

1. Record Nr.	UNINA9910797968703321
Autore	Marx-Wolf Heidi
Titolo	Spiritual taxonomies and ritual authority : Platonists, priests, and gnostics in the third century C.E. // Heidi Marx-Wolf
Pubbl/distr/stampa	Philadelphia, Pennsylvania : , : University of Pennsylvania Press, , 2016 ©2016
ISBN	0-8122-9244-8
Descrizione fisica	1 online resource (211 p.)
Collana	Divinations: Rereading Late Ancient Religion
Disciplina	186/.4
Soggetti	Neoplatonism - History Gnosticism - History Spirits - History of doctrines Demonology - History Animal sacrifice - History Philosophy and religion - History Spiritual direction - History Divinations
Lingua di pubblicazione	Inglese
Formato	Materiale a stampa
Livello bibliografico	Monografia
Note generali	Description based upon print version of record.
Nota di bibliografia	Includes bibliographical references and index.
Nota di contenuto	Front matter -- Contents -- Abbreviations -- Introduction -- Chapter 1. How to Feed a Daemon: Third-Century Philosophers on Blood Sacrifice -- Chapter 2. Everything in Its Right Place: Spiritual Taxonomy in Third-Century Platonism -- Chapter 3. The Missing Link: Third-Century Platonists and "Gnostics" on Daemons and Other Spirits -- Chapter 4. High Priests of the Highest God: Third-Century Platonists as Ritual Experts -- Conclusion -- Notes -- Bibliography -- Index -- Acknowledgments
Sommario/riassunto	The people of the late ancient Mediterranean world thought about and encountered gods, angels, demons, heroes, and other spirits on a regular basis. These figures were diverse, ambiguous, and unclassified and were not ascribed any clear or stable moral valence. Whether or not they were helpful or harmful under specific circumstances determined if and what virtues were attributed to them. That all changed in the

third century C.E., when a handful of Platonist philosophers—Plotinus, Origen, Porphyry, and Iamblichus—began to produce competing systematic discourses that ordered the realm of spirits in moral and ontological terms. In *Spiritual Taxonomies and Ritual Authority*, Heidi Marx-Wolf recounts how these Platonist philosophers organized the spirit world into hierarchies, or "spiritual taxonomies," positioning themselves as the high priests of the highest gods in the process. By establishing themselves as experts on sacred, ritual, and doctrinal matters, they were able to fortify their authority, prestige, and reputation. The Platonists were not alone in this enterprise, and it brought them into competition with rivals to their new authority: priests of traditional polytheistic religions and Gnostics. Members of these rival groups were also involved in identifying and ordering the realm of spirits and in providing the ritual means for dealing with that realm. Using her lens of spiritual taxonomy to look at these various groups in tandem, Marx-Wolf demonstrates that Platonist philosophers, Christian and non-Christian priests, and Gnostics were more interconnected socially, educationally, and intellectually than previously recognized.
