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“Marburg Dialogues on Ancient Healing Arts”
3rd Annual Meeting



July 5–6, 2024

Figure: 'Preparation of Medicine from Honey' (detail), folio from a manuscript of an Arabic translation of Dioskourides' *De Materia Medica* (MET 57.51.21)
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“Marburg Dialogues on Ancient Healing Arts”

3rd Annual Meeting

July 5–6, 2024

at

**Landgrafensaal of the Hessian State Archive Marburg,
Friedrichsplatz 15, 35037 Marburg**

organized by

Ancient Near Eastern Studies, CNMS

and the

Institute of the History of Pharmacy and Medicine

Philipps-Universität Marburg

Organization:

Prof. Dr. Nils P. Heeßel
Ancient Near Eastern Studies, CNMS
Philipps-Universität Marburg

Prof. Dr. Tanja Pommerening
Institute of the History of Pharmacy and Medicine
Philipps-Universität Marburg

Coordination und Contact:

Dr. Adam Howe
Ancient Near Eastern Studies, CNMS
Philipps-Universität Marburg
Email: ag-mgah@staff.uni-marburg.de
Telephone: +49 (0)6421 28-24617

Formation and profile of the “Marburg Dialogues on Ancient Healing Arts”

The international working group “Marburg Dialogues on Ancient Healing Arts” is the direct successor of the Interdisciplinary Working Group “Ancient Medicine” (Interdisziplinärer Arbeitskreis “Alte Medizin” = IAK) at the Johannes Gutenberg University (JGU) Mainz. This came into being in November 1980 during a meeting at the Institute for the History of Medicine at the Freie Universität Berlin and was established as a forum for mutual exchange on ongoing research projects in the field of Ancient Medicine. The IAK met annually at JGU Mainz since 1981.

With the nomination of Tanja Pommerening on Oct. 10, 2020 to the W3 professorship at the Institute of the History of Pharmacy and Medicine in Marburg, the working group also found a new home. Together with the professor for Ancient Near Eastern Studies Nils P. Heeßel, the profile of the working group was expanded and the format of the annual meetings was extended in favor of more space for discussions. The working group now bears the name “Marburg Dialogues on Ancient Healing Arts” / “Marburger Gespräche zur Alten Heilkunde” (MGAH) and the annual meetings take place in Marburg.

The aim of the MGAH is to establish an international network of researchers in the field of Ancient Healing Arts and those interested in the subject. Thus, the Marburg working group continues the activities of the Mainz working group on Ancient Medicine.

With its extraordinarily broad spectrum of participants, the working group is internationally unique. There is an interdisciplinary exchange between practicing physicians and pharmacists and scientists from the disciplines of the history of medicine, pharmacy and science, Egyptology, Ancient Near Eastern Studies, Ancient History, Classical Philology, Byzantine Studies, Coptology, Arabic Studies, Indology, Sinology, Medieval Latin, German Philology, Archaeology and many others.

3rd Annual Meeting "Marburg Dialogues on Ancient Healing Arts"

Friday 5 July, 2024

13:15 Uhr Registration

13:45 Uhr **Nils P. Heeßel und Tanja Pommerening**
(*Philipps-Universität Marburg*)
Johannes Kistenich-Zerfaß
(*Hessian State Archive Marburg*)
Welcome and introduction

Session 1, Chair: **Stefan Weninger** (*Philipps-Universität Marburg*)

14:00–14:40 Uhr **Sebastian Kheml** (*Masaryk University*)
Cultural responses and coping with the negative influence
of parasites in the Roman Empire: a spatial approach

14:40–15:20 Uhr **Krystal Marlier** (*Christian-Albrechts-Universität Kiel/
Humboldt-Universität Berlin*)
Altered Perceptions: Influence of hallucinations on
emotions, the body, and cognition

15:20–16:00 Uhr **Maximilian Haars** (*Philipps-Universität Marburg*)
Opium Poppy in Ancient Greek Botany

Session 2, Chairs: **Nils P. Heeßel und Tanja Pommerening** (*Philipps-Universität
Marburg*)

16:30–16:40 Uhr **Lutz Alexander Graumann** (*UKGM Gießen*)
Was können Altertumswissenschaftler zum Unterricht der
modernen anatomischen Terminologie für Mediziner und
Pharmazeuten beitragen?

16:40–18:00 Uhr Discussion with all participants

18:30–20:00 Uhr Public Keynote
Markham J. Geller (*University College London*)
Das medizinische Vermächtnis der ‚toten‘ Sprache
Akkadisch

Ab 20:15 Uhr Optional joint dinner
(registration is requested)

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Saturday 6 July, 2024

9:40 Uhr Welcome

Session 3, Chair: Rita Amedick (*Philipps-Universität Marburg*)

09:45-10:25 Uhr **Thorsten Fögen** (*Northeast Normal University Changchun*)
The role of veterinary medicine in Roman agricultural treatises: Remarks on Palladius' *Opus agriculturae*

10:25-11:05 Uhr **Lennart Lehmmaus** (*Eberhard-Karls-Universität Tübingen*)
Rabbis and Healing Experts: the Midwife between Pragmatism, Precaution and Demonization

Session 4, Chairs: Nils P. Heeßel und Tanja Pommerening (*Philipps-Universität Marburg*)

11:30–12:10 Uhr **Jonny Russell** (*Brown University*)
Ancient technologies as informants for Egyptian therapeutic recipes and their administration

12:10–12:50 Uhr **Adam Howe** (*Philipps-Universität Marburg*)
The Observation and Interpretation of Disordered Eating in Mesopotamian Medicine

13:30 Uhr Closing address

Ab 13:45 Uhr Optional joint lunch
(registration is requested)

Sebastian Kheml
(Masaryk University, Brno)

Cultural responses and coping with the negative influence of parasites in the Roman Empire: a spatial approach

The ancient period experienced substantial migration and urbanization, directly impacting the general human condition and elevating the risk of pathogen and parasite transmission. Extensive archaeoparasitological research has indeed revealed the widespread prevalence of intestinal parasites in the Roman Empire throughout its existence. In response to these challenges, Greco-Roman society developed various sophisticated tools and practices, including sanitation, hygiene, waste disposal, and a specialised branch of ancient medicine. A related tool that has played a role in dealing with parasites was the worship of healing deities, particularly the cult of the god Asclepius, as evidenced by votive stelae uncovered at Epidauros. However, the extent of cultic practices focused on mitigating dangers associated with parasites in the Greco-Roman world has not yet been thoroughly explored in the scholarship. This paper aims to investigate the potential influence and relationship between parasite burden and the prominence of religious healing centres. The quantitative analysis of archaeoparasitological data enables the identification of areas of parasitological importance, considering both species diversity and the severity of infection, which is expressed by the amount of eggs in the examined samples. These data, coupled with the epigraphic records of ancient healing deities, can serve as proxies in a comprehensive spatial analysis, shedding light on the interplay between natural and cultural factors that shaped the daily life of ancient society. While interest in archaeoparasitological findings is gradually increasing, their integration into mathematical GIS models is still in early stages.

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– Notes –

Krystal Marlier

(Christian-Albrechts-Universität Kiel / Humboldt-Universität Berlin)

Altered Perceptions: Influence of hallucinations on emotions, the body, and cognition

This paper endeavours to present a chapter within my interdisciplinary dissertation project: altered perceptions through hallucinatory experiences, as depicted by the North African medical author, Caelius Aurelianus (4th – 5th century CE). Hallucinations are phenomena that manifest across all sensory systems such as the visual, auditory, olfactory, gustatory, and tactile. Individuals perceive absent stimuli; one can see, hear, smell, taste, and feel things that are not really there. Throughout Caelius' medical treatises, "On Acute Diseases and Chronic Diseases" (*De morbis acutis et chronicis*), there are scattered anecdotes describing the visceral interplay between experienced hallucinations, emotions, bodily movements and functions, and cognition (such as memory and reasoning). For instance, in some cases of visual hallucinations, the patient's fear or shame is amplified, which consequently influences their body's precipitative sensations (resulting in fatigue, involuntary movements, or stiffness) and may lead them to act without reason (*sine ulla ratione*). Caelius' (psycho)pathology of hallucinations is accurate and detailed; his therapeutics target not only the body but also the mind. For this presentation, I will delve into some of these anecdotes and short descriptions, bringing to light his medicalisation of hallucinations. Furthermore, these narratives will aid in understanding the lived experiences of patients suffering from disease.

My dissertation, "Perceptions of Mental Health in Caelius Aurelianus: A Psychological Perspective," aims to go beyond the limited (although important) scope of scholarship on Caelius, which has predominantly concentrated on philological and nosological inquiry or confined itself to singular diseases such as *melancholia*, *mania*, and *phrenitis*. My project engages with Caelius' treatises in its entirety, particularly through the lens of psychology. By probing if and in what ways Caelius conceptualises cognitive phenomena, I aim to unveil the diverse approaches he employed when managing patient (mental) health.

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– Notes –

Maximilian Haars
(Philipps-Universität Marburg)

Opium Poppy in Ancient Greek Botany

The opium poppy (*Papaver somniferum* L.), or rather the narcotic opium derived from it, is the analgesic par excellence – not only in ancient times. In Greek literature, there are two authors in particular who go into the botanical and pharmacological details of species that today are classified in the genus *Papaver* L. In my contribution, I will interpret the central passages on the poppy in the works of Theophrastus (ca. 371-287 BC) and Dioscorides (1st cent. AD). The focus will be on how certain formulations can be translated. Since every translation is always also an interpretation, it must be made transparent which (modern) pre-understanding is involved. In addition to these questions of translation, we will also discuss what can and cannot be said about identification from a modern perspective. We will also look at what medicinal properties Dioscorides ascribes to the poppy. The ancient concepts of disease must be taken into account here, as well as the modern understanding. Here, too, both levels must be methodically separated and then brought together again in a reflective manner.

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– Notes –

Lutz Alexander Graumann
(Universitätsklinikum Giessen und Marburg, Gießen)

Was können Altertumswissenschaftler zum Unterricht der modernen anatomischen Terminologie für Mediziner und Pharmazeuten beitragen?

Ein Impulsreferat mit dem Beispiel *talus/astrágalos*

Der Begriff für das menschliche Sprungbein (lateinisch *talus*, griechisch *astrágalos*) hat in der westlichen Medizin eine lange, wechselvolle Tradition. Eine kleine Zeitreise mit diversen sprachlichen und epistemologischen Facetten führt von der frühen antiken Anatomie und Terminologie bis hin zu ihren Auswirkungen in der aktuell verwendeten „*Terminologia anatomica 2*“.

Dieses Beispiel eröffnet dann die Diskussion:

Derartige Begriffsdiskussionen können als ein Türöffner für viele, weitere Themen dienen, wie z.B. Basis-Anatomie, Wissenstradierung in der Medizin, soziokulturelle Sprachmechanismen bis hin zur rezent diskutierten Dekolonialisierung der internationalen Medizinsprache.

Kann eine solche Form von exemplarisch praktizierter Medizingeschichte heute aber tatsächlich sinnvoll in der frühen medizinischen Lehre Eingang finden und wenn ja, wie?

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– Notes –

Markham J. Geller
(University College London)

Das medizinische Vermächtnis der ‚tote‘ Sprache Akkadisch

Die akkadische Medizin hat eine beeindruckend lange Zeit existiert, da sie schon zu Beginn des 2. Jahrtausends v. Chr. in voller Blüte erschien und in den nächsten zweitausend Jahren in Form von Rezepten, diagnostischen Vorhersagen und Arzneimittellisten sowie gelehrten Kommentaren weiter gedieh. Obwohl die physischen Zeugnisse des akkadischen medizinischen Wissens, d. h. die Tontafeln, gegen Ende des 1. Jahrtausends v. Chr. verschwanden, bedeutet dies nicht, dass die akkadische Medizin nicht mehr gelesen und angewendet wurde. Der dritte Abschnitt des syrischen Arzneimittelbuchs stammt wahrscheinlich aus dem 3. oder 4. Jahrhundert n. Chr. und enthält mehr als hundert akkadische Lehnwörter. Dies wäre unwahrscheinlich, wenn Akkadisch eine ‚tote‘ Sprache war, die nicht mehr lesbar war oder nicht mehr verstanden wurde. Darüber hinaus spiegeln die akkadischen Lehnwörter im Syrischen konventionelle Krankheits- bzw. Symptomenamen und Arzneimittel wider, genauso wie sie durchgängig in der Keilschriftmedizin angewendet wurden.

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– Notes –

Thorsten Fögen

(Northeast Normal University, Changchun)

The role of veterinary medicine in Roman agricultural treatises: Remarks on Palladius' *Opus agriculturae*

In the ancient Graeco-Roman world, there was hardly any area where humans did not have any direct or indirect contact with animals. Among other things, they were used for all kinds of work: for example, they served as a medium of transportation, in a military framework they participated in war and fighting, they were employed for the tilling of fields, for work in the mill or for hunting. In many situations they were exposed to injury or suffered ill health. Especially in an agricultural context, this would mean a financial loss to the farm owner who was predominantly interested in profit maximisation. For that reason, it was essential for farmers to be sufficiently familiar with different types of treatments and remedies for their livestock. However, in addition to the proper handling of diseases, they needed to take a serious interest in the general wellbeing of their farm animals, enhanced e.g. by adequate stables, the right kind of nutrition and a considerate approach by farm workers.

The ancient Roman agricultural tradition is represented by four different authors: Cato the Elder (234–149 B.C.), Varro (116–27 B.C.), Columella (first century A.D.) and Palladius (fifth century A.D.). Their treatises, though differing regarding form, length and overall agenda, all take into account veterinary medicine. However, they do so to a varying degree: While Cato's *De agricultura* contains no more than a few scattered paragraphs on the prevention and treatment of animal diseases, the three later works devote a greater deal of attention to this important sub-discipline. With the composition of a separate book entirely devoted to veterinary medicine, Palladius stands at the end of this development which allows us to argue for a gradual emancipation of the field in question. This paper will shed some light on the structure and content of Book 14 of his *Opus agriculturae* and compare it to the earlier agricultural tradition, especially to Cato.

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– Notes –

Lennart Lehmhaus

(Eberhard-Karls-Universität Tübingen)

Rabbis and Healing Experts: the Midwife between Pragmatism, Precaution and Demonization

Although some rabbinic sources seem to adhere to an ideal of distinctiveness from Gentiles/non-Jews and promote rabbinic insularity, the texts mostly prove the commonalities in a late antique multicultural world with intersecting (and sometimes possibly hybrid) spaces, communities, and identities – commonly fraught with tensions, conflicts and competition. In the past, studies on such interactions, especially between Jews and Christians, have frequently focused solely on religious tensions and theological conflicts with two possible conclusions: either polemics or disregard. Such a simple dichotomy, however, cannot do justice to the more complex relationships that existed among and between those groups outside of the particular fields of scriptural exegesis and theology. In this talk, I will use discourses about healing experts, specifically in the area of gynaecology and obstetrics, as a test-case for the analysis of competition and, what I term, socio-medical interaction between Jews and others in Late Antiquity.

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– Notes –

Jonny Russell
(Brown University)

Ancient technologies as informants for Egyptian therapeutic recipes and their administration

The practice of healing in a given culture, as with any action that exists as a social transaction, is reliant upon a myriad of informants, each with their own perspective on how the desired end result—i.e., returning ‘health’ to the sufferer—can be best achieved. Such informants that typically participate in the healing process can range from family members and neighbours to members considered part of varying kinds of professional class, such as ‘physicians’, ‘priests’, and so weiter (e.g., Kleinman 1980). The present is an exploration of how lay- and non-layperson knowledge might be observed in the differing means for healing single sickness-designations in recipe lists in therapeutic compendia from Egypt. As its analytical lens, the paper will consider the importance of beer-brewing and baking technologies. It has a dual agenda: on the one hand, it will consider the influence these technologies had on recipe composition, the social implications thereof, and how this influences the ways in which we might understand individual components of typical recipe structures; conversely, it will consider what therapeutic recipes, their structure, and their administration can tell us of these ancient technological processes.

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Adam Howe
(Philipps-Universität Marburg)

The Observation and Interpretation of Disordered Eating in Mesopotamian Medicine

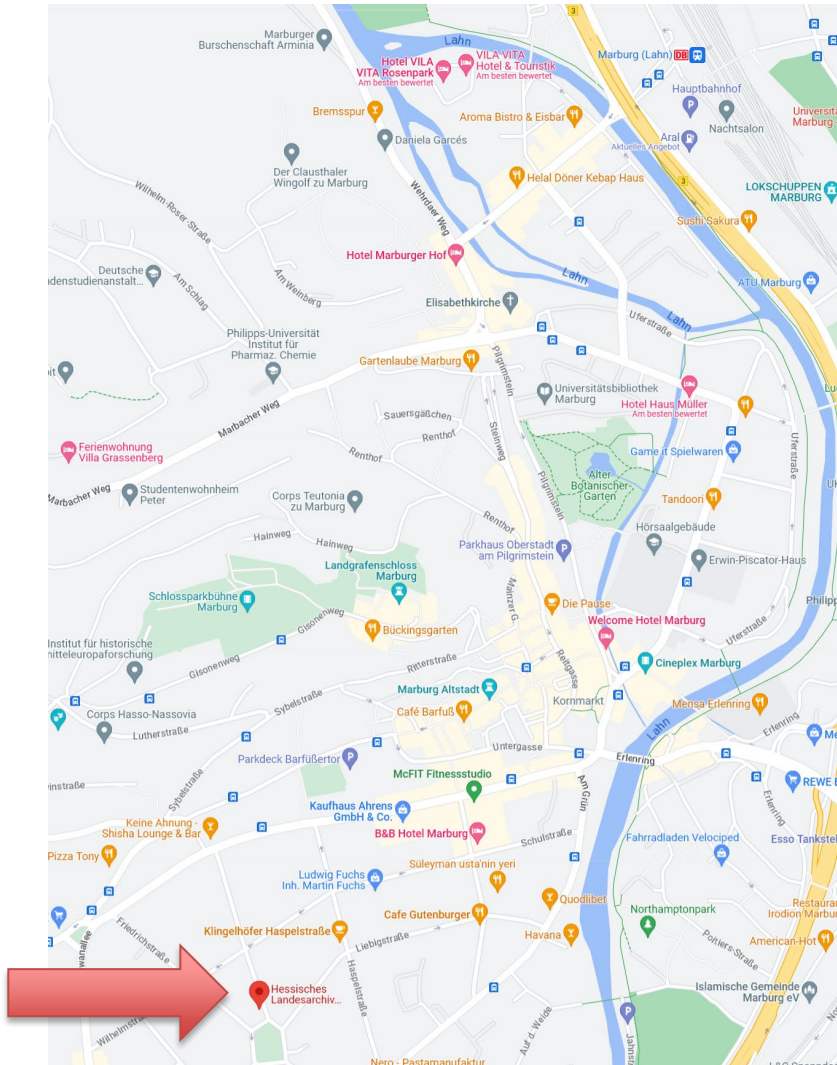
Symptoms descriptions in Mesopotamian medical texts contain frequent references to disordered patterns of eating and digestion observed in the patient. These observations are usually described in relatively laconic terms and occur in enumerations of many other symptoms, which only sometimes relate to the internal organs or digestive tract. Of course, a patient's ability or desire to eat or drink can be an important indicator of their general health and wellbeing. However, such symptoms are often mentioned only in passing without further explanation, and are not matched in therapeutic prescriptions by any treatments focusing on eating and diet, if we discount the many medicines that were administered orally.

In this paper, I examine the possibilities for interpreting disordered or disturbed eating patterns within Mesopotamian medicine. I especially take into account the wider significance of norms of eating and drinking as a marker of civilization and socialization in Mesopotamian literature. I also assess the evidence for treatments involving diet and eating prescriptions, which are only attested in very specific contexts and do not appear to have formed part of the canonical medical practice in Mesopotamia. This in turn provides insights into the nature of illness, the role the gods played in causing it, and the limits of the ways in which humans could treat it.

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Site plan of the venue



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Directions to the venue

Landgrafensaal des Hessischen Staatsarchivs Marburg,
Friedrichsplatz 15,
35037 Marburg (Lahn)

By car

If you come from **south**

(i.e., from Mainz/ Frankfurt) follow the **A5**; take the exit for **A45** and at junction **33 Gießener Südkreuz**, keep to the right and follow signs for **A485** in the direction of Langgöns/Marburg/Gießen/Linden/B3. Continue on **A485** and then on **B3** until you reach the exit **Marburg-Mitte**. Keep left and continue towards **Wilhelm-Röpke-Straße**, then keep right and follow signs for **MR-Ortenberg/MR-Erlenring**. Turn right onto **Wilhelm-Röpke-Straße**, then turn right onto **Erlenring/Kurt-Schuhmacher-Brücke**. Follow Erlenring and turn left after **Weidenhäuser Brücke** into **Universitätsstraße**. Follow the road and then turn left into **Bismarckstraße**. The State Archive is located on the right-hand side.

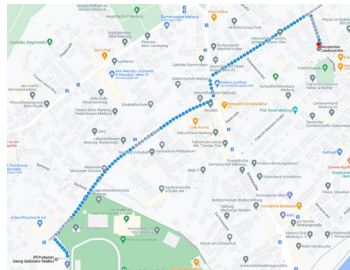
If you come from **North-East**

(i.e., from Berlin) use the **A49** and leave it in favor of the **B3** in Cölbe. Follow the **B3** until you reach **Marburg** and take the exit in the direction of **Marburg-Mitte**. Turn right onto **Erlenring** and follow this until **Weidenhäuser Brücke**; there turn left into **Universitätsstraße**. Follow the road and then turn left into **Bismarckstraße**. The State Archive is located on the right-hand side.

Parking

Only **paid parking** is available at the State Archive. All-day **free parking** is available at **Georg-Gaßmann-Stadion**, from there it is a 15min walk to the State Archive. Head in the direction of the city center via

Leopold-Lucas-Straße, at its end turn left into **Schwanallee** and immediately right again into **Wilhelmstraße**. The second street on the right is **Friedrichstraße/Friedrichsplatz**. Or walk from the parking lot to the bus stop and take **bus number 8** in the direction of *Waldtal* to the stop *Philippshaus*. Walk back down the street to **Bismarckstraße** and turn left. The State Archive is on the right-hand side. Please check the respective websites for prices and conditions.

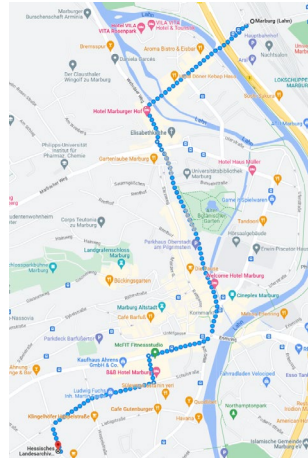


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By foot or public transport from Marburg Main Station

By foot (approx. 30min)

Leave the **Main station** and go straight ahead; follow **Bahnhofstraße**. At the end of the street turn left and follow **Elisabethstraße**. Pass the Elisabethkirche and continue straight on to **Pilgrimstein**. Follow this to the end and keep right. Then turn into **Universitätsstraße** and switch sides of the street. Continue straight until you reach **Bismarckstraße** and turn right. The State Archive are on the right-hand side.



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By bus

From **Main station** use

bus 1 (*Richtsberg Eisenacher Weg*),

bus 4 (*Richtsberg Eisenacher Weg*),

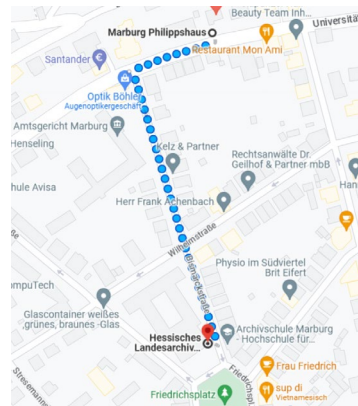
bus 5 (*Dietrich-Bonhoeffer-Straße*) or

bus 7 (*Lahnberge UKM*)

The bus stops are located directly in front of the station.

(2,45 € per trip).

Leave the bus at the stop *Philipphaus*. From there, switch sides of the street and walk a little further until you turn right into **Bismarckstraße**. Follow the street until you reach the State Archive, which is located on the right-hand side.



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Directions from Frankfurt a. Main Airport

Marburg is easy to reach by public transport from Frankfurt Airport. The Regional Train Station is located in the basement of Terminal 1 on level 0. You can reach it via all sections (A, B and C) on the arrivals level. Follow the signs to the Airport City Mall/Regional Station. If you arrive in Terminal 2, you can take a shuttle bus to Terminal 1 on Level 2.

There you can buy a ticket to Marburg directly at the ticket machine, or you can purchase a digital ticket in advance (rmv.de or App RMV go). A train ticket from the airport to Marburg costs approx. 17.60€. There is a city train (S-Bahn) every 15 min. in the direction of Frankfurt. You can take the following lines:

S8 (Offenbach)

S9 (Hanau).

It is approx. 13min to Frankfurt main station ("tief"). From there you have to go up from the underground to the main level. Trains in the direction of Marburg mostly depart from platforms 13-16; more detailed information can be found on the display boards or received through announcements. There is a train every hour in the direction of Marburg:

RE30 (Kassel)

RB98 (Kassel).

Please note: The RB 98 is a double train that splits up in Gießen! Please make sure that you sit in the train part direction Kassel!

The journey by train takes about one hour.

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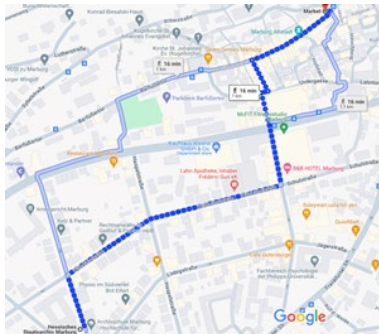
Restaurants

Friday (dinner): Market

Markt 11,
35037 Marburg
Telephone: 06421 164969

Directions (approx. 15 min.):

From the State Archive, follow **Bismarckstraße** to the end and turn left into **Universitätsstraße**. In front of the Schlossberg shopping centre, climb the hill and at the top turn right into **Barfüßerstraße**. The restaurant is located on the left hand side of the **Marktplatz** at the end of the street.

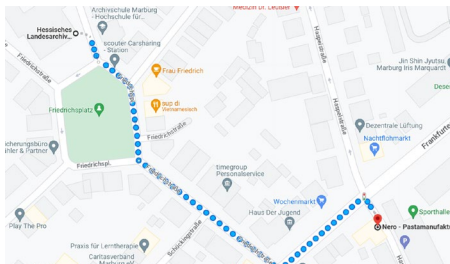


Saturday (Lunch): Nero - Pastamanufaktur

Frankfurter Str. 14A
35037 Marburg
Telephone: 06421 1820126

Directions (approx. 5 min.):

Walk south from the State Archive and turn into **Friedrichstraße**. Then turn left into **Frankfurter Straße**, at the next intersection turn right into **Haspelstraße**. The restaurant is located on the right-hand side.



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