



Type: Altar

Findspot: Reims (France)

Chronology: AD 1 century

Actual location: Reims, Musée Saint-Remi

The altar depicts three deities framed between the columns and the pediment of a shrine: the one sitting at the centre has been identified with Cernunnos, with Apollo and Mercury at the sides. Cernunnos was usually represented as a horned or antlered figure, and often seated cross legged holding or wearing torques and surrounded by animals.

The ancient sources never mention the god and very little is known on his cult or his significance in Celtic religion. What makes this representation particularly interesting is the association between a local deity and two “imported” gods, Apollo and Mercury on an altar that broadly reflects the aesthetics and the functionality of Roman cults.

You may want to look at other artefacts where Cernunnos is represented and see in which cultural and functional context (religious? Funerary?) he is being represented, in association with other deities or alone, but also to look at the chronology of such manifestations of syncretic cults.

MY RESEARCH

What are syncretic cults? And how did they develop in the Roman world?

What impact had the migration of people from Italy to the provinces on native cultures?

How far the relief shows reflects the integration of local cults into the official Roman religion or on the other side the minimal incorporation of Roman paraphernalia by resistant provincials?