

RELIGIOUS TEMPORALITIES AND THE ANCIENT CITY

Workshop - 15-16 May, 2025 – University of Groningen

Organized by the [CRASIS network 'Time and Temporalities in the Ancient World'](#) and the [Groningen Research Institute for the Study of Culture \(ICOG\)](#) together with the OIKOS research groups '[Cultural Interactions in the Ancient World](#)', and '[Cities and Settlements in the Ancient World](#)'

The conceptualization of time is an intrinsic feature of belonging. Those sharing the space of a community ideally share a sense of time, making temporality a powerful coordinating force (Baldwin & Keefer 2019). Living together in a community requires synchronization (Zerubavel 1981; Elias 1984; Lefebvre 2004; Rüpke 2011). This concerns both the pragmatics of regulating quotidian activities, but also the shared concept of the shape and depth of time. In the ancient world, claims to urban space are often bound to a sense of deep time, whether through tradition, ancestral ties, localized stories of city founders, heroes, and the gods. On the other hand, a temporal disconnect leads to a sense of alienation. Different temporalities are also a powerful way of highlighting divides in communities and of 'othering' individuals and groups (Fabian 1983) - prime examples of 'other' urban religious temporalities, besides gender divides, include Judaism and Christianity (Kattan Gribetz 2018; Graf 2012).

Ancient cities brought together a plurality of time systems such as calendars, shared rhythms and routines, narratives of the past and future. Religion is at the crossroads of many of these urban temporalities (Rüpke 2006; Sun 2023). Social, economic, and (geo)political motives were typically channeled through religious frameworks, intertwined with urban aspirations, creating a vibrant space of overlapping and sometimes contesting voices. Time was one of the most fundamental of these urban flows regulated by religion, and sanctuaries were primary timekeepers of cities. Their rituals regulated the days, months, and seasons of human time, with transregional 'panhellenic' festivals synchronizing cities across the Mediterranean. Yet festivals also had a transcendent capacity of lifting the individual out of the everyday, creating 'atemporal' communities that extend beyond the boundaries of the living and the dead (Assmann 1991; Petsalis-Diomides 2010). Reaching back beyond the passage of days, seasons and years, this sense of time kept the past alive as a vital part of the present (Alcock 2002; McGrath & Jebb 2015).

How did these temporalities contribute to the vitality of the city? Who were they for? Which communities shared in these temporal experiences?

This **workshop** aims to explore the diversity of temporalities of the ancient city through the lens of religion. Questions to include:

- What shape did religious temporalities take, in which contexts? (e.g. calendars, routines, monuments)
- Who were the actors involved in shaping temporalities? Which levels of agency can we identify? Who participated, who resisted, who bridged the differences?
- What kinds of local temporal narratives were told, by whom, for what purpose? (e.g. mythographers, historiographers, religious personnel)
- At what scales were temporalities operative (e.g. personal, familial, group, urban, empire) and how did these interact?
- When did temporalities overlap, collide, when were they contested?
- How was time experienced?

Keynote speaker for the workshop is [Prof. dr. Jörg Rüpke](#) (Max-Weber-Kolleg, Universität Erfurt), co-director of the KFG project '[Religion and Urbanity: reciprocal formations](#)', and author of the *Fasti sacerdotum* (2005) and numerous publications on urban and religious temporalities.

We welcome contributions by researchers from all career levels, and especially encourage research master students and doctoral candidates to participate.

Note: at this point we cannot guarantee that we can cover travel or accommodation expenses.

If you are interested in contributing, please send a title and abstract of c.300 words by 13 December to: p.schievink@rug.nl.

Organizers: Christina Williamson (University of Groningen), Sofie Remijnsen (University of Amsterdam), Pim Schievink (University of Groningen), Chris Dickenson (University of Groningen), Rebecca van Hove (University of Groningen)

Selected literature

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