

Krzysztof Ulanowski

## Conference report: “The religious aspects of war”

### War and religions

The topic of the conference referred to cross-section of religion, divine ambitions of rulers and the military achievement in antiquity. The subject not explored enough because scientists focus only on theological aspects or the technical nuances of military campaigns. The main organizers were Nicholas Sekunda responsible for the Classical Period, Karol Polejowski, a colleague who specializes in issues related to the Middle Ages, and Krzysztof Ulanowski responsible for the ancient Near Eastern section. The conference took place in a reconstruction of a trade village from the Roman Period in Pruszcz Gdański which particularly emphasized the nature of the conference and has been noticed even by Robert Parker.

In the conference participated nearly 60 scientists from around the world. The key speaker was internationally renowned scholar Robert Parker. The conference but we divided it into three chronological parts. The first one was connected with the Ancient Near East (Mesopotamia, Egypt, and Iran), the second one referred to the Classical Period (Greece and Rome) and the third one related to the Middle Ages. There were the researchers from various scientific disciplines: Assyriology, Egyptology, History, History of Art, Archaeology, Classical Studies and Anthropology.

The majority of the presentations linked the worlds of religion and warfare, the religious activity even the ideological times during the times of military campaigns and rites of war. In the conference took part the scholars not only from the European countries but from USA, Canada, Egypt, Israel and Taiwan. The conference presentations were delivered by such well-known scholars as Robert Parker, Wykeham Professor of Ancient History, New College, Oxford University, Pietro Mander, University of Naples “l’Orientale”, Robert Rollinger, University of Helsinki/Leopold-Franzens Universität Innsbruck, Ivan Ladynin, Lomonosov Moscow State University, Susan J. Deacy, University of Roehampton, Christoph Schaefer, Universität Trier, Burnam W. Reynolds, Asbury University and a significant number of young scientists perfecting their skills in international scientific programs.

The first section of the conference included the following topics: War in Mesopotamian Culture, Deciphering the Signal to Attack: Eclipses and the Precipitation of Conflict, From Gaugamela to the Assyrian Kings: the Enemy's Fear and the King's Frightening Splendor, The Comparison of the Role of *bārû* and *manteis* in the Warfare, Defence and Offence in the Egyptian Royal Titles of Alexander the Great.

Here is the selection of the conference presentations from the second session: "Impiety, *xoana* and the hubris of Oilean Ajax in Evolutionary Perspective", "The Burning of Shrines by the Persians in Greek War Propaganda in the Fifth and Fourth Century BC", "The Introduction of the Mounted Torch-Race into the *Bendideia* at Athens in 411 BC", "Ritual Slaughtering for Victory: the *sphagia*", "The Religious Legitimation of War in the Reign of Antoninus Pius", «Archaeological Perspectives on Religious Aspects of the Bar-Kokhba Revolt ("The Second Jewish Revolt against Rome", 132–136 CE)», "Apollo and Artemis *Daïttai*: a State Cult for the Seleucid Soldiers?", "Like Gods among men. The use of Religion and Mythical issues during Alexander's campaign".

And a sample from the third session impact: «Summon for me the martyr Theodore!» The veneration of military Saints by Byzantine frontier Strategoi and their households during the 9<sup>th</sup>–11<sup>th</sup> centuries», «The "monachus-miles". The legitimacy of war in the ideology of the military orders: The case of the Knights Templar», «Hypothesis on the Use of the Manual for Preachers "De predicatione sancte crucis" in the Wars against the Turks and the Hussites».

The conference offered insightful and stimulating presentations. The homogeneity of its topics let the professionals in antiquity participate with attention in the discussions of colleagues from the Middle Ages.

The idea and its implementation seems to be very fruitful and even during the conference the scholars enquired about the conditions of participation in the second edition.