

RÉFLEXIONS SUR LA NOTION DE FRONTIÈRE: EXISTE-T-IL UNE FRONTIÈRE RELIGIEUSE DANS L'EMPIRE ROMAIN?

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Abstract: *As we examine religions within the Roman Empire, we are struck by the diversity of gods who have been coexisting throughout this vast territory : Greco-Roman, Egyptian, oriental deities, indigenous or local divinities. But, if we take a closer look at these religions, at the level of provinces, we can see that the most important Roman divinities are very unevenly spread. The question then arises as to the existence of one or more borders.*

Each city having its own pantheon, some gods or goddesses meet only within a territory, possibly even a sanctuary. Thus, there is already, somehow, some religious divides within each province. We need to then look at the great divinities who were imported in order to analyse their expansion. However, the answer is not so simple. Indeed, religious issues prove to be highly complex so we should consider the effects of interpretation romana / indigena, partial or complete assimilation, persistence and change, as illustrated by the example of Narbonnensis. A Roman divinity may hide an indigenous deity and vice-versa. The distinction is far from clear-cut. In some areas, a geographical and chronological border should be considered in order to deal with phenomena which changed with time and space : for example, the situation of the Iberian peninsula in the first century BC is not the same as in the second century AD. "Romanization" and acculturation have resulted in the assimilation and change of pantheons.

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