

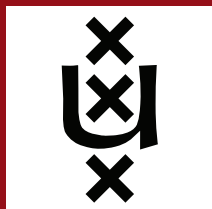


ANNUAL MEETING 30-1-20

NINO Annual Meeting 2020:

**Magic, rituals and cult in
the ancient Near East**

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2nd NINO Annual Meeting
Thursday 30 January 2020

University of Amsterdam
P.C. Hoofthuis (Spuistraat
134), lecture hall 1.05

NINO ANNUAL MEETING 2020

09:45-10:15	Registration, coffee	
10:15-10:30	Opening words	
10:30-12:30	Session 1: Mesopotamia and the Cuneiform World	
	Andrew George (SOAS University of London)	"Mythical Time in Mesopotamian Incantations"
	Daniel Schwemer (University of Würzburg)	"Any Evil, a stalking ghost, and the ox-headed demon"
	Karel van der Toorn (UvA)	"Celebrating New Year in the Ancient Near East"
	Ilan Peled (UvA)	"The Scapegoat Ritual in the Ancient Near East and the Hebrew Bible"
12:30-13:30	Lunch break	
13:30-15:00	Session 2: Egyptology and Epigraphy	
	Kasia Szpakowska (Swansea University)	"An iconography of protective Middle and New Kingdom daemons"
	Jacques van der Vliet (LU/NINO)	"Old and new in late antique Egyptian magic"
	Margaretha Folmer (VU/LU)	"A magic lead tablet in Aramaic from Late Antiquity"
15:00-15:30	Coffee break	
15:30-16:30	Session 3: Project presentations ("lightning")	
	Caroline Waerzeggers, Melanie Gross, Maarja Seire (LU)	
	Rolf Strootman (UU)	
	Natalie Naomi May (LU)	
	Susanna Wolfert-de Vries (UU)	
	Elizabeth Hicks (Leiden University/NINO)	
16:30-17:00	NINO Thesis Prizes: award and presentations	
17:00-17:30	Closing words, presentation of NINO Annual Meeting 2021	
17:30-18:30	Drinks ("borrel")	

ABSTRACTS

Andrew George, SOAS University of London

Mythical Time in Mesopotamian Incantations

Mythical Time in Mesopotamia refers to the period in mythology when the gods ordered the world, after the separation of Father Sky and Mother Earth and before the Flood. This paper will explore the representation and function of Mythical Time in ancient Mesopotamian incantations.

Andrew George gained his BA and PhD at the University of Birmingham under the guidance of W. G. Lambert. Since 1983 he has taught Akkadian and Sumerian language and literature at SOAS in London. He was founding chair of the London Centre for the Ancient Near East and for seventeen years co-editor of the journal *Iraq*. He is chiefly known for his work on the Epic of Gilgamesh and his first editions of many cuneiform tablets now in the Schøyen Collection (Oslo and London). He currently holds a Leverhulme Major Research Fellowship to write a study of Mesopotamian mythology.

Daniel Schwemer, Julius-Maximilians-Universität Würzburg

Any Evil, A Stalking Ghost, and the Ox-Headed Demon

Based on first-millennium cuneiform manuscripts from Ashur, Babylon, and Uruk, a ritual against an illness conceptualized as the personified 'Any Evil' can be reconstructed for the first time in its entirety. The text sheds light on how the catch-all figure of a demon called Any Evil corresponds to the idea of a universal cure for any physical ailment, and how the traditional rhetoric of incantations is used to articulate this relationship in a manner that facilitates the active participation of the patient. The ritual instructions of this and a closely related text show that Any Evil is envisaged as an ox-headed male demon. This points to an adaptation of motifs that are typically associated with ghosts in ancient Mesopotamian thought and raises questions concerning the pictorial representation of Any Evil and its conceptual foundations.

Daniel Schwemer (PhD 2000, Habilitation 2005) is Professor of Ancient Near Eastern Studies at Würzburg University. He is the first editor of numerous cuneiform texts from ancient Mesopotamia and Anatolia (mostly in Akkadian and Hittite) and has published extensively on the history of religion and magic in the Ancient Near East, including the three-volume *Corpus of Mesopotamian Anti-witchcraft Rituals* (2011-20) and *The Anti-witchcraft Ritual Maqlû* (2017).

Karel van der Toorn, University of Amsterdam

Celebrating New Year in the Ancient Near East

The transition from the old year to the new one was an occasion for ritual action throughout the early Middle East. The passage called for rites designed to conjure the fear of disorder. For a long time, the principal source of information on the New Year festival consisted of cuneiform texts from Babylonia. Scholars identified echoes of similar ritual events in the Hebrew Bible (most notably in the Psalms), but explicit texts were lacking. The recent publication of Papyrus Amherst 63 has changed that situation. Though discovered in Egypt and written in Demotic characters, this papyrus is in fact the longest collection of Aramaic religious texts from antiquity. The common background of the ritual songs compiled in the papyrus is, precisely, the New Year festival. These texts corroborate and complement in various ways what we knew about the New Year Festival in the West-Semitic Near East (Emar, Ugarit, Hebrew Bible).

Karel van der Toorn holds a chair in Religion and Society at the University of Amsterdam. He is the author of the prizewinning *Scribal Culture and the Making of the Hebrew Bible*. His latest publications include an edition of Papyrus Amherst 63 (AOAT 448; Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2018) and a study of the Israelite and Aramean presence in Persian Egypt, called *Becoming Diaspora Jews: Behind the Story of Elephantine* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2019).

Ilan Peled, University of Amsterdam

The Scapegoat Ritual in the Ancient Near East and the Hebrew Bible

The so-called “Scapegoat ritual” was first known from the biblical Book of Leviticus. As soon as the languages of the civilizations of the ancient Near East were deciphered, numerous parallels to the biblical ritual were identified. These are found from as early as third millennium BCE Ebla, and then continue for many centuries, attested in numerous Mesopotamian and Hittite texts. In addition to these ancient Near Eastern and biblical contexts, the Scapegoat ritual is also known from later classical Greek sources. This presentation surveys the pertinent attestations of the ritual, evaluates their characteristics, similarities and differences, and assesses the rationale behind this magical procedure.

Ilan Peled (PhD 2013) is an Assyriologist working at the University of Amsterdam. Following the completion of his Ph.D. he had postdoctoral appointments at the University of Pennsylvania, New York University, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem and the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago. Since 2017 he has been teaching Hebrew and Middle Eastern studies at the University of Amsterdam. His research focuses on cultural life in the ancient Near East, especially in the spheres of gender, law, religion and cult. He has published two monographs, an edited volume and several dozen articles investigating these topics.

Kasia Szpakowska, Swansea University

Armed from Head to Toe:

An Iconography of Protective Middle and New Kingdom Daemons

One of the most obvious characteristics of Middle Kingdom Egyptian iconography is the surfacing of new populations of beings, many of them creatively composite. They appear as both two and three-dimensional images on objects and as figurines themselves. Many are armed with weapons or potent religious icons in their mouths, hands, even wrapped around their bodies. During the New Kingdom, mundane household pieces of furniture, such as chairs, beds, and headrests also began to be decorated with strikingly similar imagery. However, these feature one remarkable transformation that is initially easily overlooked — the beings were depicted as wielding weapons on both their feet! This idiosyncrasy is rare not only in Egyptian art but in the religious art of other cultures as well. The ancient Egyptians' goal in creating all these representations in the first place was to make visible and tangible powerful liminal beings capable of efficiently dispatching a range of demons, anxieties, and afflictions that troubled them in their everyday life. Rather than being restricted to the literate religious practitioners in the temples, this type of *heka* (magic) could be invoked by the vulnerable in their own homes.

Kasia Szpakowska is Associate Professor of Egyptology at Swansea University, Wales, and Director of the *Ancient Egyptian Demonology Project: Second Millennium BCE*. Her research focuses on Ancient Egyptian private religious practices, dreams, gender and the archaeology of magic. Currently she is investigating the role of apotropaic devices such as clay cobra figurines and images of supernatural beings as mechanisms for coping with physical and mental health afflictions Ancient Egyptians believed to have been caused by external demons. Of particular interest is the motivation underlying the choice of specific attributes (form, accessories, gesture) and archetypes. Her publications include *Daily Life in Ancient Egypt: Reconstructing Lahun* and *Behind Closed Eyes: Dreams and Nightmares in Ancient Egypt*. She is the editor of *Demon Things: Ancient Egyptian Manifestations of Liminal Entities* to be published in the next few months.

Jacques van der Vliet, Radboud University / NINO / LIAS, Leiden University

Old and New in Late Antique Egyptian Magic

Christian Egypt, between about AD 300 and 1200, produced an important corpus of magical texts, commonly designated as 'Coptic magic'. It provides an uncensored picture of noncanonical forms of religious agency that fall outside the scope of theology or church history. As a body of early Christian magic, it is unrivalled for richness and variety of contents and form as well as for its historical potential, challenging established views of what magic is and what its status and function are

in a rapidly changing world, marked by the rise of Christianity first, then Islam. One of the more striking characteristics of the corpus is the astonishing longevity of traditional formats, apparent in particular in dialogued spells that have the ancient gods Isis and Horus as protagonists and are now transmitted in Christian contexts. Such 'survivals' raise intriguing questions both about the channels transmitting traditional ritual knowledge and the mechanics of change and innovation.

Jacques van der Vliet holds a PhD in Coptic studies from Leiden University. He is Jozef M.A. Janssen Professor of Religions of Ancient Egypt at Radboud University, Nijmegen, visiting research fellow of the Netherlands Institute for the Near East (NINO), guest researcher of the Leiden Institute for Area Studies (LIAS), Leiden University, and staff member of the Institute for Eastern Christian Studies (IvOC), Nijmegen. Between 2012 and 2016, he was president of the International Association for Coptic Studies. His research covers all aspects of Coptic literary culture, with a focus on epigraphy, papyrology, magic and apocryphal texts. Van der Vliet participated in field work in both Egypt and Sudan. His latest book, co-authored with J.H.F. Dijkstra, is *The Coptic Life of Aaron* (Brill 2019).

Margaretha Folmer, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam and Leiden University

A Magic Lead Tablet in Aramaic from Late Antiquity

In 2014 scholars opened a lead tablet from a collection of curse tablets in Greek found in the circus of Antioch on the Orontes. Much to the surprise of the researchers in charge with the publication of these tablets, the tablet appeared to be written in Aramaic. Curse tablets written in Greek and Latin are well known from the (Late) Antique World, but a specimen written in Aramaic with a clear Jewish background thus far has remained without any parallel. In this contribution, I will discuss the context of the tablet and some of its interpretational problems.

Margaretha Folmer holds a PhD in Aramaic from Leiden University. She is associate professor at the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, where she teaches Biblical Hebrew, Biblical Aramaic, and apocalyptic literature, and assistant professor at Leiden University, where she teaches among other things older varieties of Aramaic, Cultural History of Aramaic (From Aram to Zakho), Comparative Semitics and Languages of the Middle East. Her research covers Aramaic from different periods, in particular Aramaic from the Achaemenid period, Biblical Aramaic, Middle Aramaic and Late Aramaic, with a special focus on Elephantine, Bactria, Targumic Aramaic (in conjunction with Biblical Hebrew) and magic texts from Late Antiquity (amulets and magic bowls). She is a member of the board of IOTS (International Organisation of Targumic Studies) and the chairperson of the Vereniging Hebreuws.