WRITING SAMPLE · FELLOWSHIP PROPOSAL

# Statement of Purpose, Jacob Hirsch Fellowship

American School of Classical Studies at Athens · Awarded, 2022–2023 · Machal Gradoz

This excerpt follows the statement's core argument: the research question, the gap in existing scholarship, the case for why the work required extended, on-site study in Greece, and the project's broader significance. Omitted passages are marked with ellipses.

I am applying to the Jacob Hirsch Fellowship for funding to complete my dissertation, which requires first-hand ceramic analysis in northwest Greece. My project, *Of Sherds and Stones: A Study of the Ceramic and Epigraphic Records of Late Hellenistic-Early Roman Northwest Greece & Southwest Albania*, examines local reactions to Roman hegemony in northwest Greece and southwest Albania in the late-Hellenistic-early Roman period (ca. 150 BCE–150 CE) through theoretically informed archaeological study of ceramics and inscriptions to challenge traditional scholarly narratives of decline and cultural homogeneity among local groups during the transition to Roman rule. I show that the material choices of these groups were varied, reflecting diverse cultural practices, which in turn indicates their complex social identities. This region has been historically understudied in scholarship, so my project will contribute to the discourse on the history of the area and nuance our understanding of how local communities reacted to and interacted with changing political, economic, and social conditions at a critical historical juncture. It will also be one of the first studies of this area to integrate data from both sides of the Albanian-Greek border.

[ … ]

While the Roman province of Achaia has been the subject of many comprehensive archaeological and historical studies, the provinces of Epirus and Illyria have not received the same attention. This is likely the result of several factors, including the political situation in these areas throughout the 20th century. It is certainly the case, however, that these regions, particularly northwest Greece, have been treated in distinct ways. Nicholas Hammond's seminal work, *Epirus* (1967), describes the inhabitants of the region as clinging to "traditional" ways of life longer than those living in southern Greece, denies that they are "Mediterranean Greeks," and claims that the whole region is generally considered to be poorer than the rest of Greece. This perception has changed in recent decades, with the opening of borders and collaborations between scholars around the world, including the *L'Illyrie Méridionale et l'Épire dans l'Antiquité* conference and two recent works that have considered southern Albania in the Roman period—Danijel Dzino's 2010 book, *Illyricum in Roman Politics, 229 BC–AD 68*, a historical study, and Saimir Shpuza's 2016 monograph, *La romanisation de l'Illyrie méridionale et de la Chaônie*. While they are well-researched, they are largely informed by literary evidence and neither considers the archaeological evidence of northern Greece. My dissertation fills the gap in this scholarship by taking a theoretically informed, material-first approach by using archaeological

evidence from northwest Greece and southwest Albania to show that local groups in ancient Epirus and southern Illyria did not blindly adopt the trappings of Roman material culture, but rather made choices to maintain some cultural practices and adapt others.

[ … ]

In-person study of the ceramics is necessary because although ceramic publications provide an essential starting point for the study of regional trends in supply and demand, they are inconsistent in terms of the information they include—fabric descriptions and measurements are rare, shape descriptions are not always included, and drawings and photographs of the objects (if included) are often grainy and without scale. My study will supplement the publications with a more detailed and systematic study of the artifacts that I have identified based on my investigation of the published finds. [ … ]

With the support of this Fellowship, I will apply through the ASCSA for the necessary permits to study the objects I have already identified, which are stored in the museums at Nikopolis, Arta, Ioannina, and Igoumenitsa. My ceramic analysis will include shape descriptions, macroscopic analysis of the fabrics, photography, and drawing. [ … ] Prior to and after my analysis, I will spend time in Athens at the ASCSA to research and write up my results in consultation with the resources available at the Blegen Library.

My dissertation will show that the material choices of the local communities of ancient Epirus and southern Illyria reflect their complex and layered social identities. Some local cultural practices continued into the Roman period, while other, new practices were adopted selectively. This challenges the narrative of cultural decline and homogeneity, which had dictated that the groups in this region wanted to be Roman and thus used Roman things. My project not only adds to the historical discourse in this understudied region—it also represents a new approach by integrating data from around the region informed by a strong theoretical framework, thus serving as a model for how to study Romanization.