

Humboldt Foundation visit 29 June 2023

Announcement sent to Humboldt Foundation (March 2023) and put in their program:

Title: Ancient astral science in transformation - the zodiac in text and image

Lab Tour in the project ZODIAC - Ancient Astral Science in Transformation (ERC Advanced Grant)

Location: Institute for History of Knowledge in the Ancient World, Freie Universität, Arnimallee 10.

We offer short "lightning" presentations by the ZODIAC research team on diverse aspects of the cross-cultural transfer of the zodiac and related practices of astronomy and astrology in text and image.

ZODIAC - Ancient Astral Science in Transformation is an ERC Advanced Grant project (No. 885478, 2021-2026) based at the Institute for History of Knowledge in the Ancient World, Fachbereich History and Cultural Studies at Freie Universität Berlin. The project is carried out by an interdisciplinary team composed of scholars and PHD students from Assyriology, Egyptology, papyrology, astrophysics, history of science, art history, and ancient history. Principal Investigator is Mathieu Ossendrijver (astrophysicist, Assyriologist, historian of science).

What is ZODIAC about?

Our units of time and angle, the coordinates used by astronomers, and horoscopy are examples of concepts and practices that are connected to the zodiac. The introduction of the zodiac triggered a global transformation of science and culture that took shape in Babylonia, Egypt, the Greco-Roman world between ca. 400 BCE and 300 CE. Three innovations were disseminated in its wake: a “zodiacal turn” - the zodiac became the central concept for interpreting, predicting, and representing celestial phenomena, a “mathematical turn” - the emergence of mathematical methods for astronomical prediction, and a “personal turn” - the emergence of astrological practices that cater to private individuals.

How could these innovative practices take root in linguistically, culturally and religiously diverse communities across the ancient world? ZODIAC addresses this unanswered question by studying the cross-cultural transformations of astral science through textual and iconographic sources from Babylonia, Egypt and the Greco-Roman world with a new interdisciplinary approach.

Program

Short "lightning" presentations by team members on diverse aspects of the project centered on the topic of cross-cultural transformations of zodiac-based astral science in text and image.

(13:45 they leave by bus from Henri Ford building, arrival 14:00)

14:05 Cale Johnson: Welcome from the Institute

14:05 Mathieu Ossendrijver: ZODIAC Knowledge transfer in astron. comp. (16+4 min)

14:25 Christian Casey: A cross-cultural digital glossary for ancient zodiacal astral science (6+4 min)

14:35 break

14:45 Alessia Pilloni: Inner-Babylonian knowledge transfer in the astral sciences (6+4 min)

14:55 Andreas Winkler: Egyptian temples as loci and embodiments of zodiacal astral science (6+4 min)

15:05-15:30: reception