

INTRODUCTION

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In looking at classical antiquity, religion is easily reduced to gods, temples, and priesthoods, and the rituals performed within this framework. This list helps to identify religion in cultures that usually do not entertain notions of religion comparable to our own, or at least not ones that are widespread. The guidance offered by such a list is, however, treacherous. What we describe as “religion” for ancient societies is too easily reduced to a specific dimension of religion. Gods, temples, priests, and rituals concentrate on the visible remains of public architecture, on the institutions providing large-scale ritual, on standard forms of rituals, and on the most spectacular symbols of ancient religious action and discourse, a multitude of superhuman agents. If the religious practices and ideas of ancient societies should be analysed within a comparative framework, as suggested by the disciplines of the history of religion, *Storia delle Religioni*, or *Religionswissenschaft*, we need a larger conceptual framework, bringing into focus aspects that go beyond political identity, social integration, or mobilization.

This is not to say that we need a universal concept of religion, bringing as many aspects of social action as possible into our field of vision. Any analysis and any comparison demand a specific perspective. But today’s manifold encounters with religion suggest that we should start from a broader concept of religion, which needs to be tailored to the interests informing our research. Thus, we suggest¹ regarding ‘religion’ as a cultural product.

It is to challenge the suggested definition and the related recent developments in religious studies that we brought together contributions on the topics of memory and experience. Both terms have stimulated interest in a wide range of recent cultural studies. In the history of scholarship on religion in Mediterranean antiquity, scholars have focused on the emotional dimension of both terms by employing the concepts of ‘Christianity’ and its derivative, ‘oriental religion’.² Only recently has there been a shift to a methodology focusing on the individual and an analysis of emotional and cognitive phenomena from this perspective.³ Memory, on the other

- 1 The following definition follows a proposal developed by Martin Fuchs and Jörg Rüpke in the context of the Research Group (KFG) ‘Religious Individualization in Historical Perspective’, financed by the German Science Foundation (DFG).
- 2 See Rüpke 2010 for the decontextualisation of early ‘Christianity’ and Bonnet, Rüpke, Scarpì 2006 as well as Bonnet, Rüpke 2009 for the critique of any heuristic use of the concept of ‘oriental religions’ (leaving aside the issue of its political correctness).
- 3 Sanzi 2000; Borgeaud 2009; Rüpke 2011; Rüpke, Spickermann 2012; Rüpke 2013.

hand, has been studied from a historical rather than religious perspective.⁴ Like ‘experience’, it opens a window onto the interaction of individual and society, individual processes of memorialization and remembrance, as well as the collective evocation of memories and their shaping of individual memory.

The relationship between religion and memory can be investigated through the practice of oath-taking, a particularly sophisticated social tool in ancient Greece. It concerns, in fact, both the status of social trust and problematic intercourses between gods and human beings, who find in oath a regulated and effective space of interrelation. In this volume, Nicola Cusumano focuses on the tale of the Spartan Glaucus in the *Histories* of Herodotus (“Glaucus and the importance of being earnest. Herodotus 6.86 on memory and trust, oath and pain”), which seems to illustrate the ambivalence of memory, the risks associated with trust, and the efficacy (and limits) of taking an oath based on it.

The paper of Isabella Solima (“The perpetuation of memory in the myths and cults of Artemis in the Peloponnese”) focuses on how the relationship between memory and religion involves Artemis through two significant channels: through her rites, in the religious sphere narrowly speaking, and through her cults, whose institution goes back to historical events.

The theme of recovered sacred memory, central to several ancient cultures of the Mediterranean, allows the legitimization of new states of affairs by representing them simply as ways of recovering the forgotten past. Accordingly, Daniela Bonanno (“Memory lost, memory regained. Considerations on the recovery of sacred texts in Messenia and in biblical Israel: a comparison”) focuses on how the fourth book of Pausanias’ *Periegesis* may be read as a journey across the collective memory of the Messenian *ethnos*, condemned to a painful diaspora for three hundred years.

Inscriptions represent a useful source for reconstructing the cults, rituals, and religious mentality of the ancient world. Gian Franco Chiai (“The origins and deeds of our gods: inscriptions and local historical-religious memories in the Hellenistic and Roman world”) offers in his paper an overview of the epigraphical testimonies of the Hellenistic and Roman eras as well as a reconstruction of the different strategies of communication employed by the sacral texts (confessional inscriptions, *aretalogiai*, prayers etc.) in their local contexts.

According to Daniela Motta (“Heroic memory and *polis*: Achilles and Athena in Zosimus’ *Historia Nova*”), at a time when most people believed in the power of a holy man’s intercession to save a city from barbarians or natural disasters, the memory of archaic heroes apparently continued to be worshipped by the last pagans. Two passages from Zosimus’ *Historia Nova* (IV 18 and V 6) tell us how Achilles saved Athens: these events, told only by Zosimus, are of great importance to the historian, according to whom the neglect of Roman ancestral religion brought about the decline of the empire. Zosimus probably draws on Eunapius, and the story of Athens’ preservation through observance of ancient cults, probably arising from a Neoplatonist context, highlights the cultural and religious role of the *polis* in Eunapius’ outlook.

4 Hölkeskamp 2001; Chaniotis 2005; Diefenbach 2007; Lucarelli 2007; but see now Rüpke 2012; Galinsky 2013.

Individually deviant religious behaviour is observed and criticized by ancient authors, particularly when it takes place in public temples. Jörg Rüpke's chapter ("On religious experiences that should not happen in sanctuaries") points to technical installations which contradict the norms on behaviour in temples as formulated by first-century philosophers. He explores the conceptualisation and utilisation of images as a key to understanding the behaviour described. It is 'experience' which serves as the central concept for this endeavour.

The contribution of Marlis Arnhold ("Group settings and religious experiences") addresses the topic of religious experiences via the settings created by collective agents, and explores how different options were used to create atmospheres and spaces which could potentially contribute to and effect religious experiences. In this, not only the structure and size of a group played a role, but also the choice of cult and rituals, as well as the design of the spatial settings required for the worship. For example, a *mithraeum* differed highly from a *podium* temple regarding the inclusion and exclusion of cult attendants. But spatial arrangements and furnishing also influenced the atmospheres in which rituals were performed, which often required more than one active agent. Thus many actions helping to create atmospheres which could lead to religious experiences depended on the collective, whereas the settings often were the product of individual beneficence and initiative.

As Attilio Mastrocinque notes in his contribution ("Dionysos and religious experiences in *Bona Dea* rituals"), Roman Dionysiac sarcophagi often represent the wedding of Bacchus and Ariadne. Many features of their reliefs depict precisely what Ovid's *Fasti* 4.313–30 narrates of the myth of Omphale and Hercules. The Greek hero appears as sleeping or drunk, while the Satyrs or Faunus-Pan are lusting after him. He sometimes wears a necklace, and Omphale can also appear. The imagery of sarcophagi is not only fantasy or a representation of hopes for a happy afterlife, but also an image of what the Romans thought of Maenadic rituals of Fauna, Faunus' wife or daughter. Such rituals were properly the preparation for a wedding, like the scene, depicted on many sarcophagi, where Ariadne is discovered by Faunus before Bacchus' arrival. In these rituals, intrusions of cross-dressed men are known. These ceremonies were supposed to take place in a wilderness setting, probably in a cave.

Charles Guittard's analysis ("From the *Curia* on the Palatine hill to the *Regia* on the *Forum*: the itinerary of the *Salii* as a war ritual") focuses on one of the oldest *collegia* in Rome, the *Salii*, a priesthood related to the sacred rhythm of war and to spectacular rites performed twice a year. At the beginning of March, a procession gathered in the *Curia* of the Palatine Hill and proceeded to the *Regia* in the *forum* to hold a sacrifice with the *Pontifex Maximus* and the *Virgines saliares* in the *sacra-rium Martis*, in honour of the god of war. The whole month was marked by a series of feasts related to warfare: *Mamurratia*, *Equirria*, *Quinquatrus*, *Armilustrium*, *Tubilustrium*. In October, when the campaigning season came to an end, the rituals were performed in reverse order.

Valentino Gasparini ("Staging religion. Cultic performances in (and around) the Temple of Isis in Pompeii") explores the ritual dynamics experienced inside and around the sanctuary of Isis in Pompeii, and the way they shaped its architecture as well as its relationship with the surrounding urban fabric (the so-called "Theatres

Quarter”). The paper aims to offer some original ideas on the complexity of these rites by recreating, through an archaeological perspective, a kaleidoscopic world made of a variegated emotional and even “physical” appropriation, where music, dance and scenic representations transformed the sanctuary itself into a theatrical *orchestra*, and the staircase, the altar, and the *pronaos* into a sort of stage.

These two panels of the annual meeting of the European Association for the Study of Religion (EASR) at Messina in 2009 started a (not exclusively) Italian-German cooperation which led to the present book. We are grateful to the authors of these ten articles who readily embarked on the long path of reworking and translating their original talks, and to the editors of the series for remaining patient with this long process of exchange. Kelly Shannon, Oxford/Erfurt (financed by the German Science Foundation – DFG – within the framework of the International Research Group “Religious Individualization in Historical Perspective” – KFG 1013), linguistically revised all chapters, and we are most grateful to her, too. Maximilian Gutberlet compiled the Index. We also would like to thank Giulia Sfameni Gasparro, who took the trouble to outline the intellectual context of the conference for this volume.

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