

ESF Exploratory Workshop on

**Redefining the sacred: Religious identity,
ritual practice and sacred architecture in
the Near East and Egypt, 1000 BC – AD 300**

Oxford (United Kingdom), 19–21 March 2009

Convened by:

Rubina Raja^① and Elizabeth Flood^②

SCIENTIFIC REPORT

Executive summary:

The conference was held at the Ioannou Centre for Classical and Byzantine Studies, University of Oxford, England 18 – 21 March 2009. On the evening of 18 March all participants were welcomed by the organisers at the Classics Centre where a reception was held. On Thursday morning at 9am the workshop began with an introduction to the workshop content and theme given by the organisers, followed by a presentation given by the ESF representative Bohuslav Máněk. Ten papers were presented on Thursday each followed by discussion and each session concluded with a session discussion. On Friday 20 March seven papers were given with time allotted to discussions at the end of each paper as well as session discussions. On Saturday morning four papers were presented, followed by a session discussion as well as a discussion of possible follow-up collaborations.

On the first day, a position paper was given by professor Joachim Ganzert, Professor of Architecture, in order to set the theoretical framework of the workshop and to provide the basis for the rich theoretical discussions which followed each paper.

As the theme integrated texts, architecture, and religion in these regions, it offered a forum for interdisciplinary discourses concerning domains of evidence that are normally treated separately, therefore often generating divergent interpretations. In the discussions, however, it became clear that these differences were often the result of lack of specialism in the material in question. Once these barriers were broken down, a set of common themes and concerns began to emerge, highlighting the immense value of inter- and intra-disciplinary conversations for enabling new connections and ideas. This workshop successfully brought together scholars from a variety of disciplines and gave them the opportunity to discuss their research with a group of experts with wide-ranging academic backgrounds. The discussion sessions proved the most significant component of the workshop for developing future collaborative research; they extended ideas and concepts more fully, offered opportunities for participants to combine their fields of expertise, and allowed all to reassess their own material with fresh perspectives and a deeper understanding of temporal and spatial contexts.

Scientific content:

The papers fell into the following sessions: 1. architecture and function; 2. sacred landscapes; 3. sponsorship, dedication and display; 4. access, audience and performance and 5. religious identities. At the core of each paper stood the question of the sacred; in what ways can it be defined for the periods in question and how it can be understood within the terms applying to each session. One important aspect which arose from the discussions was the question of continuity and change in a local, regional and cross-regional context. There were many points of comparison across regions within the time period that the workshop addressed. It also became clear that because of the need for most academics to be highly specialised, there is a tendency to ignore the importance of broader comparative studies, which could contribute to the understanding of various phenomena. Collaborative networks, such as the one developed through the course of this workshop, have the potential to bridge gaps between closely connected disciplines in the ancient world and will foster new frameworks of understanding and interpretation.

Assessment of the results, contribution to the future direction of the field:

It was widely agreed upon that the theme of the sacred offered a solid basis for a much needed interdisciplinary research group or network. Through the exploration of various core questions, including definition, the expression of religious identity and social power, and the modelling of ancient actors' experiences, it became clear that there is an immense potential for exploring the meanings and functions of religious architecture in the ancient Near East and Egypt from the first millennium BC into the first centuries AD. We intend that this should be pursued in an interdisciplinary comparative setting on a more permanent basis, providing that the funding to undertake such a project is available. It was agreed upon that the organisers of the workshop would explore the possibilities for further funding opportunities in order to set up a core research group.

Final programme:

Wednesday 18th March 2009

17.30-19.30

Drinks reception, Ioannou Centre

Thursday 19th March 2009

9.00-9.30 **Meeting and orientation**

9.30-10.00 **Welcome by Convenors**
Rubina Raja and **Elizabeth Froid**

Presentation of the European Science Foundation (ESF)
Bohuslav Mánek (ESF Standing Committee for the Humanities (SCH))

10.00-11.00 **Position paper: “Redefining the sacred”**
Joachim Ganzert (Abteilung Bau-/Stadtbaugeschichte
Institut für Geschichte und Theorie der Architektur, Universität
Hannover)

11.00-11.30 *Coffee / Tea break*

11.30-16.30 1. Session: Architecture and Function
Chair: Andreas Kropp (Department of Classics, University of
Nottingham)

11.30-12.15 **“Re-entering Karnak: Taharqa’s innovations and their impact on
sacred space”**
Jenny Cashman (Faculty of Oriental Studies, University of Oxford)

13.00-14.00 *Lunch*

14.00-14.45 **“Tradition and innovation in early Ptolemaic temples: The
complex of ‘wabet’ and court in Philae and Edfu”**
Filip Coppens (Czech Institute of Egyptology, Charles University in
Prague)

14.45-15.30 **“Sacred architecture on Jewish coins. Development, function and
religious dependency”**
Anne Lykke (Institut für Klassische Archäologie, Universität Wien)

15.30-16.00 **Session discussion (with coffee and tea)**

16.00-19.30 2. Session: Sacred Landscapes
Chair: Rubina Raja and Elizabeth Froid

16.00-16.45 **“Les lieux de culte de substitution en Egypte ancienne”**
Claude Traunecker (Université Marc Bloch Strasbourg II)

16.45-17.30 **“Natural world reflected in sacred space. Ritual in focus:
Vogellauf”**
Jiri Janak (Czech Institute of Egyptology, Charles University in
Prague)

- 17.30-18.15 **“The temple of Kalabsha and the ritual landscape of the Dodekaschoenos”**
Carina van den Hoven (Leiden University)
- 18.15-19.00 **“The sacred landscape of Egypt as perceived by its Roman governors”** **Rudolf Haensch** (Kommission für Alte Geschichte und Epigraphik, München)
- 19.00-19.30 **Session discussion**
- 19.30-21.30 *Wine reception and buffet (canapés), St Cross College*

Friday 20th March 2009

- 09.00-12:30 3. Session: Sponsorship, Dedication and Display**
Chair: Christoph Bachhuber (School of Archaeology, University of Oxford)
- 9.00-9.45 **“Contextualising the ‘sacred one’”**
Kristina Lahn Dumke (Archäologie und Kulturgeschichte des antiken Mittelmeerraumes, Universität Hamburg)
- 9.45-10.30 **“Multifunctional sacred space at Thebes and the priests of Montu in the 25th Dynasty”**
Cynthia May Sheikholeslami (American University Cairo)
- 10.30-11.00 *Coffee / Tea break*
- 11.00-11.45 **“The imperial cult of Cassius Dio. An invention of tradition”**
Jesper Majbom Madsen (Institut for Historie, Kultur og Samfundsbeskrivelse Syddansk Universitet)
- 11:45-12.30 **Session Discussion**
- 12.30-14.00 *Lunch*
- 14.00-18.30 4. Session: Access, Audience and Performance**
Chair: Frances Reynolds (Faculty of Oriental Studies, University of Oxford)
- 14.00-14.45 **“Shaping sacred space in Egyptian magical practice”**
Martin Bommas (Institute of Archaeology and Antiquity, University of Birmingham)
- 14.45-15.30 **“Do specific sound patterns indicate liminality? Sound production in rituals during the New Kingdom”**
Erika Meyer-Dietrich (History of Religions, Dept. of Theology, Uppsala University)
- 15.30-16.00 *Coffee / tea break*
- 16.00-16.45 **“The Kuttamuwa stele of Zincirli: Elite mortuary cult within the Syro-Hittite city”**
Virginia Rimmer Herrmann (Oriental Institute, University of Chicago)

- 16.45-17.30 **“Sacred topography of the empire: Assyrian state rituals”**
Beate Pongratz-Leisten (Dept. of Near Eastern Studies, Princeton University)
- 17.30-18.30 **Session discussion**
- 19.00 *Dinner: St Cross College*

Saturday 21st March 2009

- 09.00-12:30 5. Session: Religious Identities**
Chair: Fergus Millar (Faculty of Oriental Studies, University of Oxford)
- 09.00-09.45 **“Temple and city in Hellenistic Uruk: Sacred space and the transformation of late Babylonian society”**
Heather Baker (Institut für Orientalistik, Universität Wien)
- 09.45-10.30 **“Continuity, discontinuity and change in the religious life of Northern Jordan in the Roman period”**
Achim Lichtenberger (Institut für Klassische Archäologie und Frühchristliche Archäologie/Archäologisches Museum, Münster)
- 10.30-11.00 *Coffee / Tea break*
- 11.00-11.45 **“Greek roofs over Egyptian heads? Acculturation and religious architecture in Hellenistic and Roman Egypt”**
Frederick Naerebout (Dept. of Ancient History, Leiden University)
- 11.45-12.30 **“Redefining cult at Dura-Europos: the wall paintings of the temple of the Palmyrene gods”**
Ted Kaizer (Dept. of Classics and Ancient History, University of Durham)
- 12.30-13.00 **Sessions discussion**
- 13.00-ca.14.30 **Lunch discussion of follow-up activities and collaborations**
- after 14.30 *End of Workshop and departure*

Also To be found on conference webpage:

http://www.orinst.ox.ac.uk/conferences/redefining_the_sacred/programme.html

Statistical information on participants:

Gender repartition: 13 male, 13 female

Age structure: youngest participant 30, oldest participant 68
30, 32, 33, 34, 34, 34, 35, 35, 36, 36, 38, 39, 45, 45, 46, 47, 49, 51, 52, 54, 54, 55, 57, 65, 68

Countries of origin:

5 from the UK	2 from Denmark	2 from Austria
2 from USA	2 from Czech Republic	6 from Germany
2 from the Netherlands	1 from France	1 from Egypt

Final list of participants:

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