



# 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

