

THE AMORITES IN ARCHAEOLOGY, TEXTS, AND CULTURAL MEMORY

Two connected winter lectures on archaeology and biblical studies.

Amorites: Their Origins and Their Legacy

Dr. Aaron Burke, UCLA

Tuesday 11 February 2025 @ 7:00 PM, ZSB 244 and online

Sponsored by the Lawrence T. Geraty & Douglas R. Clark Center for Near Eastern
Archaeology

The Amorites, an ancient Near Eastern group, are infamous for their appearance in the Bible, where they are remembered among Canaan's diverse inhabitants at the time of its conquest by Israel. Yet, this collective identity is perhaps better known for its famous rulers during the first half of the second millennium BCE. During this period, called the Middle Bronze Age, Amorite rulers like Hammurabi of Babylon reigned across the Near East, from Bahrain to the Egyptian Delta. Competition, emulation, and their pursuit of legitimation inspired their patronage of long-distance trade, temple construction and religious orders, the arts, warfare and fortification building, and standardizations of law. The extensive nature of their efforts has led some to even refer to this as "the age of the Amorites." This lecture explores the emergence of this Amorite legacy, how it spread, and why it was commemorated so widely in later Near Eastern history.

The Legacy of Heshbon: Biblical Memory, Archaeology, & Contemporary Narratives

Dr. Øystein LaBianca, Andrews University

Tuesday 18 February 2025 @ 7:00 PM, ZSB 244 and online

Sponsored by the HMS Richards Divinity School

The biblical narrative of Heshbon, linked to the conquest of Sihon, King of the Amorites, is referenced 38 times in the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament. This persistent memory contrasts with the absence of available archaeological evidence at Tall Hisban, identified with ancient Heshbon. The presentation explores the dynamic interplay between textual traditions and archaeological findings, focusing on how such narratives are remembered, reinterpreted, and instrumentalized over time. Drawing on findings from the Hisban excavations and related regional surveys, it assesses the construction of Heshbon's historical significance through literary, cultural, and geopolitical lenses. Particular attention is given to how these narratives have been co-opted in contemporary settler colonialist ideologies to assert territorial claims, amplifying their relevance beyond the biblical text. By situating Heshbon within the broader contexts of cultural memory studies and political archaeology, this presentation underscores the nuanced relationship between ancient history and modern socio-political realities.