

2018 Symposium Classicum Peregrinum:
Blessings and Curses in Antiquity
June 21-24, 2018
Lonato del Garda, Italy

Call for Papers

Panel Title:

*"Religions Dominated by Mothering Women"[1]:
Unveiling Dynamics and Emotions in Religious Practices Involving Children in Danger,
Mothers and Mother-like Figures in Antiquity*

Chair: Giulia Pedrucci

Generally speaking, ancient sources suggest, at least in Greek and Roman wealthy families, an alloparental care strategy: mothers fostered the mental capacities of their children, their growth, and shaped their social acceptability (distal strategy. I also put under this category grandmothers and aunts, and even the majority of goddesses); while female attendants (nurses and other female servants) were responsible for the physical care of the infants (proximal strategy). Both were engaged in preserving the life of the infants.

In this way, the work of the mother was made lighter, but, as the same time, a complex and ambivalent network of familial or quasi-familial relationships and of emotions was built around her.

By placing a particular emphasis on the religious aspects of such mothering practices, this panel aims at reconstructing the embodied ritual experiences of women in their children care-taking functions, the emotional involvement in performing them and between the people involved, by considering both archaeological and literary sources.

In particular, it will focus on the role of women in the so-called "religions dominated by women" as nurturers, healers, primary child care providers, and emotional supporters in case of children diseases and premature death in a comparative perspective.

What kind of ritual did the mother and "mother-like" (wet-nurses, nurses, grand-mothers, aunts...) figures perform? Publicly and privately?

Which was the purpose? To what extent were they personally involved? For affection, for duty or for personal interest? Which kind of deities were involved? Were there professional intermediaries between those women and the deities? From whom/what did children need to be protected? What happened when a young child died: did they abandon "official" religion for a more individualized form of religion or did they abandon religion in general? The intersection between "Lived Ancient Religions"[2] and ancient medicine is relevant here, and the panel aims at offering a challenging perspective by analyzing the way to cope with illness by means of a third party.

Papers, which will also focus on ancient cultures different from the Greek and Roman ones in a comparative perspective, are particularly welcomed.

If you wish to submit a proposal as part of this session, please send a title and a short (200-300 words) abstract to giulia.pedrucci@gmail.com until December 31, 2017.

For all inquiries, please contact giulia.pedrucci@gmail.com .

[1] Sered S.S., *Priestess, Mother, sacred Sister. Religions dominated by Women*, New York-Oxford 1994.

[2] Rüpke J., *Lived Ancient Religion: Questioning "Cults" and "Polis" Religion*, «Mythos» 5 (2011), 191-203; Rüpke J., *On Roman Religion: Lived Religion and the Individual in Ancient Rome*, Ithaca-London 2016.