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# Introduction

The third section of this volume assembles articles that, in one way or another, shed light on the prehistory and early developments of modern scholarly historiography and the academic discipline of the History of religion. The timeframes of the following articles thus range from the sixteenth to the twentieth centuries (with some exceptions), while particular attention is given to authors, discourses and sources that have been crucial for modern scholarly narratives of a 'religious past'.

The title of this section – 'Transforming narratives' – alludes to dynamics that may (or may not) have accompanied the apparent transition of writer milieus that forms the historical backdrop of this section. Certainly, the historiographic methods, writing styles, narrative patterns and literary motivations applied in (*emic*) religious and (*etic*) scholarly historiography have changed to a more or less considerable degree. However, a fundamental distinction between *emic* and *etic* narratives of a 'religious past' should not be posited too hastily. As pointed out in the main introduction of this volume, academic historians devoted to the History of Religion often have – consciously or not – adopted terminologies, concepts, chronologies and genealogies or entire narrative patterns from questionable sources that had been produced by the very religious groups under investigation. Archaeological evidence notwithstanding, how should historians of early Christianity verify the Apostolic succession or the topics of ancient synods and councils without using historical reports written by ecclesiastical chroniclers? Obviously, there is a close relationship between *emic* and *etic* historiography which yields a range of unique problems in the realm of religion (e. g., how should academic historians deal with miracle reports or the frequently evoked historical agency of spiritual beings?). Even though historians of religion habitually profess that they handle the peculiarities and limitations of their sources in a controlled and reflected manner, it seems to us that the *emic-etic*-relationship has not been sufficiently problematised or thought through in the History of Religion. The following articles thus aim at elucidating said relationship within the scope of selected case studies. The reader may keep in mind that the distinction between primary and secondary literature (applied in the bibliographies) is, particularly in this third section, nothing but pragmatic.

BENEDIKT KRANEMANN focusses on the Roman Catholic history of liturgy in his article 'The notion of tradition in liturgy'. In a comparative survey of theological texts ranging from early Christianity to post-Conciliar writings of the late twentieth century, Kranemann unveils a fundamental ambivalence in the way the Roman Church has historicised its own ritual portfolio. On the one hand,

the ideal of an original, uncorrupted ‘service that was close to its biblical or apostolic origins’ was evoked continuously throughout the centuries. Often enough, liturgy ‘reforms’ really aimed for the ‘restoration’ of a presumed ritual prototype. On the other hand, Kranemann unveils that, the ‘desire to be close to the origins’ notwithstanding, the theological debate was quite aware that liturgy was a ‘living’ tradition open to change and innovation, e.g. to different local adaptations or theological re-interpretations. This twofold approach influenced the theological use of the Latin term ‘*traditio*’ which, expectably, adopted varied semantic nuances among different theological authors. Particularly from the nineteenth century onwards, ‘different notions of tradition stood side by side’. Kranemann thus concludes that ‘tradition’, in the realm of the Roman Catholic history of liturgy, is by no means self-evident but constantly negotiated. Its establishment was and is an act of power that ‘depends on the here and now’ and is ‘continually redefined by its specific context’.

In her article ‘Verbs, nouns, temporality and typology: Narrating about ritualised warfare in Roman antiquity and modern scholarship’ GABRIELLA GUSTAFSSON exemplifies mechanisms of ancient as well as modern historiographical distortions. Her case study is the historiographical construction of a ritual imagined as a stable sequence of ritual gestures. The cases are taken from the historiography of the Roman republic, starting from ancient general historiographic accounts like the Roman History written by Livy at the end of the first century BCE down to recent accounts of Roman religion in ‘scientific historiography’. With reference to the ‘calling out’ of a tutelary deity of a beleaguered city (‘Evocation’) and the self-sacrifice of a Roman general on the brink of losing a battle (‘devotion’), Gustafsson points to the gradual transformation of verbal ideographic accounts in early narratives (e.g. *evocare*, ‘they called out the god’) into abstract and generalising nouns (*evocatio*, ‘the calling out of gods’), suggestive of established and formalised rituals. Gustafsson thereby elucidates the development of typologies and concludes that shifts from *emic* to *etic* terminology within historical accounts may – by their tendency to simplify – obfuscate the analysis or rituals.

In her article ‘Judaism: An inquiry into the historical discourse’ CRISTIANA FACCHINI sheds new light on the (Jewish) history of the historiography of Judaism while challenging the controversial argument of Yosef H. Yerushalmi (*Zakhor: Jewish Memory and Jewish History*, Philadelphia 1982). Against Yerushalmi’s claim that the historiography of Judaism properly began in the nineteenth century, Facchini points to the early modern humanist discourse, particularly to the work of Yehudah Aryeh Modena, also known as Leon Modena (1571–1649). According to Facchini, Modena was the first Jewish author to compose an adequate contemporary image of Judaism (focusing on Jewish ritual, but

also on its historical dimensions) through what we today ‘might call a “phenomenological” lens’. By tracing the explicit and implicit reception of Modena’s *Historia de’ riti hebraici* in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Facchini reconstructs the problematic interconnectedness of Christian and Jewish accounts of the history of Judaism and also demonstrates the conceptual roots and historiographic motivations of the nineteenth century ‘historicist era’ which was so important for the development of ‘modern’ Jewish self-conceptions and historiography. Finally, while discussing the case of the Italian scholar David Castelli, Facchini expounds the great difficulties Jewish Studies had to face in early twentieth century Italy.

RENÉE KOCH-PIETTRE, in her article ‘President de Brosses’s modern and post-modern fetishes in the historiography and history of religions’, illuminates a mostly unnoticed facet of Charles de Brosses’ (1709–1777) concept of ‘fetishism’. Koch-Piettre argues that de Brosses, unlike other prominent scholars of the eighteenth century, was one of the first ‘comparativist’ historians of religion, due to his neglect of enlightenment and theistic narratives, and his more homogeneous evaluation of various types of (non-Christian) religiosity. In this respect, de Brosses did not construe the concept of ‘fetishism’ to merely devalue the ‘direct’ worship of objects, but, to the contrary, to denote the latter as a type of religion that is in no way inferior to ‘figurative’, i.e. allegorical or theistic creed. Koch-Piettre suggests that de Brosses – even though frequently polemicising against both ‘fetishism’ and ‘figurism’ in his work *Du culte des dieux fétiches* – may have preferred the former as ‘*fétichistes* stick to the facts, to solid realities, while allegory speculates on all hot air’. As it turns out, this nuanced evaluation has been mostly neglected in the reception of De Brosses’ work. Koch-Piettre, however, sees therein the beginning of a more unbiased study of religions – as ‘the quest of truth was no more of doctrinal or mystical truth, but of historical and anthropological truth’.

In ‘*Historia sacra* and historical criticism in Biblical scholarship’ REINHARD KRATZ discusses the relationship between the fundamental claim to normativity of religious traditions on the one hand, and modern, critical scholarship of these traditions on the other. Kratz points to the example of the Biblical scholar and Arabist Julius Wellhausen (1844–1918) and carves out a continuous narrative pattern that underlies Wellhausen’s view of the historical roots of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. In all three cases there ‘is the idea of a development of, or more properly the opposition between, the original beginnings of a religion or culture which grew up naturally and are still completely earthy, and the later stage, in which things have assumed an institutionally established, artificial and dogmatic state’. Wellhausen thus shines out as one of the most radical Biblical scholars of the late nineteenth century who fundamentally challenged his-

*toria sacra* (i. e. religious foundation legends that claim normativity and absolute validity). While discussing the reception of Wellhausen's works, Kratz poses the general question whether the 'deconstruction of the *historia sacra* is intrinsically linked to the destruction of religion itself'. Both approaches – historical criticism on the one hand, and the uncritical adoption of *historia sacra* on the other – are rejected by Kratz who suggests that the relationship is far more complex. He alludes to the long, pre-academic legacy of 'sacred philology' or 'sacred criticism' that had already negotiated *historia sacra* on rational grounds before the nineteenth century, and points to the general context-dependence of truth claims, be they uttered by pre-modern theologians or contemporary academic authors. By concluding that 'sacred criticism' and 'higher criticism' do not necessarily exclude each other, Kratz seems to evoke the recent epistemological debate of 'methodological agnosticism'.

BERND-CHRISTIAN OTTO shifts the reader's attention from the historiography of 'religion' to the historiography of 'magic' in his article 'A Catholic "magician" historicises "magic": Éliphas Lévi's *Histoire de la Magie*'. Otto discusses the first extensive history of 'magic' written by a Western learned 'magician', i. e. an insider and practitioner of the art, namely, the *Histoire de la Magie*, published in 1860 by Éliphas Lévi Zahed *alias* Alphonse Louis Constant. Otto carves out three main narrative patterns within this text: (1) Lévi's tendency to construe 'magic' as a mysterious, unalterable baton that wanders through time and space – from God's creation of the world to nineteenth century France; (2) Lévi's distinction of two types of 'magic' and his evaluation of the history of the entire world from the viewpoint of this differentiation; (3) Lévi's peculiar amalgamation of 'magic' and Catholicism and his self-portrayal as the ultimate prophet of the new, 'magical' era of the 'Universal Church'. In his conclusions, Otto sheds light on the reception of Lévi's narrative, highlighting biases that pervade even recent scholarly narratives of a 'magic past'.

GIOVANNI FILORAMO, in his article 'Locating the history of Christianity between the History of the Church and the History of Religions: The Italian case', casts a critical glance on the institutionalisation of the academic discipline of 'History of Christianity and of the Christian Churches' in Italy. Due to its historical positioning between the poles of traditional ecclesiastical historiography on the one hand, and the emergence of modern, secular academia on the other, Italy shines out as a particularly difficult case in point with respect to the establishment of 'a range of studies of the history of Christianity devoid of any theological debt'. Filoramo discusses various authors and developments that took part in this establishment and points, in particular, to the continuous influence of the papacy, the heritage of idealist Enlightenment accounts of the history of Christianity (which mostly focussed on 'uncorrupted' ideas and origins), and fi-

nally, the ‘modernist crisis’ of scholarly historiography in the wake of the ‘historicist’ debate. Due to these competing factors of influence, the ‘secularised’ discipline of ‘History of Christianity and of the Christian Churches’ was properly institutionalised in Italy only after the Second World War. Filoramo, however, warns in his conclusive chapter that we are currently witnessing in Italy ‘the threat of the extinction of this discipline’, due to renewed attempts of the Pontifical Committee for Historical Sciences to claim control over this area of research.