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Panel: 16: Religion in Society

Title: Finding One's Place – hierarchy as an antidote to evil in magical amulets

Language: Paper to be presented in English

Abstract:

The amulets of the Papyri Graecae Magicae (PGM) and related corpora are clear examples of what JZ Smith (2003) terms “the religion of anywhere”. They are the material manifestations of the three major changes that Smith argues occurred in Late Antiquity – the new Geography, the new Cosmography, and the new Polity. This paper explores how certain Greek ‘magical’ texts from the third and fourth centuries use the reiteration of hierarchy to overcome or adapt to these changes, particularly as an antidote to ‘evil’ or sickness. It also explores the construction of evil itself, in the context of the proposed new order.

Length of Paper: 20 Minutes