

Newsletter

The Heritage of Mesopotamia and the Ancient Near East

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Letter of Introduction

Dear Friends of the Melammu Project,

Since we sent out the last newsletter in November 2024, three Melammu conferences have taken place. The 18th Melammu Symposium, titled *Knowledge Transfer between and across Ancient Empires*, was held in Changchun, China, and organized by Sven Günther. This event took place seven years after he had organized the memorable 6th Melammu Workshop, which was devoted to the edges of empires, also in Changchun. In May, the 25th Melammu Workshop, titled *Divination Techniques in the Ancient Near East and the Mediterranean World*, was organized by Zozan Tarhan in Sofia, Bulgaria. This workshop was especially well attended and demonstrated a great interest in the interdisciplinary investigation of ancient divination. The 26th Melammu Workshop, titled *Magic and Sorcery in Antiquity: People, Rituals, and Interpretations*, was planned to take place in Białystok, Poland, and was organized by Krzysztof Ulanowski and

Tomasz Mojsik. However, it was ultimately conducted online.

In this newsletter, you will find reports on these three events, as well as a Call for Papers for the upcoming Melammu Workshop in Rome, scheduled for April 23–24, 2026. The workshop, titled *The Fuel of Conquest: Food, Logistics, and Power in the Ancient Near East and Classical Antiquity*, will be organized by Iulia Dumitrache.

We look forward to seeing many of you during the next year and take the opportunity to thank all the organizers and participants for their support of the Melammu project!

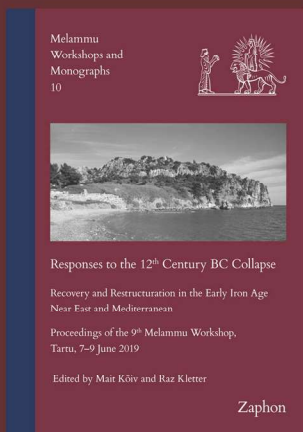
If you are interested in organizing workshops or symposia in the framework of the Melammu Project, please do not hesitate to contact us!

With all the best wishes,

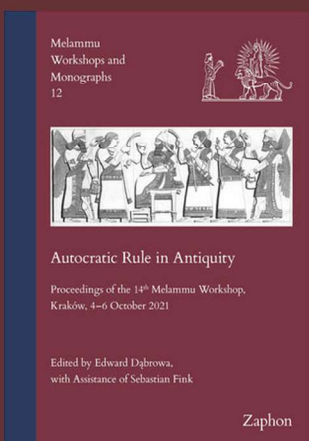
Sebastian Fink and Julian Degen



RECENT PUBLICATIONS



Melammu Workshops and Monographs 10
**Responses to the 12th Century BC Collapse
 Recovery and Restructuration
 in the Early Iron Age
 Near East and Mediterranean.**
 Proceedings of the 9th Melammu Workshop,
 Tartu, 7–9 June 2019
 Edited by Mait Kõiv and Raz Kletter
 ISBN 978-3-96327-276-9 / VI + 525 pp / 135,00€



Melammu Workshops and Monographs 12
Autocratic Rule in Antiquity
 Proceedings of the 14th Melammu Workshop,
 Kraków, 4–6 October 2021
 Edited by Edward Dąbrowa,
 with Assistance of Sebastian Fink
 ISBN 978-3-96327-284-4 / VI + 263 pp. / 85,00 €

Reports on Recent Melammu Events

Melammu Symposium 18
 Changchun (5-7 September 2025)
 “Knowledge Transfer between and
 across Ancient Empires”
 (Organiser: *Sven Günther*)

The XVIII Melammu Symposium was held at the Institute for the History of Ancient Civilizations (IHAC), Northeast Normal University, Changchun, China from 5 to 7 September 2025. The 16 speakers from the fields of Ancient Near Eastern Studies, Classics & Ancient History, Byzantine and Late Antique Studies as well as Medieval Latin Studies explored the various ways in which knowledge was shared, disseminated, transferred, and transformed in “long” antiquity across and between empires. After greeting words of Zhang Qiang, director of IHAC, and an online welcome address by the Consul General of the Federal Republic of Germany in nearby Shenyang, Annette Sévery, the organizer and vice-director of IHAC, Sven Günther introduced the conference topic by focusing on the communicative aspect of knowledge transfer. In his view a detailed study of this feature would allow for a better understanding of how different forms of knowledge could be transferred, namely, the languages, ways, forms, agents, possibilities, ideologies, limits that, among others, framed its sharing, dissemination, and transfer as well as mattered in the transformation processes that followed. The three keynote speeches by professors Jaewon Ahn (Seoul National University), Angelos Chaniotis (Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton), and Leibniz Prize laureate Hartmut Leppin (Goethe University, Frankfurt) took different forms of knowledge transfer into account. Professor Ahn focused on the specific image of the ancient Attic orator and politician Demosthenes shaped by Korean intellectuals and activists in the republican movement at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth century. The Demosthenes Coreanus entailed quite

different features than the ambivalent reception of this figure in different European countries across time. Chaniotis focused on how memory was communicated in *Res Gestae* (Achievements) reports of different ancient rulers, most prominently by the Roman emperor Augustus and the Sassanid king Shapur I. By comparing the textual structures, narrative elements, and rhetorical devices he concluded on the shared mnemopoietic features of these reports that aimed at planting specific ideas into the mind of the targeted audiences by the ways of framing, namely, selection and salience of information. Leppin's keynote looked at the multilingual landscape of the late antique Roman Empire that enabled a transfer and transformation of Roman legal knowledge across the actual boundaries of the Roman sphere into other parts of the Afro-Eurasian world. In his eyes, the agency of non-imperial languages such as Coptic and Syriac and the polyphony of Christianity, which adapted to the different cultures of Afro-Eurasia they encountered, were main factors to enable this transformation and contributes to a more diversified picture of the reception of Roman law than the traditional Europe-centred perspective.

Around these three keynotes, five thematic panels were grouped. The first explored literary transmission. Alexander Johannes Edmonds (University of Münster) proposed a new paradigm to study literary transmission in the Ancient Near Eastern framework, taking into account a diversity of versions and potential links between different texts. Sven Günther (IHAC) studied the didactic mindset of the ancient Greek polymath Xenophon who designed his works in a way the actual knowledge acquired through them could potentially be

transferred and applied to other spheres of life. Giuseppe Giardi (University of San Marino) looked into the frame of the Seres people built from late republican times onwards. He analyzed the way the frame was enriched with specific topoi and the remarkable continuity of it in later imperial times although updated information on the geography of China, with which the Seres are often identified, was already available.

The second panel focused on technological and skill transfer. Marta Lorenzon (University of Helsinki), with Melis Uzdurum as co-author, used socio-archaeological methods to examine the spread and use of building skills within Imperial Assyria, showing both local but also empire-wide recipes in use in different socio-political contexts. Lin Lijuan (Peking University) showed how Graeco-Arabic astronomical, medical, and philosophical knowledge was transferred to China during the Yuan Dynasty as visible in the Islamic books of the Mishu Jianzhi. Especially problems of identifying ancient or early Muslim authors and

works as well as the selection of works were discussed by her.

The third panel concerned the crucial question of the origin of knowledge transferred. Li Yiqing (Free University of Berlin), with Klaus Geus as co-author, looked into the tax culture of South Arabia as visible in both regional and Roman literary sources. She clearly showed the filter the actual tax system on the ground went through before entering the Roman literary framework. Elisabeth Günther (University of Heidelberg) discussed the extent to which the motif of the cista mystica with snake(s) reflect the transfer of visual elements from the Hellenistic period in Asia Minor to the center Rome and different regions of the Eastern part of the Roman Empire. She argued that the presence of this motif was triggered by the at times violent interaction between Rome and the Parthian Empire and became an alternative, exotic iconography to battle sarcophagi being popular in the same period of time. Elizabeth Webster (IHAC) studied how Dunhuang became a center for actual but also ascribed knowledge

transfer within the framework of the Silk Roads. In particular, she showed how infrastructure as well as the agency of both people and goods actually and reportedly travelling were making Dunhuang a hotspot for such transfer. The fourth panel took information flow as starting point of the considerations. Marco Ferrario (University of Trento) discussed the different methodological ways with which we can arrive at a better understanding of how the Achaemenid Empire received local information into its center and vice versa disseminated information to parts of its realm. He pointed out that traditional categorizations such as "rulers" and "ruled" or "center" and "periphery" must be re-thought in order to carve out the complexities of transactional and -formational processes visible in the source material. Hendrikus van Wijlick (Peking University) showed the degree to which Rome and her rivals in the Late Republic had to rely on intermediaries for receiving politically or militarily relevant information. These, however, were not



Melammu
Symposium 18,
group photo,
Changchun



Melammu
Symposium 18,
Changchun

tacit messengers but followed their own agenda and aims, being exactly aware of their communicating position. The final panel looked at the interactions along the Silk Roads. Li Qiang (IHAC) showed the travel of paper and the knowledge carried by it. He argued for a more comprehensive understanding of the knowhow transfer of papermaking and the knowledge dissemination through paper as unidirectional travel ways would neglect the complexities of exchange between the Byzantine Empire, the Islamic world, and China through different, notably Sogdian intermediaries. Jordi Martin Pons (University of Barcelona), whose presentation was pre-recorded, examined the various transformations of the Enoch motif which happened while travelling along the route in Eurasia, being modified and adapted to different religious and cultural settings. Bernhard Hollick (University of Oslo) explored the Western encounter with Buddhism in the thirteenth century and the ways the authors William of Rubruck and Roger Bacon dealt with the intellectual challenge in different manner. In particular he argued for a closer examination of the feedback loop on the own scholastic way



Melammu
Symposium 18,
Changchun

of thinking the different conceptual framework of Buddhism exercised on these authors.

The stimulating discussions promoted by the papers produced a vivid example of how an interdisciplinary setup as envisioned by the Melammu Project and actually existing at IHAC can promote cutting-edge research and builds

long-lasting, sustainable bridges of knowledge exchange between East and West.

Sven Günther
(IHAC, Changchun)

Melammu Workshop 25

Sofia (29–30 May 2025)

"Divination Techniques in the Ancient Near East and the Mediterranean World"

(Organiser: Zozan Tarhan)

The 25th Melammu Workshop entitled *Divination Techniques in the Ancient Near East and the Mediterranean World*, organised by Zozan Tarhan, was hosted by the Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridski (in cooperation with the Institute for Ancient History and Assyriology at the University of Innsbruck) on the 29th–30th of May 2025. This was the first Melammu conference for the University of Sofia and the second one for Bulgaria after the first Melammu event took place in 2008. Scholars from Austria, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, England, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Poland, Spain, Switzerland, Turkey, and the US took part in the 25th Melammu Workshop.

This Workshop was dedicated to

divination techniques, provoked and unprovoked omens and prophecy in the Ancient Near East and the Mediterranean World. The workshop aimed to analyse divination techniques, their development, and the context they have been used in, the experts behind them, their conceptual setting, and their diffusion in the ancient world.

The conference consisted of the following sessions: *Prophecy and Divination in the Neo-Assyrian Empire*, *Extispicy in Ancient Mesopotamia*, *Prophecy and Magic in the Hebrew Bible*, *Celestial Omens in Ancient Mesopotamia and Anatolia*, *Divination Techniques from Anatolia to Inner Asia*, *Divination Practices in the Ancient World*, and *(Re)considering Terms and New Perspectives*.

The first keynote lecturer, Martti Nissinen

(University of Helsinki), gave a lecture entitled *Prophetic Bodies and Bodily Prophecies in the Ancient Near East*. He discussed the Assyrian, Biblical and classical sources for prophecy and distinguished different prophetic bodies and bodily prophecies. Furthermore, M. Nissinen presented and analysed the relations of the Neo-Assyrian king with the great gods.

The second keynote lecturer, Nicolay Sharankov (University of Sofia), presented the *Divination Practices in Ancient Thrace*. He introduced the different types of sources on divination practices in Ancient Thrace, focusing on epigraphic evidence, and discussed the various divination techniques used by the Thracians. Sebastian Fink (University of Innsbruck) was the first speaker of the session on



Melammu Workshop 25, group photo, Sofia

Prophecy and Divination in the Neo-Assyrian Empire. He presented the lecture Not Listening to the Gods: *What lion ever performed extispicy?* S. Fink discussed and analysed textual accounts of Mesopotamian kings who disregard divine messages and pointed out that this motif is used to criticise other kings and present them as arrogant rulers ignoring the warnings of the gods. Zozan Tarhan (University of Sofia) gave a lecture on *Unfavourable Celestial Omens in the Neo-Assyrian Empire: The Death of the King and Rebellion*. She offered an interpretation of the lines in the Eponym Chronicle regarding the solar eclipse and rebellion in 763 B.C. She discussed whether an eclipse could be used by someone to incite a rebellion and specifically if this solar eclipse could have resulted in the documented rebellion. Z. Tarhan discussed this matter in her books on authority and ideology of the early Assyrian Empire (2022; 2025), but she added important new evidence. Alexander Edmonds (University of Münster) and Saki Kikuchi (LMU Munich) gave a lecture entitled *In a favourable month, on an auspicious day. The Shifting Logic of Divination within the Neo-Assyrian Royal Inscriptions*. They pointed out that great emphasis is placed upon the auspiciousness timing in which the military campaigns or monumental construction projects were undertaken. These temporal statements are typically assumed to reflect hemerological knowledge, i.e. divination dealing with favourable and unfavourable days. However, the underlying rationale for selecting specific dates for royal actions remains largely unexplored, and there is clear diachronic change evident in the expressions used. A. Edmonds and S. Kikuchi investigated the shifting changes in terminology and temporal notation just described from a diachronic perspective, seeking to determine whether they align with the known hemerological principles or with other divinatory practices attested during the

Neo-Assyrian period. Luke McDermott (University of Galway) presented *A Hitherto Overlooked Bilingual Palindrome from Esarhaddon's Prophetic Sammeltafel. Iconicity and Internal Exegesis*. His paper engaged with the textuality of Neo-Assyrian prophecies and he focused particularly on the third oracle on what is conventionally known as the "second" of the Sammeltafel (SAA 9, 2.3). L. McDermott discussed this hitherto unnoticed bilingual palindrome and its significance for the interpretation of the texts. Strahil Panayotov (Bulgarian Academy of Sciences) presented the topic of *From an Astrological Report to Medical Theory*. He discussed "the seasonal illness" mentioned in the astrological report SAA 8 1 to the Assyrian King in the light of a royal letter and cuneiform therapeutic prescriptions, searching for the theoretical background of such a diagnosis and demonstrated that the treatment of the patient in Mesopotamia was modified according to the season. Bernhard Schneider (University of Wrocław) discussed the possibility of *Excavating Divination Rituals at Neo-Assyrian Nippur?* By analysing unpublished archaeological evidence from his recent work on the Ekur of Nippur he attempted to reconstruct a divination ritual. The evidence comes from a foundation of a supporting wall at the ziggurat, datable roughly to Neo-Assyrian times. By combining all the extant sources, B. Schneider provided a historical contextualisation and interpretation of the archaeological evidence at the ziggurat of Nippur and highlighted its role in divination rituals. The session on *Prophecy and Magic in the Hebrew Bible* was opened by Stéphanie Anthonioz (CNRS UMR 8167). She gave a lecture entitled *Prophecy and Vision in the Hebrew Bible*. She demonstrated how the visual sign is part of prophecy as a divinatory practice and how through narrative and transmission it has become a literary genre in different biblical texts.

In other words, S. Anthonioz proposed that the visual dimension is constitutive of biblical prophecy, which gradually was formatted into an ideal oral prophecy "mouth to mouth" thus confusing distinct functions and divinatory practices. Hagai Dagan (Sapir College) presented on *Magic and Prophecy: Elijah and Elisha*. He pointed out that for early prophets, such as Elijah and Elisha, magic is a central tool for demonstrating their power and superiority over competing religious entities. In their world, magic is not exclusively identified with the Canaanite faith, but rather is used as a tool against it. Thus, Elijah and Elisha's magic in the field of prophecy is more effective than that of their competitors. H. Dagan noticed that their stories repeat the pattern that already appeared in the book of Exodus, namely in the episode of the competition between Moses and the Egyptian magicians. Alinda Damsma's (University College London) presentation was entitled '*Spirits of the Dead*' or '*Necromancers*? *The eṭemmu in an Old Assyrian Letter Reinterpreted in Light of Hebrew 'ōbôt and yidde'ōnīm*'. She explored the possibility that the term *eṭemmu(m)* had a wider semantic range than previously assumed and that it may, albeit in rare cases, have denoted a necromantic professional. She presented that a semantic similarity is attested in the Hebrew Bible, wherein the terms 'ōbôt and yidde'ōnīm not only refer to the spirits of the dead but sometimes also to necromancers. The next session of the programme was *Extispicy in Ancient Mesopotamia*. Selena Wisnom (University of Leicester) shared insights on *Practical Extispicy: Notes from the Field*. She presented some of the results of practical experiments, carrying out extispicy on real sheep livers, trying to reconstruct the process of reading a liver. She demonstrated what kind of challenges the ancient experts encountered in reading the liver and how this affected the interpretation. Nicholas Gill (Ca' Foscari University of

Venice) presented *Ritual and Recitation at Larsa: The Diviner's Prayers YOS 11, 22 and YOS 11, 23 in Their Incantatory Context*. His study aimed to shed new light on the ritual and performance of the divinatory texts and incantations from Old Babylonian Larsa.

Netanel Anor (University of Hamburg) discussed *The Secrecy and the Oracle Lore: On the Transmission of Knowledge of Extispicy over the Ages*. He compared omens from different periods, aiming to demonstrate that it was the teachings of interpretational principles that served as the main channel of transmission of knowledge about extispicy over the ages. N. Anor argued that the principles, which were orally taught, were more prominent in the process of transmission than the teaching of the written texts, such as omen compendia.

Dilyana Boteva (University of Sofia) was the first speaker on the following day, who opened the session on *Divination Practices in the Ancient World*. She gave a lecture entitled *New Data, Old Assessments and Further Expectations Concerning the Dionysos' Oracle in Thrace*.

D. Boteva discussed the many different questions regarding the topic, including its location and identification and the interpretation of the textual accounts making parallels in the divination techniques between Dionysos' oracle in Thrace and Apollo's oracle in Delphi.

Orestis Karavas (University of the Peloponnese) presented *Pseudo-Mantic Techniques and Necromantic Rituals in Lucian of Samosata*. He discussed Lucian's criticism (and parody) of the realm of religious practices and concluded that he did not merely aim to expose the fake prophets and the trickery of all contemporary magicians; his purpose was more profound: he considered the prophets' interference absolutely untrustworthy and attacked speculation and professional divination. According to O. Karavas, Lucian also felt obliged to prevent people from believing them easily and contributing to the flourishing

religious "industry".

Pamina Fernández Camacho's (University of Cádiz) presentation was entitled *Dreams and Dream Interpretation at the Heracleion of Gades: Organized Practice or Literary Tradition?* She discussed how the revelation in a dream was framed (provoked or unprovoked), whether the communication was verbal or visual, whether there was an identifiable person, e.g. a god giving the message, whether there was an enigma to be solved, or what kind of situations triggered this type of response. P. Fernández Camacho compared these cases to similar mentions of dreams and dream oracles in the literary Greek and Roman traditions with Phoenician practices.

Stamenka Antonova (Bulgarian Academy of Sciences) presented a talk on *The Sibylline Oracles and the Decline of the Roman Empire in Zosimus' New History*. She pointed out that Zosimus offered an alternative reading of the events unfolding in the fourth century to that of the Christian historians at the time, as well as an explanation of the decline of Rome and the traditional pagan religions during the time of Constantine in light of the prophecies and the interpretations of the utterances of the Sibylline Oracles.

Velizar Sadovski (Austrian Academy of Sciences) opened the session on *Divination Techniques from Anatolia to Inner Asia*. He gave a lecture entitled *Divination Techniques in the Most Ancient Iranian and Indic Religious Texts – the Avesta and Veda*. He focused on two important protective 'military rituals' of divination and on the sacred texts that deal with them: the Vedic and Avestan divinatory rites for the prediction of the outcome of the combat and physical protection of warriors in the battle. Beyond the intrinsic comparison of the Old Iranian and Old Indic divination material, V. Sadovski compared the Indo-Iranian evidence as a whole with typological parallels of divinatory rituals within other traditions of the Indo-European East, like the ones of

preventing the enlargements of military conflicts in the Homeric Iliad, and with divination rituals in non-Indo-European cultures, above all, with ones in Mesopotamia and Asia Minor.

Paolo Ognibene (University of Bologna) discussed *The Scythian Diviners and the Art of Interpreting the Causes of Illness. Practice or Literary Tradition?* He presented ancient authors' textual accounts highlighting divination techniques among the Scythians and other Iranian populations the areas north of the Black Sea and the Caucasus. P. Ognibene further discussed the diviners' tasks of identifying the causes of the king's illnesses.

Michal Schwarz's (Masaryk University) talk *Diversity of Practices and Unified Divination in Inner Asia* discussed the fact that medieval texts from Turfan attest numerous elements of Near Eastern origin transmitted to Iranian Central Asia and beyond. He presented other possible routes of transmission of divination practices as well. Furthermore, M. Schwarz analysed examples of the mentioned diversity, the development of particular divination patterns, and the use of amphibians and reptiles for their standardised role in communication with heaven.

The next session was on *Celestial Omens in Ancient Mesopotamia and Anatolia*. Rumen Kolev (Independent Researcher) shared his thoughts on the art of *Interpretation of Solar Eclipses in Babylon*. He discussed texts attesting solar eclipses and showed the logic and interconnection of different astrological doctrines in Babylon. R. Kolev argued that this brings a piercing insight into the, what is known, as the ideal year in Babylonian astronomy.

Şafak Beldan (University of Ankara) presented the topic of *Perception, Interpretation and Decision Making Mechanisms Based on the Celestial World in the Land of Hatti*. He examined the role of the celestial phenomena in interpreting and making decisions in the Hittite Kingdom. He discussed which celestial phenomena were interpreted as good and fatal and discussed them in the context of other traditions.

Julij Emilov's (University of Sofia) talk *"When the Moon is Ominous": A Lunar Eclipse (1st of September, 218 BC) in the story of the Celtic Aegosaes in Asia* discussed Polybius account of a lunar eclipse that occurred in the late summer of 218 B.C., while a Galatian tribe of the Aegosaes was engaged in a campaign with the Pergamene army in Northwest Asia Minor. J. Emilov discussed the individual or group responses to evil omen in a diverse sequence of causes, pretext and action.

Asoss Qader (University of Würzburg) opened the last session of the conference, *(Re)considering Terms and New Perspectives*. He gave a lecture entitled

Āpilu "Prophet" within the Resource Redistribution of the Royal Administration in the Kingdom of Arrapha. He discussed the meanings of *āpilu* and the link between him and *entu*-priestess, as well as the inclusion of religious personalities into a broader and coherent system of the resource redistribution of the royal administration.

Elisabeth Monamy (University of Bern / Archeomuse) gave a lecture on *Food of the Gods, Signs of the Future: Culinary Rituals and the Art of Divination in the Ancient Orient and the Mediterranean World*. She examined the significance of food, ritual potions, and offerings used as part of divination practices and

considered how culinary customs served as a vehicle of messages to communicate with the supernatural.

The 25th Melammu Workshop attracted many researchers from various scholarly fields. In the spirit of the Melammu Project, they focused on Mesopotamia's legacy of prophecy and divination, as well as how these practices were transmitted to other cultures beyond the Ancient Near East. The conference had a further importance. The Melammu Workshop was one of Zozan Tarhan's successive steps toward establishing of Assyriology in Bulgaria, and it undoubtedly left an impact on this pursuit.

Zozan Tarhan

Melammu Workshop 26

Białystok (Poland), 17.9.2025

"Magic and Sorcery in Antiquity: People, Rituals, and Interpretations"
(Krzysztof Ulanowski, Tomasz Mojsik)

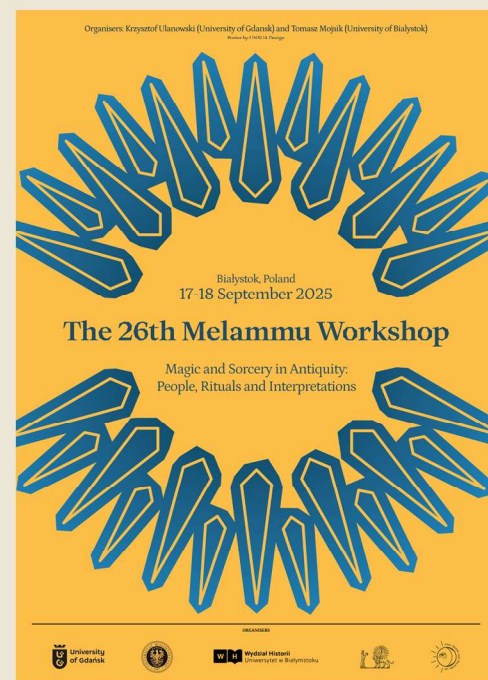
The 26th Melammu Workshop *Magic and Sorcery in Antiquity: People, Rituals, and Interpretations* organized by Krzysztof Ulanowski (University of Gdańsk) and Tomasz Mojsik (University of Białystok) brought together scholars from a wide range of disciplines to explore the many dimensions of magical practices in the ancient world. The event was structured around two main thematic sections, each focusing on different geographical and chronological aspects of ancient magic. The first part of the conference was dedicated exclusively to ancient Mesopotamia, with papers delving into the roles of priests, exorcists, and other ritual experts in magical and divinatory practices. The participants examined the structure and function of protective and purificatory rituals and the position of magic within the broader religious and political frameworks of Mesopotamian society.

The second part of the conference

expanded the scope both geographically and temporally, featuring studies on ancient Syria, the Greek world—including Homeric traditions—and the court of Alexander the Great. This section allowed for comparative perspectives on how magic functioned across different cultures and periods, with particular attention to literary, epigraphic and religious interpretations.

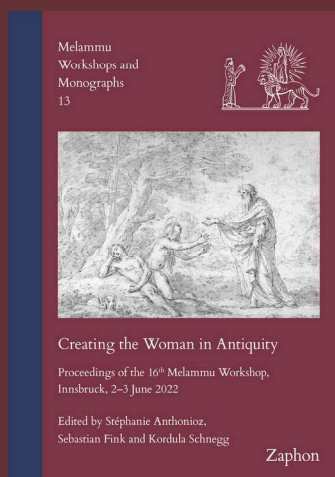
Throughout the conference, several key themes emerged: definitions and boundaries of magic in antiquity; the concrete practices and tools involved in magical rites; the often-overlooked role of women in magical contexts; and the complex interplay between magic, religion, and policy. The discussions highlighted both the local specificities and the shared patterns of magical thought and practice across the ancient Mediterranean and Near Eastern worlds.

Krzysztof Ulanowski





COMING SOON BOOKS



Melammu Workshops and Monographs 13
Creating the Woman in Antiquity
Proceedings of the 16th Melammu Workshop
Innsbruck, 2-3 June 2022
Edited by Stéphanie Anthonioz,
Sebastian Fink and Kordula Schnegg
ISBN 978-3-96327-324-7

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Call for papers

Melammu Workshop 27
Roma (23-24 April 2026)
**"The Fuel of Conquest: Food, Logistics,
and Power in the Ancient Near East
and Classical Antiquity"**
(Organisers: *Iulia Dumitrache; Sebastian
Fink*)

The provisioning of soldiers is a crucial component of military organisation. It has a significant impact on both the efficiency of operations and the outcomes of battles. Every expansion is based on logistical abilities, and before any attempt to conquer faraway lands, the supplies of the troops must be organised.

For this colloquium, the dietary patterns, food sources, and logistical methods used to sustain armies in the Ancient Near East and the world of Classical Antiquity are under investigation. The distribution of food was an essential component in ensuring that soldiers maintained both their physical endurance and their morale.

There are two possible sources of supplies for an army. The army can carry its own supplies, using manpower, pack animals, carts, or boats, and it can rely on foraging for food. While in most cases, a combination of both options is the most plausible, the investigation of extreme cases, such as crossing desert regions, allows us to study the possibilities and limits of ancient logistics. Often, we can only deduce the logistical abilities of ancient armies from their successful campaigns. In some cases, we also have evidence for the organization of the supply lines and the distribution of food in the army.

The purpose of our meeting is to study in detail the logistics of ancient armies, to investigate the parallels and differences in food provisioning arrangements between different regions, with a particular focus on the sociopolitical, economic, and strategic aspects that influenced the logistics of ancient

military operations. We aim to highlight how the efficient administration of food was not only essential for the survival of troops but also how it was a basis for the larger military and political objectives of ancient empires. This is demonstrated through the examination of historical documents (literary sources, official issues, papyri, inscriptions), archaeological data, and comparative military analysis.

The workshop will be held at the Accademia di Romania in Roma, Piazza José de San Martín 1.

Abstracts (200–500 words) should be submitted to iulia.dumitrache@uaic.ro; Sebastian.Fink@uibk.ac.at. The deadline for submission is 1st December 2025. Notifications will be sent by 15 December 2025.