



Faculty of Arts

WORKSHOP

**RELIGION ON THE VERGE
OF ORALITY AND LITERACY**

Potsdam, 11th – 13th December 2024

RELIGION ON THE VERGE OF ORALITY AND LITERACY

For several decades, the study of the interaction between orality and literacy has proven to be a highly productive field in classical studies. In particular, the influential works of Thomas and Harris continue to spark lively debates in various branches of classical antiquity. Key questions that persist in these discussions revolve around: Who in ancient times possessed the ability to read and write? To what extent, and for what purposes, were these skills employed by the less privileged segments of society?

Concurrently, our understanding of the multifaceted aspects of ancient religion continues to grow year by year. While earlier research primarily focused on state-sponsored religious practices and the role of various deities in the lives of powerful rulers, recent scholarship increasingly emphasizes the realm of private religious expressions among ordinary individuals. How did ordinary people go about their everyday religious rituals? Which deities did they worship, and what distinguished their religious practices?

At the crossroads of these two areas lies a particularly intriguing and still relatively unexplored territory: the connection between orality, literacy, and the religious life of ordinary people. How did the acquisition of one of humanity's most fundamental cultural skills impact the realm of private religious belief and practice? And how can we make sense of such developments?

This workshop aims to assess the respective impact of orality and literacy on private religious practices across different periods and areas of the ancient Mediterranean world. Additionally, we strive to better define the role of religion in the maintenance of oral traditions versus the propagation of writing habits in a variety of cultural contexts.

WORKSHOP PROGRAMME

WEDNESDAY, 11th December 2024 / 13:30

13:30 – 13.45

Welcome and Opening Remarks

13:45 – 14.30

Jens Fischer University of Potsdam

When Apollo's Voice Turned Into Religious Writings

14:30 – 15.15

Attila Egyed Eötvös Loránd University (ELTE), Budapest

The Voice of Orpheus Recorded in Writing.

The Gold Tablets and the practice of inscribing a *katabasis*

15:15 – 15.45 *COFFEE BREAK*

15:45 – 16.30

Rafał Matuszewski Leiden University

The Spoken and Written Word in Greek Incubation Sanctuaries

16:30 – 17.15

Krzysztof Bielawski Jagiellonian University, Kraków

Sacrifice in the Shadow of Words

17:15 – 18.00 *BREAK*

18:00 – 19.00

Jörg Rüpke Max Weber Centre, Erfurt

Keynote: Changing religion by letters: Urban beginnings

19:30 *CONFERENCE DINNER*

THURSDAY, 12th December 2024 / 09:00

09:00 – 09.45

Rebecca Van Hove University of Groningen

What does writing do to a votive object?

09:45 – 10.30

Kim Beerden Leiden University

“And now, put this in writing”. Textuality in the so-called confession inscriptions from Asia Minor

10:30 – 11.00 COFFEE BREAK

11:00 – 11.45

Irene Polinskaya King's College London

Reflections on ancient Greek Curses: variations of *dromena*, *legomena*, and *graphomena* in time and place.

11:45 – 12.30

Richard Gordon Max Weber Centre, Erfurt

et a[*d* qu]em modum sal in [aqua liques]cet.

Tracing orality in vernacular curse tablets in Latin

12:30 – 12.45 COFFEE BREAK

12:45 – 13.30

Edward M. Harris Durham University, University of Edinburgh

**How to Read an Inscription about Greek Sacred Norms:
The Role of Signs**

14:00 LUNCH

**Visit of Sanssouci Park, the „Neue Palais“,
and the Potsdam Christmas Market**

20:00 DINNER



FRIDAY, 13th December 2024 / 09:00

09:00 – 09.45

Sara Chiarini University of Hamburg

The *logos* to be spoken out and the *logos* to be written down in ancient recipes of private rituals.

A statistical survey

09:45 – 10.30

Jan Heilmann Dresden University of Technology

Reading in Early Christianity. An overview with a problematisation of the category of orality

10:30 – 10.45 *COFFEE BREAK*

10:45 – 11.30

Gabriella Gelardini Nord University Bodø

When You Hear of Wars and Rumors of Wars (Mark 13:7)

11:30 – 12.15

Angela Standhartinger Philipps-University Marburg

The Materiality of Storytelling. Echoes of the Jewish and Christian Joseph in Late Antique and Early Modern Manuscripts

12:15 – 12.30 *COFFEE BREAK*

12:30 – 13.15

Enno Friedrich University of Rostock

Literary Offers of Christian World Relations for Ordinary Aristocrats in the *Carmina* of Venantius Fortunatus (ca. 530-600 AD)

13:15 – 13.30 *CLOSING REMARKS*

PLACE

Wissenschaftsetage im Bildungsforum Potsdam
Am Kanal 47, 14467 Potsdam



ORGANIZER

Universität Potsdam

Historisches Institut / Geschichte des Altertums

Filippo Carlà-Uhink: filippo.carla-uhink@uni-potsdam.de

Sara Chiarini: sara.chiarini@uni-potsdam.de

Jens Fischer: fischerj@uni-potsdam.de

www.uni-potsdam.de/hi-altertum



Deutsche
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Abb. Cy Twombly, Untitled (Bacchus), 2005, Udo und Anette Brandhorst Sammlung

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