spanish

Professional and University Service

- Assyrian Studies Association, board member, 2019-present
- Diversity and Inclusion Fellow, Roger Williams University, 2020-2021
- Hassenfeld Fellow, advanced level, Roger Williams University, 2020
- FPST committee, Roger Williams University, 2019-2021
- Co-Founder and Secretary of the Assyrian Studies Association (2019-present)
- Advisor for student LLC on cats
- Chair, Department of History and American Studies, Roger Williams University (2016-2019)
- Member of the SHAE Faculty Review Committee (FSRC), Roger Williams University, (2016-2019)
- *Middle East Studies Association* (MESA) – Program Review Committee for annual meeting Boston 2016
- Co-organizer Roger Williams University Conference on *Religion and the State*, “Societal Relations in Periods of Transition and Transformation.” April 23-24, 2015
- Roger Williams University, Human Subject Review Board (HSRB) committee, 2013-2017
- *Chronos* (Journal), Editorial Board, University of Balamand, Beirut, Lebanon (<http://www.balamand.edu.lb/english/VP.asp?id=1958&fid=259>) 2010-present
- *Modern Assyrian Research Archive* (MARA), Advisory Board Member, 2010-present
- Co-organizer Roger Williams University Conference on *Religion and the State*, “Narrative and Negotiation: Agency, Religion and the State” April 12-14, 2013
- Co-organizer Roger Williams University Conference on *Religion and the State*, “Religion and the State in the 17th and 18th centuries in Europe and America,” April 1-3, 2011
- Roger Williams University, American Studies search committee, 2009-2010
- Roger Williams University, Diversity Committee, 2010-2011
- Roger Williams University, History Club faculty advisor, 2009-2013
- Roger Williams University, Faculty Union, Membership Committee, 2011-2013