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SAMR NEWSLETTER



Nancy Evans, editor

President's Column

Greetings to all SAMR Members!

And welcome to the start of a new academic year! We have a great year ahead, with multiple SAMR panels coming up at SBL/AAR in San Diego this November and SCS/AIA in Washington DC in January, a new conference on the horizon in Malta for June 2020, and a new volume in press.

Warm thanks and congratulations are due to all the SAMR members who thought carefully, researched diligently, wrote eloquently, and met all their deadlines (honest) in connection with the newest volume in the SAMR Studies in Ancient Mediterranean Religions series. *Religion and Convergence in the Ancient Mediterranean* will be only display with Lockwood Press at the SBL conference in November (see page 2 below for a preview of the cover design). The papers emerged from the SAMR conference of the same title, graciously hosted by the Giuseppe Whitaker Foundation of Palermo in 2016. This conference would have been impossible without the friendship, warmth, and unfailing generosity of Professor Sebastiano Tusa; at the request of many SAMR members this volume has been dedicated to his memory.

Our ever dutiful and incredibly efficient program committee has been working overtime this last year, and thanks to their efforts we have three panels at this year's **Society of Biblical Literature** meetings in San Diego, November 23 – 26: two are dedicated to the exploration of essential categories in the study of ancient religion, magic and votive practice, and a third explores Greco-Roman religion in context. The first SAMR panel, in conjunction with the Greco-Roman Religions section, is organized as a response to the new volume from Brill, *Guide to the Study of Ancient Magic* (2019), edited by David Frankfurter. This volume offers a wide-ranging reconsideration of the term 'magic', its usefulness and limitations as a category in the study of ancient ritual. Five scholars have taken up the challenge. We lead off with Radcliffe Edmonds' paper, 'Magic and the Art of Bicycle Maintenance: Defining Magic in the Ancient World'.

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Treasurer's Report

In 2018 SAMR reached a milestone: ten years! We have grown to become a truly international scholarly society with almost 250 members.

SAMR's modest operating budget covers annual administrative fees for memberships in international and US scholarly associations, maintains our internet accounts with Paypal and Wordpress, and supports registrations fees and equipment rentals at annual conferences. Affiliation and programming with the SBL and the SCS has become increasingly expensive in the past few years, as these organizations charge ever larger sums for AV equipment at the conference venues.

In addition, the treasury funds help us host conferences in the US and Europe. With the Malta conference on the horizon, we will be planning an exciting event in a truly beautiful location.

Please remember to renew your dues to SAMR. Our annual fees are modest, \$20 for faculty and \$10 for students. Dues can be paid through Paypal or by check. As always, drop me an email at socamr@gmail.com if you have any question about the status of your dues.

Best wishes for the 2019 academic year,

Nancy Evans, SAMR Secretary-Treasurer

<https://samreligions.org/membership/>

STUDIES IN ANCIENT MEDITERRANEAN RELIGIONS 2

Sandra Blakely
and Billie Jean Collins (eds.)

Religious Convergence in the Ancient Mediterranean



Ψ LOCKWOOD PRESS

SAMR CALL for PAPERS
SAMR Conference June 17-21, 2020
Grand Hotel Excelsior, Floriana, Malta

**Sailing with the Gods:
Religion and Maritime Mobility in the Ancient World**

Ritual practices dedicated to maritime success appear across a wide span of human cultural history, from the Mediterranean to the North Sea, Southeast Asia across the Pacific to the west coast of the Americas. Culturally-constructed seafaring rituals could be seen as spiritual or superstitious, and respond to the combination of risk and profit endemic in even short voyages by water. Maritime religion infuses all water-borne contact across cultural boundaries; the crafts of those who build rafts, canoes, and sailing vessels; navigational skills which may reach back to ancestors who have faded into cultural legend; and myriad mnemonic and naming strategies extending to littoral markers and celestial patterns. Mythic and ritual responses are accordingly complex, ranging from apotropaia to the divine authorization of civic structures, shipboard shrines and functional epithets which could link divinities, heroes and nearly-deified rulers to the control of the waves and winds.

Studies of religion and maritime mobility are often framed within individual cultural contexts, but this international conference seeks to bring together scholars from across a range of disciplines and historical periods, from prehistoric to the eighth century CE, to address critical questions in method and theory relevant to religion in the context of maritime mobility. Among these questions are:

- What are the benefits and limitations of the types of data available for the investigation of ancient seafaring – myths, legends and histories, the excavations of harbors and shipwrecks, the iconography of sea gods, the analysis of artifacts?
- What is the range of critical frameworks – from network analyses to iconography – appropriate for these data sets?
- How do data from ports and land-based institutions complement or even contradict evidence from seagoing vessels?
- How can we de-essentialize the question of ‘maritime ritual’; what might the role of cross-cultural or cross-chronological studies contribute to this end?
- How might the studies of maritime ritual offer fresh questions for the analysis of Christianity vis-à-vis traditional Greco-Roman and Mediterranean religions?
- How do Judaism, Christianity and/or Islam deploy maritime religion in different yet complementary ways to one another, or to polytheistic traditions such as Indian or Chinese religions?
- How do the divine protections sought for religiously-motivated journeys such as pilgrimage compare with the day-to-day appeal to the gods on seafaring vessels?

Abstracts should be submitted by email attachment as .doc or .docx files to socamr@gmail.com and should be from 500-600 words in length for a paper to last between 25 to 30 minutes. Abstracts should contain a title and a word count, but should not have any information regarding the identity of the submitter. The deadline for submission of abstracts is **January 1, 2020**, and all abstracts for papers will be reviewed anonymously. Please direct all queries to SAMR at socamr@gmail.com.

Upcoming conferences, with CFP's out now:

Cappadocia and Cappadocians in the Hellenistic, Roman and early Byzantine periods

- Abstracts due December 31, 2019.
- May 14-15, 2020 at the Dokuz Eylül University in Izmir, Turkey.
- An excursion to Rhodes, Greece on May 16-19, 2020.
- Further information [here](#).

Calling upon Gods, Offering Bodies Strategies of Human-Divine Communication in the Roman Empire from Individual Experience to Social Reproduction

- Abstracts due October 30, 2019.
- Málaga, 20-22 May, 2020.
- The conference aims at analysing how self-experience of religious communication becomes a reflexive phenomenon reproduced in time and space to constitute a collectively shared narrative.
- Organized by Clelia Martínez Maza & Antón Alvar Nuño (Universidad de Málaga), and Jaime Alvar Ezquerro & Valentino Gasparini (Universidad Carlos III de Madrid).
- Interested speakers should send an abstract of their proposal (200-300 words), a short curriculum vitae, and contact information before October 30, 2019, to the following address: anton.alvar@uma.es

Ancient Religion in Rural Settlements

- Abstracts due October 30, 2019.
- 1-3 June 2020 at the Julio Caro Baroja Institute of Historiography (Universidad Carlos III de Madrid)
- XVIII International ARYS Conference: Association [ARYS](#) (Antiquity, Religions and Societies)
- As lived spaces, ancient cities conditioned and were conditioned by very specific social relationships. This conference aims to deconstruct the ideas of rural religion as mechanically reproducing urban rituals and religious hierarchies and of the rural world as a space of cultural and religious resilience against urbanity.
- Interested speakers should send an abstract of their proposal (200-300 words), a short curriculum vitae, and contact information before October 30, 2019, to the following address: bpandeda@hum.uc3m.es
- Contact Beatriz Pañeda Murcia (Universidad Carlos III de Madrid): bpandeda@hum.uc3m.e

A quick guide to SAMR Sessions at the 2019 SBL in San Diego

Saturday, November 23, 2019

S23-241 "Should I Stay or Should I Go?": Responses to Guide to the Study of Ancient Magic

Co-sponsored with Society for Ancient Mediterranean Religions and Greco-Roman Religions

1:00 PM to 3:30 PM 30D (Upper Level East) - Convention Center

S23-320 Interpreting Greek and Roman "Religions" in Context in the Mediterranean World

Co-sponsored with Society for Ancient Mediterranean Religions and Greco-Roman Religions

4:00 PM to 6:30 PM 30B (Upper Level East) - Convention Center

Sunday, November 24, 2019

S24-342 Dedications and Votives, Method, and Context Co-sponsored with Society for Ancient Mediterranean Religions and Greco-Roman Religions

4:00 PM to 6:30 PM 31B (Upper Level East) - Convention Center

Other Sessions of interest programmed by Greco-Roman Religions and co-sponsored with SAMR

S24-216 Further on the Twilights of Greek and Roman Religions

Co-sponsored with Society for Ancient Mediterranean Religions and Greco-Roman Religions

Sunday 1:00 PM to 3:30 PM Aqua 313 (Third Level) - Hilton Bayfront

S26-115 Intersections: Modelling Christian Cult Groups among Greco-Roman Cults

Co-sponsored with Society for Ancient Mediterranean Religions and Greco-Roman Religions

Tuesday 9:00 AM to 11:30 30D (Upper Level East) - Convention Center

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Two leadership positions within SAMR – president and secretary – are both coming to the end of their terms, and we warmly invite members to consider volunteering for these posts. Service in SAMR connects you with lively minds, conferences around the world, and opportunities to help shape emerging discussions in the study of religions from one corner of the Mediterranean to another. Please feel free to contact Sandy or Nancy with any questions – we plan to hold elections at the SCS in January, 2020.

SAMR member Fred Brenk wishes to announce that Iseum Campense volume has been published by Quasar as: M.J. Versluys, C. Bülow-Clausen, G. Capriotti Vittozzi (eds.), *The Iseum Campense from the Roman Empire to the Modern Age. Temple - monument - lieu de mémoire* (Papers of the Royal Netherlands Institute in Rome 66 (Quasar: Rome 2018)). Check it the full details [here](#).

ANNOUNCEMENTS continued

CURSES IN CONTEXT 4: CURSE TABLETS IN THE WIDER REALM OF EXECRATIONS

Christopher A. Faraone announces the fourth in a series of conferences on ancient magic at the Franke Institute of Humanities and The Neubauer Collegium at University of Chicago, October 11-13, 2019. More information on the conference at can be found [here](#).

Friday October 11 (Franke Institute of Humanities)

Session 1: Cursing in the Roman Provinces (Chair: Cliff Ando)

- 3:40- 4:20 Celia Natalias Sanchez (University of Zaragoza), "Curses against Thieves and Roman Law: The Legal and Social Context"
- 4:20-5:00 Alexander Hollmann (University of Washington), "Curse Tablets from the Well in the Procurator's Palace at Caesarea"
- 5:10-6:00 Greg Woolf (Director, Institute of Classical Studies, London), "Cursing as a Transferable Technology: Provincial Appropriations of a Mediterranean Ritual"
- 6:00- 7:00 Reception
- 7:00 Dinner

Saturday October 12 (Neubauer Collegium)

Session 2: Classical Athens (Chair: Sarah Johnston)

- 9:00-9:40 Radcliffe Edmonds (Bryn Mawr College) "Contingent Catastrophe or Agonistic Advantage: The Rhetoric of Violence in Classical Athenian Curses"
- 9:40-10:20 Jessica Lamont (Yale University): "A Baby Chicken in a Pot: A New Curse from the Athenian Agora"

Session 3: Social Contexts (Chair: Andrej Petrovic)

- 10:40-11:20 Zinon Papakonstantinou (University of Illinois at Chicago) "Agency and Dispute Resolution in the Judicial Curse Tablets from Athens"
- 11:20-12:00 Phil Venticinque (University of Chicago), "Bound for Success: Cursing and Commerce in Antiquity"

Session 4: Roman Egypt (Chair: Carolina Lopez-Ruiz)

- 2:00-2:40 Drew Wilburn (Oberlin College, Ohio), "Ritual Exchange between Egyptian Magical Texts and the Selenite Curse Tablets from Amathous, Cyprus"
- 2:40-3:20 Christopher A. Faraone, (Classics), "Lead Curse Tablets in Roman Egypt: Athenian Import or Local Hybrid?"

Session 5: Coptic Egypt (Chair: Margaret Mitchell)

- 3:40-4:20 David Brakke (Ohio State University), "Cursing Monks: The Forms and Functions of Early Monastic Execrations in Egypt."
- 4:20-5:00 Sofia Torallas Tovar (University of Chicago), "Impossible Anatomies. Coptic Curses and the Torments of the Beyond"
- 5:00-6:00 Roundtable Discussion: Sarah Johnston (Ohio State University), Carolina Lopez-Ruiz (Ohio State University), Margaret Mitchell (Divinity), Sarah Morris (UCLA), Susanne Paulus (NELC), Andrej Petrovic (University of Virginia), Ivanna Petrovic (University of Virginia), Bruce Lincoln (Divinity) and Cliff Ando (Classics)

Sunday October 13 (Neubauer Collegium)

Session 6: General Reflections (Chair: Ivanna Petrovic)

- 9:00-9:40 Jan Bremmer (University of Groningen), "The Gods in the Curse Tablets"
- 9:40-10:20 Fritz Graf (Ohio State University), "What is a Curse?"
- 10:20-12:00 Coffee and Roundtable Discussion: Carolina Lopez-Ruiz (Ohio State University), Margaret Mitchell (Divinity), Susanne Paulus (NELC), Sarah Morris (UCLA), Andrej Petrovic (University of Virginia), Ivanna Petrovic (University of Virginia), Bruce Lincoln (Divinity) and Cliff Ando (Classics)

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Three papers on specific magic traditions follow, with Gina Konstantopoulos' 'So Rigidly Organized a Realm: The Systematic Magic of Mesopotamian Exorcistic Incantations', Lennart Lehmhaus' 'Ritual Healing, Apotropaic Practices, and the Misleading Category of "Magic" in Talmudic and Late Antique Medical Discourse', and Andrew Durdin, 'Redescribing Pliny the Elder's History of "Magic"'. Jennifer Larson concludes the papers with 'A Cognitive Definition of Magic'; David Frankfurter will then preside over the discussion. This panel, #S23-24, will be held Saturday 11/23, 1:00 – 3:30 pm, room 30 D, Upper Level East of the Convention Center.

Our second SBL SAMR panel this year explores the concept of votives as materializations of the relationship between the human and the divine, core components of sacred spaces, and the object of cross-disciplinary investigations. This panel's papers span Greek, Jewish and late antique sites, and explore questions of agency, cognition and materiality. Christine Thomas will begin with "Reading Dedications from Rural Sanctuaries of Zeus: Cognitive Archaeological and Object Agency Approaches"; Avram Shannon will offer "Under Every Green Tree": Votive Offerings in Mishnah and Tosefta Avodah Zarah"; Jordan Conley concludes the panel with 'An Empty Category No More: Votives as Agential Objects at Late Antique Saints' Shrines". Nancy Evans will preside. This panel, #S24-342, will be held Sunday 11/24, 4:00 – 5:30 pm, room 31B, Upper Level East, Convention Center.

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Our third SAMR panel is part of our continuing collaboration with the Greco-Roman Religions section, under the leadership of Gerhard van den Heever. This panel, "Interpreting Greek and Roman 'Religion' in Context in the Mediterranean World", is devoted to theorization of primary data from material contexts, mythic traditions, narrative and literary genres, and a concern for religious practice as a social and cultural formation. Jeff Brodd will preside over five papers. Mary Jane Cuyler's 'Statuettes of Roman Gods from the Synagogue at Ancient Ostia' begins with an archaeological perspective; Jared Salz follows with an exploration of literary data in ' "It Said the Men Became Gods": Euhemerus of Messene and the Question of Divine Kingship'. Alyssa Cady takes up social organization and iconography with 'Women's Funerary *Collegia*: Rethinking an Antiochene Funerary Mosaic'. Caroline Crews returns us to a textual tradition with 'Elusive Eleusis: Evidence of Editing in the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter*'; David Riggs concludes the panel with a history of religions perspective, 'Re-Contextualizing the Nature and Significance of the African Cult of Saturn'. This panel, #S23-320, will be held Sunday, 4:00 – 6:30 p.m., Room 30 B, Upper Level East, Convention Center.

Please note that the SAMR business meeting will be held on Sunday at 5:30, at the conclusion of the votives section, in Room 31B, Upper Level East, Convention Center.

In the **SCS/AIA meetings** in Washington DC, January 2-5, SAMR is hosting the paper session *God and Man in the Second Sophistic: Criticism, Innovation and Continuity*. This panel explores how literary voices – including Lucian, Plutarch, and Philostratus – provide the foundation for exploring change, criticism, invention or decline of religion in the Second Sophistic. Contributors address a range of religious and ritual phenomena, from epiphany, to sacrifice, to oracles; the collected papers address questions of the subjectivity of religious agents and interpretations, the shape of divinities, and the crossing of genre-boundaries in our literary sources. The panel brings together five papers: Barbara Blythe, 'Ambiguous Epiphanies in the Novels of the Second Sophistic'; Inger Kuin, 'Sacrificing to Hungry Gods: Lucian on Ritual'; Rebecca Frank, 'The Didactic Oracle: The Delphi Oracle in Plutarch's "Delphic Dialogues" '; Kenneth Yu, 'Sincerity in the Second Sophistic: The Rhetoric of Religiosity in Philostratus' Heroicus'; and James Henriques, ' "That's

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Not the Way I Heard It.” Folkloric Mechanisms in the Creation of Philostratus’ *Vita Apollonii*.’ The panel begins bright and early on Saturday morning, 8:00 – 10:30 a.m. – please check your programs for location.

And it’s never too early to begin planning for conferences in warmer locations! Please submit your abstracts to *Sailing with the Gods: Religion and Maritime Mobility in the Ancient World*, to be held June 17-21 at the Grand Hotel Excelsior, Floriana, Malta <https://samreligions.org/2019/07/23/sailing-with-the-gods-religion-and-maritime-mobility-in-the-ancient-world/> With this conference we seek to bring together multiple foci in religious studies, including mobility, risk, insularity, connectivity, and the centrality of the Mediterranean as a cultural focus and actor that has informed historical models from Braudel through Horden & Purcel’s *Corrupting Sea*. Cultures from the Mediterranean as well as those beyond are welcome foci. Deadline for abstracts is January 1, 2020.

None of these events would happen without the generosity and energy of all the SAMR members, and especially Nancy Evans, whose planning and publishing skills make the newsletter and the SAMR website happen. Please mark your calendars for these panels, and keep us informed of your plans and publications as the year unfolds.

All the best



Sandy Blakely, President
Society for Ancient Mediterranean Religions