

John Z. Wee

*Historian of Science, Medicine, and Mathematics in Mesopotamian and Greco-Roman Antiquity,
and Assistant Professor at the University of Chicago*

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EDUCATION

- Yale University — Ph.D. (*with distinction*) awarded William J. Horwitz Prize in Near Eastern Languages & Civilizations (2012) & M.A. in History (Classical Greece) (2008)

PROFESSIONAL HISTORY

University of Chicago, *Faculty in the Oriental Institute, the Department of Near Eastern Languages & Civilizations (NELC), and the College, and Associated Faculty in the Department of Classics*

- Assistant Professor (2015–2022) & Director of Grad Studies in NELC, Ancient Programs (2016–2019)

Fellowship Awards

- Provost's Career Enhancement Postdoctoral Scholar (2012–2014), University of Chicago
- Samuel K. Bushnell Fellow (2010–2011) & Teaching Fellow (2007–2012), Yale University
- Landesstiftung Baden-Württemberg Scholar (2008–2009), Ruprecht-Karls-Universität Heidelberg

BOOKS

- Author of *Knowledge and Rhetoric in Medical Commentary. Ancient Mesopotamian Commentaries on a Handbook of Medical Diagnosis (Sa-gig)*. Cuneiform Monographs 49/1. Leiden: Brill, 2019.
- Author of *Mesopotamian Commentaries on the Diagnostic Handbook Sa-gig. Edition and Notes on Medical Lexicography*. Cuneiform Monographs 49/2. Leiden: Brill, 2019.
- Editor of *The Comparable Body: Analogy and Metaphor in Ancient Mesopotamian, Egyptian, and Greco-Roman Medicine*. Studies in Ancient Medicine 49. Leiden: Brill, 2017.

PEER-REVIEWED ARTICLES & ESSAYS

- "Literary Montage and Ambiguity in an Old Assyrian Tablet of Medical Incantations." *Ancient Near Eastern Studies* (2022) [Invited contribution, in preparation]
- "An Amulet for the Lamashtu Demoness: Contagion, Population Control, and Individualism." *Harvard Library Bulletin* [Invited contribution, in preparation]
- "Ghosts In and Outside the Machine: A Phenomenology of Consciousness, Psychic Possession, and Prophetic Ecstasy in Ancient Mesopotamia." [Under review]
- "A Systemic Etiology of Sicknesses from Ancient Iraq: Organ Systems and the Functional Holism of the Babylonian Body." Pp. 318–356 in *Holism in Ancient Medicine and Its Reception*. Edited by C. Thumiger. Studies in Ancient Medicine 53. Leiden: Brill, 2021.
- "Five Birds, Twelve Rooms, and the Seleucid Game of Twenty Squares." Pp. 833–876 in *Mesopotamian Medicine and Magic: Studies in Honor of Markham J. Geller*. Edited by S. V. Panayotov and L. Vacin. Ancient Magic and Divination 14. Leiden: Brill, 2018.

- "Pan-astronomical Hermeneutics and the Arts of the Lamentation Priest." *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie und Vorderasiatische Archäologie* 107/2 (2017): 236–260.
- "Earthquake and Epilepsy: The Body Geologic in the Hippocratic Treatise *On the Sacred Disease*." Pp. 142–167 in *The Comparable Body: Analogy and Metaphor in Ancient Mesopotamian, Egyptian, and Greco-Roman Medicine*. Edited by J. Z. Wee. *Studies in Ancient Medicine* 49. Leiden: Brill, 2017.
- "A Late Babylonian Astral Commentary on *Marduk's Address to the Demons*." *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 75/1 (2016): 127–167.
- "Virtual Moons Over Babylonia: The Calendar Text System, Its Micro-Zodiac of 13, and the Making of Medical Zodiology." Pp. 139–229 in *The Circulation of Astronomical Knowledge in the Ancient World*. Edited by J. M. Steele. *Time, Astronomy, and Calendars* 6. Leiden: Brill, 2016.
- "Discovery of the Zodiac Man in Cuneiform." *Journal of Cuneiform Studies* 67 (2015): 217–233.
- "Phenomena in Writing: Creating and Interpreting Variants of the Diagnostic Series Sa-gig." Pp. 247–287 in *In the Wake of the Compendia: Infrastructural Contexts and the Licensing of Empiricism in Ancient and Medieval Mesopotamia*. Edited by C. Johnson. *Science, Technology, and Medicine in Ancient Cultures* 3. Berlin: de Gruyter, 2015.
- "Case History as Minority Report in the Hippocratic *Epidemics* 1." Pp. 138–165 in *HOMO PATIENS: Approaches to the Patient in the Ancient World*. Edited by G. Petridou and C. Thumiger. *Studies in Ancient Medicine* 45. Leiden: Brill, 2015.
- "Grieving with the Moon: Pantheon and Politics in the Lunar Eclipse." *Journal of Ancient Near Eastern Religions* 14/1 (2014): 29–67.
- "Lugalbanda Under the Night Sky: Scenes of Celestial Healing in Ancient Mesopotamia." *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 73/1 (2014): 23–42.

ENCYCLOPEDIAS & HANDBOOKS

- "Astronomy and Medicine." *Oxford Handbook of Ancient Astronomy*. Edited by J. M. Steele. Oxford: Oxford University Press. [In preparation]
- "Mesopotamian Medicine." *Oxford Classical Dictionary*, Digital Edition. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- "Medicine and Healing, Ancient Near East." *Encyclopedia of the Bible and its Reception*. Berlin: de Gruyter.

POPULAR ESSAYS

- "Wretched Subjects, or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love Ancient Science." *Oriental Institute News & Notes* 230 (2016): 4–14.

ACADEMIC CONFERENCES & LECTURES

- "Meanings of the Right Triangle in Ancient Geometry." Meeting of the History of Science Society (New Orleans), November 2021.
- "Medicinal Plant as Actor—Therapeutic Ingredients and Medical Astrology in Ancient Mesopotamia." Invited Lecture for Conference on Ancient Sciences. Institute for the Study of the Ancient World (ISAW), New York University, September 2021.

- "The Babylonian Right Triangle and Its Meanings by Pythagoras, Plato, and Proclus." Conference on *Anchoring Technology in Greco-Roman Antiquity*. Radboud Universiteit Nijmegen (The Netherlands), 9–12 December 2020.
- "The Hippocratic Oath and Professional Family Guilds in Ancient Mesopotamia." Meeting of the Association of Ancient Historians. Emory University (Atlanta, Georgia), 25–27 April 2019.
- "Metrological Commentaries on the City Wall and Moat of Babylon." 229th Meeting of the American Oriental Society (Chicago), 15–18 March 2019.
- "Scholasticism and Medical Language in Cuneiform Commentaries from Ancient Iraq." Invited Lecture for the History of Science, Technology, and Medicine Colloquium. Johns Hopkins University, 21 February 2019.
- "The Micro-Zodiac in Babylonian and Greco-Roman Late Antiquity" and Chair of Session on *Measurement and Calculation*. Meeting of the History of Science Society (Seattle, Washington), 1–4 November 2018.
- "Epistemics, Curriculum, and Scholasticism in Mesopotamian Commentaries on a Handbook of Medical Diagnosis." Conference on *5000 Years of Comments: The Development of Commentary from Ancient Mesopotamia to the Age of Information*. Center for Hellenic Studies, Harvard University (Washington, DC), 7–10 August 2018.
- "Ancient Commentaries on the Mesopotamian Diagnostic Handbook." Ancient Civilizations Workshop. University of Chicago, 25 May 2018.
- "Scholasticism and Technical Writing in Late Babylonian Medical Education." Meeting of the History of Science Society (Toronto), 9–12 November 2017.
- Invited Chair and Respondent of Session on *Mesopotamian Timekeeping and Its Relationship to Greco-Roman Practices*. Conference on *Down to the Hour: Perspectives on Short Time in the Ancient Mediterranean*. University of Chicago, 24–25 February 2017.
- "Sundering the Beast: From the Babylonian Micro-Zodiac to Dodekatemoria in Greco-Roman Late Antiquity." Invited Lecture for Workshop on *Scale in Ancient Astrology*. Durham University, 9–10 December 2016.
- "Knowledge and Inquiry in the Mesopotamian Diagnostic Handbook." Conference on *The Form, Utility, and Professional Technê of Practical Handbooks in the Ancient World*. Magical Knowledge Project sponsored by the Neubauer Collegium. University of Chicago, 12 November 2016.
- "On Mesopotamian Planets and Star Maps." Wednesday Lunch Series for Faculty at the Franke Institute for the Humanities. University of Chicago, 12 October 2016.
- "Pan-astronomical Hermeneutics and the Arts of the Lamentation Priest." Invited Presentation at Workshop on *Pre-Medieval Commentaries in Medicine and Mathematical Sciences*. Max Planck Institute for the History of Science (Berlin), 25–27 August 2016.
- "An Esoteric Babylonian Commentary, Explained." 226th Meeting of the American Oriental Society (Boston), 18–21 March 2016.
- "Houses of Secret and the Meanings of Planetary Exaltations." Session on *The Heavenly Bodies in Image and Text*. 61st Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale (Geneva and Bern), 22–26 June 2015.
- "Straight from the *Ummânu*'s Mouth: Serialization, Classification, and Cuneiform Text Commentary." Session on *How to Build a Long-Term Text in the Ancient Near East*. 225th Meeting of the American Oriental Society (New Orleans), 13–16 March 2015.

- "The Roots of Commentary: From the Ancient Near East to Alexandria to Rabbinic Palestine." Invited Lecture, sponsored by the Liss Lectures in Judaica Fund. University of Notre Dame, 28 Jan 2015.
- Invited Seminar on "Mathematical Models for the Micro-Zodiac" and Lecture on "A Choice of Microcosms: *Dodekatemoria* Models and the Calendar Text System" for the Program *General Mathematical Practices in the Astral Sciences and Their Relation to / Contrast with Mathematical Sources*. Mathematical Sciences in the Ancient World (SAW) Project. Université Paris Diderot, 15 and 17 Oct 2014.
- "Air and the Physiology of Intelligence in the Hippocratics." Symposium on *Body and Metaphor in Ancient Medicine*. Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, 1–3 May 2014.
- "Stranger Beasts in the Zodiac: Kalendartexte and the Astrological Table in BM 56605." 39th International Conference on *Astrology in the Near East*. Aram Society for Syro-Mesopotamian Studies. University of Oxford, 23–24 April 2014.
- "Late Babylonian and Greco-Roman Medical Astrology." Conference on *The Circulation of Astronomical Knowledge in the Ancient World*. Brown University, 12–13 April 2014.
- "Measurements in Babylonian Drawings of Planets and Star Constellations." Symposium on *Mathematical Facets of Measurement, Measuring Units, Measured Quantities and Their Uses*. Mathematical Sciences in the Ancient World (SAW) Project. 24th International Congress of History of Science, Technology and Medicine (Manchester), 22–28 July 2013.
- "Medical Signs as Signs: The Immediacy of Experience in the Diagnostic Series Sa-gig." BabMed Session on *Empiricism in Mesopotamian Technical Literature*. 223rd Meeting of the American Oriental Society (Portland, Oregon), 15–18 March 2013.
- "The Patient as Variable: Presuppositions in the Writing of Case Histories." Conference on *HOMO PATIENS: Approaches to the Patient in the Ancient World*. Humboldt Universität zu Berlin, 29 June – 1 July 2012.
- "Argumentation in Mesopotamian Medical Commentaries." 222nd Meeting of the American Oriental Society (Boston), 16–19 March 2012.
- "Lugalbanda In the Mountain Cave: An Early Mesopotamian Model of Celestial Healing." 57th Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale (Rome), 4–8 July 2011.

PUBLIC LECTURES

- "Geometry of Sound Holes in Mesopotamian Harps." Invited Lecture for Volunteer Day at the Oriental Institute. University of Chicago, 11 March 2019.
- Cornerstone Lecture on "The World's Oldest Board Game Rules" and Mind-bender Lecture on "Journeys of Ancient Planets" for Renaissance Weekend (Santa Monica), 15–19 February 2018.
- "Stone Ducks: Weights and Measures in Ancient Mesopotamia." Oriental Institute Lunchtime Gallery Talk. University of Chicago, 7 December 2017.
- "The Royal Game of Ur from Ancient Mesopotamia." 39th Annual Humanities Day at the University of Chicago, 21 Oct 2017.
- "Mathematical Astronomy from Babylonia to Chicago." Invited Public Lectures for *A Night of Astronomy, Astrology, and Magic at the Oriental Institute*. Sponsored by the James Henry Breasted Society and the Adler Planetarium's Webster Institute for the History of Astronomy (Chicago), 13 April 2017.

- Cornerstone Lecture on “A (Very) Brief History of Ancient Astronomy” and Mini-lectures on “Discovery of the Zodiac Man” and “Herodotus and the Ever-present Past” for Renaissance Weekend (Santa Fe), 16–20 February 2017.
- “How to Play the Mesopotamian Game of Twenty Squares.” Invited Lecture for the Oriental Institute Volunteer Program. University of Chicago, 11 April 2016.
- “Mapping Stars and Planets Until the Zodiac.” 37th Annual Humanities Day at the University of Chicago, 17 Oct 2015.
- “Astronomy and Medicine in Ancient Mesopotamia.” The Program *Adler After Dark: Terra Firma*. Adler Planetarium (Chicago), 15 May 2014.
- “Mesopotamian Texts and the Knowledge Assumptions of Medical Diagnosis.” Fall 2012 Mini-series on *Medicine and Magic in the Ancient World: A Search for the Cure*. Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, 27 October 2012.

COURSES TAUGHT — University of Chicago (2012–)

- *Science, Culture, & Society in Western Civilization I: Greek and Roman Science*
— Annual Undergraduate Core Course in the History, Philosophy, and Social Studies of Science and Medicine Program
- *Before the Zodiac: Astronomy and Mathematics as Ancient Culture*
— Signature Humanities Undergraduate Course
- *Akkadian Astronomical Texts*
- *Cuneiform Mathematics*
- *Akkadian Medical Texts*
- Lecturer in “Historiography of Ancient Science and Medicine”
— Module for the Annual Core Course: *Approaches to the Study of the Ancient Near East*
- *Akkadian Literature: Late Period*
- *Assyrian Dialect*
- *Intermediate Akkadian: Myths of Creation and Destruction*
- *Introduction to Babylonian III: Divinatory Texts*
- *Elementary Akkadian*
- *Elementary Sumerian*

LANGUAGES STUDIED

- Conversant in English (native), Chinese, Japanese; Proficient in the Academic Use of Sumerian, Akkadian, Classical Greek, Latin, German, French; with Secondary Proficiencies in Egyptian, Aramaic, Hebrew, Ugaritic, Phoenician, Old Persian.