

CfP for the 26th Melammu Workshop

Białystok (Poland), 17-18 September 2025

Organizers Krzysztof Ulanowski (University of Gdańsk) and Tomasz Mojsik (University of Białystok)

The Melammu Project, University of Białystok, University of Gdańsk

Magic and Sorcery in Antiquity: People, Rituals, and Interpretations

The study of magic in antiquity is deeply intertwined with religious, social, and political structures. Rather than existing as an isolated or marginal practice, magic was often performed by religious specialists—priests, diviners, exorcists, and other ritual experts—who played essential roles in protecting communities, purifying spaces, and mediating between the human and divine realms. This conference seeks to explore the concrete manifestations of magical and divinatory practices in the ancient world, with particular attention to the figures who enacted them and the specific rites they performed.

We invite scholars to examine:

- The roles of various priests and ritual specialists in magical and divinatory rites.
- Protective, purificatory, and apotropaic rituals: their structure, purpose, and significance.
- The relationship between magic, religious authority, and state institutions.
- The interplay between written traditions (e.g., ritual manuals, incantations) and oral or performative aspects of magical rites.
- The boundaries between magic, religion, and science in antiquity—should these categories be maintained or reconsidered?

Contributions may focus on specific case studies, comparative perspectives, or theoretical reflections on the nature of magic and its practitioners. We encourage interdisciplinary approaches that draw from anthropology, philology, archaeology, religious studies, and history to refine our understanding of ancient magical traditions and their legacy.

On the 17th, we will be participating in conference presentations in Białystok. On the 18th, a folklore and sightseeing excursion is planned to the culturally rich region of Podlasie, specifically Tykocin and Supraśl, renowned for their Jewish and Orthodox heritage in Poland.

We encourage the submission of abstracts of no more than 250 words by 15th May 2025, at krzysztof.ulanowski@ug.edu.pl