



CONSTRUCTING THE SACRED

LITURGY, ARCHITECTURE, AND EXPERIENCE
IN THE LATE ANTIQUE EAST

University of Warsaw | 25–26 June 2026



► venue:
Faculty of Archaeology, Room 210

WORKSHOP PROGRAM

Thursday 25 June

Concepts, Texts, and Interpretative Framework

09:15–09:45

Arrival and Registration

09:45–10:00

Welcome and Introduction

10:00–10:30

BEYOND THE CHURCH: RITUAL SPACE AND COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVES

Chairperson: TBA

Krzysztof Jakubiak (Warsaw), The Bema Before the Bema: Form and Function of Elevated Structures in the Sacred Architecture of the pre-Christian World

10:30–10:45

Discussion

Coffee break until 11.00

11:00–12:30

SESSION 1: CONCEPTUALIZING THE BEMA: TEXTUAL TRADITIONS AND LITURGICAL CONTEXTS

Chairperson: TBA

Erich Renhart (Graz), The Bema – A Prominent Place in Liturgical Choreography

Gabriel Bar-Sawme (Södertälje), From Platform to Presence: The Syrian Bema as a Fluid Ritual Center in Syriac Sacred Space

Françoise Briquel-Chatonnet (Paris), The Bema: A Point of View from the Syriac World

12:30–13:00

Discussion

Lunch Break from 13:00 until 14:00

14:00–15:20

SESSION 2: AMBIGUITY AND INTERPRETATION: RETHINKING PLATFORMS AND LITURGICAL INSTALLATIONS

Chairperson: TBA

Agnieszka Lic (Warsaw), Bema, Bet Slutho – or neither? On the Interpretation of Podia and Platforms in Late Antique and Early Islamic Architecture in Mesopotamia and the Gulf

Tomasz Waliszewski (Warsaw), Raised Platform from the Church in Chhim – The Layout of the Liturgical Space in the Churches of Phoenicia

Rina Talgam (Jerusalem), From the Cathedra of Moses to the Cathedra of Christ

Marica Cassis (Toronto), Continuity and Connection in the Sacred Spaces of Medieval Türkiye

15:20–16:00

Discussion

Coffee break until 16.30

16:30–17:10

KEYNOTE LECTURE

Emma Loosley (Exeter), Locating the Syrian Bema in Time and Space: On the Trail of the Evidence

17:10–17:30

Discussion

Conference Dinner at 20:00 (Flaner Hotel, Krakowskie Przedmieście 4)

Friday 26 June

Architecture, Space, and Regional Contexts

09:00–10:00

SESSION 3: From Landscape to Monument:

Chairperson: TBA

The Bema in Architectural Context

Gunnar Brands (Halle-Wittenberg), Resafa's Liturgical Landscape

Catharine Hof (Berlin), Reassessing Bema and Synthronon in Basilica A at Resafa/Syria: Architecture, Chronology, and Liturgical Space

Basema Hamarneh (Vienna), Bema, Barrier, Boundary: Architectural Mediation of Ritual in the Late Antique Levant

10:00–10:30

Discussion

Coffee break until 11.00

11:00–12:00

SESSION 4: Materiality, Connections, and Transregional Connections

Chairperson: TBA

Mariusz Gwiazda (Warsaw), Imported Marble and the Shaping of Sacred Space in the Southern Levant Churches

Bertrand Riba (Beirut), The Churches with Bema in the Limestone Massif of Northern Syria

Ivan Foletti (Hradec Králové), Reflection on the Ritualization of the Empty Throne in Syria, the Caucasus, and the Mediterranean

12:00–12:30

Discussion

Lunch Break from 12:30 until 14:00

14:00–15:20

SESSION 5: CASE STUDIES AND COMPARATIVE APPROACHES

Chairperson: TBA

Katinka Sewing (Warsaw), Where did all the men go? Bema, Raised Sanctuary, and Liturgical Space in the Bishop's Church of Doliche

Ute Verstegen (Nürnberg-Erlangen), The Bema in the Church of the East: Between Liturgical Ideal and Archaeological Reality

Grzegorz Majcherek (Warsaw), The Church with a Bema in Palmyra: The Intersection of Architectural Design and Liturgical Necessity

Jürgen Zangenberg (Leiden), The Bemah at the 5th/6th Century CE Synagogue at Horvat Kur/Galilee

15.20-15.40

Coffee break until 15.40

15:40–16:20

Discussion

16:20–16:40

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Vasileios Marinis (Yale)

16:40–17:00

CLOSING

