

The overall goal of the research project “**Omnipotens. Manufacturing and Empowering Gods in Greco-Roman Antiquity**” (OMEGA) is to challenge the traditional idea that Greco-Roman “pagan” religion, Judaism, and Christianity all developed in separate social realms. Against the still widespread tendency to historically conceptualize such religions in terms of parallel and alternative “cultural packages”, we propose to approach this issue from a very different angle, by setting aside the modern taxonomical dichotomy of “monotheism” vs. “polytheism” and focusing instead on the shared Greco-Roman cultural capability of manufacturing “bespoke” gods and empowering them up to the highest plausible level. We seek to show how cultic actors – regardless of their religious affiliation – could eventually envisage and contemplate the possible selection or creation of almighty gods. The specific objective of the OMEGA project is thus to analyse the strategies employed in these religious “high-stakes bets” in the area corresponding to the Roman territory at its widest geographic extent, in the period between the 7th cent. BCE and the 7th cent. CE.

The first of the two conferences that the OMEGA project is organising will focus on how these strategies were constructed through the creation of the “ultra-divine” power of individual divinities or through the combination and grouping of different deities:

1) The Power of the One. The first part of the conference will be consecrated to investigate the ways through which it was possible to empower specific gods as “much more divine” than others. Speakers are invited to investigate, according to different registers and contexts of use, i) which linguistic options could be adopted to empower a specific deity or the notion itself of “divine” (*theon/theos*) by praising its nature as unique or supreme; ii) how far minimalism (see, e.g., the baetylus of Aphrodite in Paphos) and/or the “superabundant” amalgam of selected attributes (see, e.g., the so-called “Sabazius’ hands”, the “pantheistic objects”, the “*grylloi*” or the other bizarre images represented on amulets and “magical papyri”) contributed iconographically to the definition of this empowerment. We expect the analysis of such case studies to open a new debate on modern historico-religious categories such as “henotheism”, “megatheism”, “pagan / pluriform / insular / inclusive / quasi / soft monotheism”, “monolatry”, etc., thus stimulating new critical methodological reflections.

2) The Power of the Many. A second series of papers will be devoted to the topic of “groupness”. The OMEGA project claims that dyads, triads, enneads, Dodekatheia and other divine “elite clubs” constantly changed from one context to another because they were the result of local and contingent decisions. The indeterminacy of some synthetic formulas that referred to non-individualized pluralities of gods were also the result of a very situational choice that mobilized specific “micro-panthea” which really only made sense in relation to the cultic context of the dedication by the religious actors. By analysing how such divine “groups” were named and/or represented, we invite contributors to explore i) what constituted the unity of a given divine group and what qualities and powers were stressed through their grouping; ii) if a hierarchical relationship could be established between such divine powers within a group or among different groups; iii) what degree of contact/interference between institutions and individuals was enacted in negotiating the cohabitation of divine entities perceived as particularly mighty in the same sanctuary or urban/rural context.

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Organising Committee

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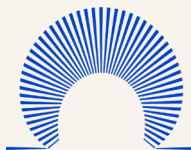
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Omnipotens.
Manufacturing and
Empowering Gods in
Greco-Roman
Antiquity



OMNIPOTENS

MANUFACTURING AND EMPOWERING GODS

IN GRECO-ROMAN ANTIQUITY

1. THE POWER OF THE ONE AND OF THE MANY

International Conference



Universidad Carlos III de Madrid
Campus Madrid – Puerta de Toledo
15-17 November 2023

Programme

Wednesday, 15 November, Conference Hall (0.B.06)

15.00-15.10 Welcome

15.10-15.30 **Valentino Gasparini**
(Universidad Carlos III de Madrid)
The OMEGA Project. An Introduction

PART I: THE POWER OF THE ONE

Chair: Valentino Gasparini

15.30-15.50 **Andreas Bendlin** (University of Toronto)
Choosing the Right One. Tactics and Strategies of Religious Choice in Ancient Rome

15.50-16.10 **Naomi Janowitz** (University of California-Davis)
The Dissimulation of Monotheism. Building a Vision of the Power of One

16.10-16.30 **Constantinos Macris**
(CNRS – PSL Université – Laboratoire d'études sur les monothéismes)
L'erreur des monothéistes, ou le polythéisme comme condition de possibilité de l'omnipotence du dieu premier. Mise en perspective d'un argument du pythagorisme hellénistique

16.30-16.50 **Nicole Belayche** (EPHE-PSL, UMR 8210 AnHiMA)
Les épicleses des divinités « hypsistos » : un rôle dans l'exaltation des divinités ?

16.50-17.20 Discussion

17.20-17.50 Coffee break

Chair: Georgia Petridou

17.50-18.10 **Eleni Fassa** (Democritus University of Thrace)
Rising to Omnipotence. Sarapis' Quest for Supreme Power in the Graeco-Roman Mediterranean

18.10-18.30 **Raquel Martín Hernández**
(Universidad Complutense de Madrid)
Almighty Typhon-Seth. The Transformation of Seth in Greco-Roman Magic

18.30-18.50 **Ian Rutherford** (University of Reading)
Polymorphism and Pilgrimage. Bes at Abydos and Other Cases

18.50-19.20 Discussion

20.30 Dinner

Thursday, 16 November, Conference Hall (0.B.06)

Chair: Ginevra Benedetti

09.30-09.50 **Adrien Coignoux** (AnHiMA)
Jupiter and the First Roman Kings. How to Become the Best of All?

09.50-10.10 **Giampiero Scafoglio** (Université Côte d'Azur)
Le Soleil omnium auctor. Ébauches de théologie solaire dans les Saturnales de Macrobie

10.10-10.30 **Nicola Denzey Lewis**
(Claremont Graduate University)
A Miniature Votive Object, a Hybrid God, and a Woman Devotee. The Case of Cascelia Elegans' Dominus Aeternus Altar

10.30-10.50 **Gideon Bohak** (Tel-Aviv University) - *in absentia*
Polyangelic Monotheism in Late-Antique Judaism. The One and the Many

10.50-11.20 Discussion

11.20-11.50 Coffee break

PART II: THE POWER OF THE MANY

Chair: Andreas Bendlin

11.50-12.10 **Vinciane Pirenne-Delforge** (Collège de France)
The Power of One in Many. Zeus and His 30,000 Immortal Guardians (Hesiod W&D 252-3)

12.10-12.30 **Ioanna Patera** (Jagiellonian University, Kraków)
Le pouvoir de la démultiplication et le culte « unique » d'Éleusis

12.30-12.50 **Stella Georgoudi** (École Pratique des Hautes Études)
Retour sur une catégorisation des dieux grecs: les chthonioi, les olympioi, les ouranioi

12.50-13.20 Discussion

13.40 Lunch

Chair: Beatriz Pañeda Murcia

15.40-16.00 **Marios Koutsoukos** (University of Liverpool)
At the Gates of the Creator. The Theurgic Gods of Iamblichus

16.00-16.20 **Irene Polinskaya** (King's College London)
Divided or United They Stand? Divine Plurality in Ancient Greek Oaths

16.20-16.40 **Francisco Marco Simón & Celia Sánchez Natalías**
(Universidad de Zaragoza)
Cosmic Gods and/versus Multiple Invocations in defixiones from Roman Africa

16.40-17.10 Discussion

17.10-17.40 Coffee Break

Chair: Nicola Denzey Lewis

17.40-18.00 **Aleksandra Kubiak-Schneider**
(University of Wrocław)
Girls' Power! Portrait of Atargatis, Allat and Nannaya from the Perspective of Their Worshippers at the Beginning of the Common Era

18.00-18.20 **Benjamin Winnick**
(University of British Columbia)
The Mysteries of Samothrace. Prestige Through Ambiguity

18.20-18.40 **Claire Heseltine** (King's College, London)
Gods in Miniature. Representations of Deities on Personal Possessions from 1st Century CE Campania

19.00-19.30 **Jean-Marie Pailler**
(Université de Toulouse Jean Jaurès)
Dionysos-Bacchus un, double et multiple. Les métamorphoses d'un dieu en quête de reconnaissance

19.00-19.30 Discussion

20.30 Dinner

Friday, 17 November, Classroom 0.A.07

Chair: Jaime Alvar Ezquerra

09.30-09.50 **Emmanuelle Palermi** (AnHiMA)
Les Deux Déeses. Nommer la dyade « Déméter et sa fille »

09.50-10.10 **Sylvia Estienne** (UMR 8210 AnHiMA)
« L'union fait la force » : dyades et triades divines dans le temple de la Concordia Augusta

10.10-10.30 **Csaba Szabó** (University of Szeged)
Empowering the Elite. Micro-Panthea of Senators and Knights in Roman Dacia

10.30-11.00 Discussion

11.00-11.30 Coffee Break

Chair: Angelos Chaniotis

11.30-11.50 **Françoise van Haepelen**
(Université catholique de Louvain)
Les déesses qualifiées de domina en contextes. Entre souveraineté « universelle » et locale

11.50-12.10 **Jaime Alvar Ezquerra**
(Universidad Carlos III de Madrid)
The Failed Creation of a Supergod. Sol Elagabal

12.10-12.40 Discussion

12.40-13.00 **Angelos Chaniotis**
(Institute of Advanced Study, Princeton)
Conclusions

13.30 Lunch