



Lived Ancient Religion in North Africa

University Carlos III of Madrid
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Organised by
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Call For Papers (ENGLISH)

The LARNA project (*Lived Ancient Religion in North Africa*), based at the Institute of Historiography 'Julio Caro Baroja' (University Carlos III of Madrid) and funded the Autonomous Community of Madrid, invites researchers of ancient history, history of religion, archaeology, anthropology, classical studies, and further related fields to discuss the topic of "**Lived Ancient Religion in North Africa**".

As the title of this International Conference clearly suggests, the theoretical framework of this meeting is inscribed within the paradigm of *Lived Ancient Religion* (hereafter LAR), developed in Erfurt between 2012 and 2017 and supervised by Jörg Rüpke. LAR supports a methodological shift from the idea that the dominant structure in the Graeco-Roman World was based on the routinised and institutionalised performance of public, collective rites driven by the elite ideology (i.e. the *polis*- or *civitas*-religion) to a focus on the individual as an active actor, capable of situational and creative innovation. Sharing this perspective, this conference will deal with religious agency not as a 'normalising' action by representatives of institutional entities or local oligarchies, but as creative innovation by decision-makers who consciously modified established religious patterns. The main sociological reference point for this conference lies in Michel de Certeau's concepts of *bricolagiste appropriation* and *re-contextualisation*, which take into account the processes by which individuals select, construct and vary religious offers, as well as the concepts (and limits) of group membership and of normative and deviant behaviours.

Speakers are invited to examine Roman Africa (corresponding nowadays to Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia and Libya) as the arena of situationally-dependent innovations and adaptations by a number of local small-scale religious actors who freely used religion as a resource to respond to emerging dilemmas, generate religious experiences encompassing the human body and the material environment, and communicate these experiences through multifarious narratives and strategies of emotional saturation. Therefore, we aim to avoid any overemphasis on allegedly shared religious worldviews, divine entities, religious symbols, and myths, but rather to highlight specific authorial micro-strategies in the construction of religious narratives and perspectives, and to specify the relationship between religious experience, group-formation, and textuality in different contexts and periods. Speakers are encouraged

to answer to the following questions: How did religion enlarge and strengthen interpersonal engagement and individual agency in Roman Africa? What stimuli and sense-scapes did generate religious experiences? How did individuals of different social statuses, genders, and ages, with different engagements in religious praxis (practitioners, borderline specialists, devotees), experience a given phenomenon as 'religious'? How was this experience interpreted and communicated? Why was religion invoked strategically in interpersonal communication? Who were the specialists in charge of mediating and properly addressing this communication thanks to their specific competence and knowledge? What were the media interactively employed in the processes of encoding and decoding the message?

Proposals including a title and an abstract of 300-500 words should be sent to María Fernández Portaencasa (fportaen@hum.uc3m.es) by **30 June 2019**. We accept papers in English and French language. All costs of travel (up to 200 euros), food, and accommodation (2 nights) will be covered by the organisation. The proposals will be scrutinized by a Scientific Committee composed by Jaime Alvar (Universidad Carlos III de Madrid), Nicole Belayche (École Pratique des Hautes Études, Paris), Lamia Ben Abid (Université de la Manouba), Nacéra Benseddik (Université d'Alger), Corinne Bonnet (Université de Toulouse Jean Jaurès), Liliane Ennabli (Université Paris IV Sorbonne), Layla Es-Sadra (Université Mohamed V de Rabat), Richard L. Gordon (Universität Erfurt), Attilio Mastino (Università degli Studi di Sassari), Sergio Ribichini (Consiglio Nazionale delle Ricerche, Roma), Jörg Rüpke (Universität Erfurt), Greg Woolf (Institute of Classical Studies, London).