

I. EDITORIAL

In the present volume, we are fortunate to continue publishing the very successful dossier entitled *Religion, Religiosity and Material Culture in the Ancient World*. In fact, the dossier was initially scheduled to be published in its entirety in Volume 11, Number 2 of 2020. However, since the journal received quality contributions in a much larger volume than expected, the editorial board decided for the publication divided into two parts. We are certain that such a positive response indicates that the journal is following the right path by opening contributions to researchers who are in the most diverse phases of the academic career, from undergraduates to PhD researchers. The consequence of such editorial orientation of the journal is presented in the fact that it is one of the most accessed and downloaded publications in the field of Antiquity in Brazil. We believe that this occurs precisely because the journal presents itself as a democratic vehicle for academic debate based on quality.

The Vol. 12, N. 1, (2021) brings seven articles in its “Dossier” section, two free articles, a translation of a scientific article in the “Essays” section and, finally, two contributions in the “Reviews” section. A more detailed presentation of the theme of this dossier can be found in the editorial of the above-mentioned volume, which is easily accessible on the journal’s website. However, it is convenient to return to some central points that guide all the contributions of both volumes. The main objective of the dossier is to bring to the national academic debate the critics related to the positioning of religion as a social phenomenon circumscribed to the ideas and doctrines. In this perspective, the material support just serve as an accessory for the people to better understand the religious ideas. Instead, we present to the Brazilian academic scenario the possibility of think about religion and religiosity themselves as a material phenomena; that is, to consider the existence of an intrinsic relationship between the religious expression and its material culture. In this way, both religion and religiosity could only be properly analyzed by taking into account their materiality.

This tension between modern theoretical interpretation of religion and the information present in the material culture data is already addressed in the first article, the one that opens the second part of our dossier, entitled *Short History of “Matriarchy” as a Hypothesis for the Interpretation of Prehistory*, authored by Dr. Lolita Guimarães Guerra. In this contribution, she seeks to critically discuss the historical interpretations

that conceive the existence of a matriarchy at some point before the foundation of the first sedentary human agglomerations. For this, she starts from the analysis of the prehistoric figures representing naked women, the so-called “Venus”, to question the various authors that regard such statuettes as a symbol of the fertility superiority conferred to women in ancient societies. In this way, Guerra brings both the withdrawals from archeology to debate the very probability of a matriarchal prehistoric society and the critics regarding the consequences of *matriarchalism* for contemporary feminism movements. Her conclusion is the idea of matriarchalism can be distorted within political reactionary movements in a way that the once defenders of this thesis don't expected.

Then, a section of the dossier opens with three valuable contributions to the study of Ancient Egypt from the point of view of material religion and religiosity. The first one is entitled *The Use of Amulets as a Practice of Religiosity in New Kingdom's Egypt (1550-1070 a.C.)*, and is authored by Victoria Arroyo. By analyzing a series of amulets found at the Gurob site in the Fayum region, Arroyo seeks to explore the role of such material manifestation of religiosity. Likewise she links them to the universe of sacred, specially to the sensitive life moments of the Egyptian inhabitants in the second half of the second millenium. One example of this are the apotropaic amulets made for the parturient women and their children at the time of delivery, specially in a society marked by infant mortality. This is another case, therefore, in which the traditional division between the religious experience based on doctrines about the supernatural and the manifestations of the material character of this religiosity would not make any sense.

The second study in the dossier that analyses the intimate link between religiosity and materiality in ancient Egypt is *Materiality and Identity: the Shabtis of the God's Wives of Amun*, written by André Shinity Kawaminami. By analyzing the Egyptian statuettes that replaced specific people in the post-mortem agricultural work of four priestesses recognized as divine wives of the god Amun, Kawaminami demonstrates how the shabtis cannot be seen as a mere way of legitimizing the discourse of social distinction. Instead, the statuettes must been considered constituent elements of the divine wives' own social and religious identity, an essential part in the very disposition of a fraction of the Egyptian religion.

The study that closes the part of articles related to ancient Egypt is authored by Danilo Melo da Fonseca and has the title *Popular Religion in Greco-Roman Egypt: the Cult of Serapis*. In this article, Fonseca explores the manifestations of the cult of Serapis in Alexandria and in other regions of Egypt during the Greco-Roman period. He analyzes

the development of the divine figure of Serapis, a god whose cult was founded by the first Ptolemaic king, and adopts the theoretical point of view of cultural entanglement initially proposed by Philipp Stockhammer. An approach, however, that Fonseca does not use in a doctrinal perspective, but rather develops it from the point of view of the material manifestations of the Serapis' cult. More specifically, he surveys and analyzes terracotta figurines of the god seeking to highlight the symbolic characteristics present in them that have connection with sign repertoires from both Greek and Egyptian cults.

The last three articles of the second volume of the dossier *Religion, Religiosity and Material Culture in the Ancient World* deal with material religion and its manifestations in other Mediterranean regions under the Roman rule. This second part initiates with the article written by Felipe Perissato and entitled *Archaeology of an Ancient Procession: the Practice of πομπή Between Athens and Eleusis in the Roman Period (2nd - 3rd AD)*. Based on the remains of material culture, but also using textual and epigraphic sources, Perissato proposes to identify some specificities of the Eleusinian cult in this period, considering it mainly from the manifestations of his religious materiality, such as the processions and space interventions, the construction of sanctuaries and of a path intended for worship.

The next article of the dossier comes from the pen of Ismael Wolf and is entitled *Brigantia from Birrens: Cultural Interactions in Frontier Zone of Roman Britain*. In this text, Wolf dwells on a highly worshiped deity in the region of Hadrian's wall: the goddess Brigantia. More specifically, the author analyses a stele dedicated to the goddess found at the archaeological site of Birrens, a Roman fort next to the wall. From that stele Wolf not only highlights the Roman symbolic influences on the representation of the goddess (usually linked to the goddess Minerva), but also investigates the very circumstances of the construction of the stele, highlighting from it the cultural interactions in a border area.

The dossier is closed with a valuable contribution from Dr. Carlos Eduardo da Costa Campos, which bears the title *Divine Signs and Prodigia in the Construction of Augustus' Image: a Study from Suetonius*. In his study, Campos explores the religious foundations of republican Rome, based on textual sources such as Suetonius and Cicero. These foundations, however, are explored above all in their materiality which is highlighted by the importance of sacred rites not only to legitimize the position of magistrates and senators, but also to maintain the social order of the *res publica*. Since the social and political order is inseparable from maintaining peace with the gods of the *Urbs*, Campos explores especially from Suetonius how Augustus himself seeks to

centralize the relationship between the *res publica* and the divinity by assuming for himself a series of prerogatives in public rituals.

In addition to the dossier, the present volume includes two articles with a free theme. Although they do not represent analyzes of material culture, both present great contributions to the study of ancient religions in Brazil. The first of them is entitled *Non Ducor, Ducor: the Soul's Condition in the Corpus Hermeticum* and features Pedro Barbieri carrying out a dense and highly erudite study of a set of esoteric treatises from Roman Egypt, dating between the 1st and 3rd centuries AD. By exploring the cosmological and soteriological contents of these treatises, Barbieri identifies the ways in which they present the human being: constituted of body, soul and intellect. Thus, in the search for salvation from their precarious condition the human beings should allow themselves to be guided by knowledge, which could connect them with the divinity present in themselves. Therefore, the author contributes a lot to the studies around the mystery cults and initiation rites of the Roman period, which still constitute a vast field of research.

In this matter, Barbieri is accompanied in this volume by the article *Mystery Cults in Prothreptic from Clement of Alexandria*, written by Sami de Figueiredo Maciel. In this text, Maciel seeks to gather information about the mystery cults in the Greek-speaking Roman Mediterranean from a critical reading by one of his detractors: the Christian author Clemente of Alexandria. From this source, Maciel is not restricted to presenting the information provided by the author, but also seeks to highlight how he consciously used certain characteristics of these mystery cults to present Christianity as the religion with a soteriological initiation superior to all others and that represented the true initiation to divine mysteries.

Then, we return to the section “Essays” with the precious translation into Portuguese made by Dr. Thais Rocha da Silva of an essay written by Dr. Christian Langer (Freie Universität Berlin) entitled *The Informal Colonialism of Egyptology: From the French Expedition to the Security State*. Professor Langer's study is a valuable presentation of the profoundly colonialist character of Egyptological studies developed in the West, which underpin a current Egyptian socio-political order that maintains the supremacy of a wealthy elite over the country's agenda. In contrast, the author highlights the eminently political (and therefore legitimate) need for both self-criticism and the decolonization of Egyptology as a field of study. In other words, Langer calls on all Egyptologists, whether Western or Egyptians, to be aware of the responsibilities surrounding their research objects. Thus, he argues that research on Ancient Egypt needs

to be a continuously reflective activity about the consequences of what is being done. Otherwise, Egyptologists are likely to end up, albeit involuntarily, working to maintain a deeply unequal social order.

Finally we end this volume with the section “Reviews” which presents two contributions. The first one has the title *The Feminine in Greek literature: from Epic Poetry to Tragedy* and was written by Laysse Leda Dantas Cavalcanti. In this text, the author reviews the collection of studies entitled *Literatura e Sociedade na Grécia Antiga*, organized by Gabriela Fasano and Fábio Lessa and published in 2018. The second one is authored by Helton Lourenço Carvalho and has the title *Beyond Athens: Other “slave Societies” in the Eastern Mediterranean*. Through this review, he introduces the reader to the book *Greek Slave Systems in Their Eastern Mediterranean Context, c. 800-146 BC*, written by David M. Lewis and also published in 2018.

Finally, we wish that everyone has a good and pleasant reading and that, if that is the case, continue to follow the journal’s works and events linked to it and to the Laboratory of Roman Empire and Ancient Mediterranean Studies of the University of São Paulo (LEIR-MA/USP), always published in our social medias and websites.

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