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Memorizing the Past and Writing Religion in the Roman Republic

Introduction

Deuteronomistic historiography and the traditions of historiography and writing on religion that were developed in the western Mediterranean, particularly at Rome, have never been compared. I will argue in this chapter that such a comparison is worth undertaking, even though I will not do it myself. Instead, I will present a review of Roman historiographic developments that focus on religion to identify agendas and issues that might prove fruitful for a future comparative analysis with deuteronomistic historiography. The evidence to be examined belies popular assumptions about the lack of a presence of linear notions of time, a historical perspective on religious beliefs and practices, and the spread of universalist notions in Roman culture, which are traits commonly attributed to the biblical traditions and deuteronomistic and prophetic texts in particular. The relationship between history-writing and cultural memory in Roman society will be highlighted. By employing the concept of "cultural" rather than "collective" memory, I am focusing on the media and the individual and institutional agents of communicated remembrances and the varieties of forms – historiography, the special focus here, included – the latter can take. Yet, as I will argue in this first part of my chapter, it must not be forgotten that individual memory, which appropriates, rejects, and modifies social memories, is the underlying basis for the way human beings deal with and construct the past.

Such a comparison is not a comparison of contemporaneous developments. It was only at the beginning of the third century BCE that Appius Claudius Caecus improved the Latin script so that it better reproduced the sound of Latin speech by using the letter *G* to distinguish the hard, guttural *C* from the soft one and adjusting the script to the altered pronunciation of intervocalic *S* as *R* (rhotacism). But it was Quintus Fabius Pictor who produced what probably was the first extant and substantial historical work in the Greek language written in Rome, having found in Greek the model for relating a consecutive history of a

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city.[1] He devoted much space to the portrayal of the religious activity of the political elite, probably because he conceived such rituals to be an important element of what for him had to be the subject of the narrative: the "common cause" *(res publica)* relating to the city of Rome.[2] Subsequent Roman historians, including those writing in Latin from the mid-second century onwards, remained true to this interest.[3]

This does not mean that clans' memories of their respective achievements played no role. Families and their male young no doubt had long made heroes of their (male) ancestors in their own sung traditions. Families began to provide accounts of such heroic deeds in highly truncated form in tomb inscriptions, such as the one in the François Tomb at Etruscan Vulci at the end of the fourth century BCE[4] and those on sarcophagi in the tomb of the members of the family of the Cornelii Scipiones at Rome in the following century.[5] These memories did not remain confined to the family circle. At least from the second half of the fourth century BCE, aristocrats adopted the somewhat older Greek practice of representing the claims of both celebrated ancestors and of living individuals in the form of statues outside their houses[6] and even occasionally in monumental contexts.[7]

It had initially been victorious commanders who had been driven into the city in the guise of "living statues," fully dressed and posing like a statue, who subsequently were to be honored with an actual statue on the Capitol. The granting of such a triumphal procession depended on a decision of the clans assembled in the Senate. With the exacerbation of social difference and competitiveness during and after the Second Punic War (218–201 BCE), the constraint that had tied permission to erect a statue in a public space to particular military services or the exercise of senior magisterial functions progressively tightened. In 158 BCE, censors removed from the Forum any statues that had not been authorized by senatorial decision.[8] In the same year, an attempt was made to forbid women the use of excessively ostentatious jewellery, an action that was indicating the breadth of the process of differentiation.

1 For an overview, see Rüpke 2014b, 69–70; 97–101.

2 See e. g. frags. 3 and 5 Beck/Walter (Dreams of Aeneas), frag. 7a (Plutarch, *Rom.* 7.2); 7b (Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Ant. rom.* 1.79.13) (ritual practices of Romulus); frag. 15 (Livy 1.55.8) (financing of the Capitoline Temple).

3 See Levene 1993; and Davies 2004.

4 Coarelli 1983; Holliday 1993; and Musti 2005.

5 Pepe and Moretti 2015.

6 For full accounts of the phenomenon, see Ma 2013. For Rome, see Stewart 2003.

7 Miano 2011.

8 Pliny, *Nat.* 34.30–31; Sehlmeyer 1999, 152–61.

Almost at the same time, the Greek Polybius observed how aristocratic families in Rome displayed ancestors who were either actually or supposedly celebrated for victories or magisterial offices in the form of "living statues" once more, using paid actors to play the dead personalities. They were presented at the central, public place of assembly called *comitium* on the Forum, which also was the area of elite housing. Thus, the "living statues" were displayed virtually on their own front doorsteps but deliberately in public space; here, speeches were delivered in honor of the ancestors represented and afterwards, the "living statues" would be led in procession through the city to the site of cremation.[9] It was the use of "living statues" and the accompanying rituals and wax masks that were used in the funeral procession and displayed with associated speeches or inscriptions in the semi-public chamber of the atrium that kept alive or initially awakened memories of family members and individuals both inside and outside the immediate family circle. The visible presence of such exemplary characters could act as an incentive for later generations to follow in their footsteps and would act as a proof of that family's suitability for such offices in the eyes of the clients who needed to vote for them.[10]

But memory did not remain memory merely of and within families. The first attempts to write a common Roman history coincided with a period of intense conflict and confrontation with other, more distant societies and cultural practices. Roman commanders and their troops advanced beyond Sicily and Sardinia as far as Spain and North Africa; after the Second Punic War, they entered Greek territories near and far and already in the second century BCE established themselves in southern Gaul (France), Asia Minor, and the Mediterranean seaboard of Spain. Direct or indirect contacts extended as far as Palestine and Egypt, and slaves, merchants, ambassadors, and occasionally even fighting soldiers from those areas went to Italy. Cultural diversity was not something learned about merely by reading Herodotus or Hellanicus of Mytilene;[11] it became part of a victor's triumphal self-representation, whether in temples erected especially for the purpose or in his own villa, perhaps in the peristyle, the portico around the garden. Greeks went to Rome and remained as doctors or teachers of reading and writing to young men who did not know whether they would emulate or outdo their fathers in positions that would allow them to bring home fortunes greater than those achieved by other clans. Thus, cultural contacts

9 Polyb. 6.53. On this interpretation of the *funus publicum*, see Rüpke 2006c; Rüpke 2008b.
10 On the *memoria* and its incentivizing effect within the great families, see Sallustius, *Iug.* 4.5–6.
11 See Cancik 2012.

were not limited to distant theatres of war but were present, if not omnipresent, in Rome.

Under such circumstances, Greek narratives that linked the present condition of a city to common beginnings, like the one Philochorus had provided for Athens,[12] were attractive. Writers active in Rome and wishing to demonstrate that the collaborations and rivalries between the clans had been preceded by a common history were drawn to follow the model of Greek foundation histories and to relocate as many important institutions as possible into the city's early years.[13] In his work called "Annals," the early-second century BCE poet Ennius introduced a second principle in his epic account of Roman history, which subsequently became prominent in Latin-language historiography. This was the annual pattern, which included the yearly changing of senior magisterial posts. Such an organisation of an historical account need not restrict itself to the presentation of some original innovators and inventors, as in myth. Instead, writers of continuous histories were able to feature large numbers of protagonists who entered the scene with the beginning of a new year, providing responsibility as much as dating. This literary innovation extended into the religious sphere as well, including information about new temples, new rituals, and new priesthoods.

No less interested in the past were those who, from the mid-second century BCE onwards, compiled statutes describing in detail particular institutions or procedures on the basis of records of magistrates or priests and their own intuition. Quintus Fabius Maximus Servilianus wrote about "pontifical law" and Marcus Iunius Congus about "prerogatives of office." Sergius Fabius Pictor wrote about "the law of pontiffs," listing "the following deities invoked by a *flamen* when he performs the Ceres sacrifice to Tellus and Ceres: the field-sweeper, the one who ploughs again, the furrow-maker, the sower, the over-plougher, the harrower, the hoer, the weeder, the cutter, the collector, the storer, [and] the one who brings forth stored grain."[14] In his capacity of being a *flamen Quirinalis,* a priest of Quirinus, Pictor was a member of the pontiffs,[15] and the existence of records maintained by this priesthood most likely stimulated him to create such a systematization. Subsequently, however, others followed this lead of self-reflexivity and systematization. Augurs, priests responsible for divination and above all procedures calculated to ensure prosperity and good luck, wrote about auspices

12 For a brief account of atthidography, see Rhodes 1990; briefly on Philochorus, see Brodersen 2013.

13 A variation on the theories of Ungern-Sternberg 1988, 262–65. See also Ungern-Sternberg 2008, 528.

14 Fabius Pictor *Iur.* frag. 6 Seckel/Kübler (Serv. auct. *Georg.* 1.21).

15 For a full account of this identification: Rüpke 2008a, no. 1600.

and augural law.[16] In both cases, the systematization of religious practices went hand in hand with the study of the past, either in the archives of one's own priesthood or in general historiography.

Memory turned into history is traceable in written form from the beginning of the third century BCE onwards. As already mentioned, we have evidence of honorific funerary inscriptions, increasing in scale with the sarcophagi and *elogiae* to the Scipiones, from the end of the fourth century BCE. The earliest known funerary oration (*laudatio funebris*), in fragmentary form and thus, presumably a speech recorded in writing, dates from 221 BCE; it concerns the twice consul and – this information is, however, absent from the textual fragment – *pontifex maximus* L. Caecilius Metellus. By the middle of the third century, the *pontifex maximus* Ti. Coruncanius began to record pontifical *commentarii,* protocols of changes in memberships, prodigies observed, and decisions taken. Ascription of agency to the very actors, specific priesthoods within the net of ever more formalized and differentiated authorities, seems to have been the dominant function. Thus, we know, that in 275 or 274 BCE, L. Postumius Albinus[17] was the priest called "Rex sacrorum" who witnessed the introduction of a new divinatory practice within haruspicy. Etruscan priests who specialized in the inspection of entrails started to pay attention to the heart of a victim in their scrutiny of entrails.[18]

These developments need to be viewed within a larger framework. By the end of the Republic, without doubt, incipient processes of what I have called rationalization[19] can be observed, employing the instruments of Greek linguistics, philology, and philosophy to systematize second-order thinking about religion in Cicero's Constitution, his theological triptychon, *De natura deorum, De divinatione* and *De fato*, or in Varro's *Antiquitates rerum divinarum*, placed aside his *Antiquitates rerum humarum*. The concentration of texts within a decade, including Lucretius' *De rerum natura* posthumously edited by Cicero, is as significant for the strength of the development as for its utterly provincial character. We are talking here only about Rome, that is, one of the many intellectual centers of the ancient Mediterranean. Places like Athens, Pergamon, and Alexandria – to illustrate the participation of three continents – had witnessed comparable developments even earlier. We are talking about a small intellectual elite engaged as much in written

16 See a more complete account in Rawson 1985; Rüpke 2012.

17 Rüpke 2008a, no. 2818.

18 Pliny, *Nat.* 11.186.

19 Rüpke 2011a. Using Max Weber's notion of types of rationality, several processes of systematization of practices and beliefs can be observed that need not follow Aristotelian logic but which produce organized lists or descriptions of names of gods as much as rules for magisterial or priestly conduct.

as in real face-to-face communication in this third-order reflection *on* religion that in a history of religion, must be regarded as *part of* religion, as we have learned from Mary Beard, John Scheid, and Denis Feeney.[20]

History not only is a mighty instrument for ordering the past in academic research but has much wider importance. It is the claim of this chapter that the historicization of religion was an important element in the creation of a concept of religion in the late Roman republic and was able to provide new identities. This claim presupposes a concept of "history" that needs some explanation before I begin to analyze the Roman evidence.

History is widespread, even if not universal in its specific forms of narratives, of organized historiography.[21]

> There is no human culture without a constitutive element of common memory. By remembering, interpreting, and representing the past peoples understand their present-day life and develop a future perspective on themselves and their world. "History" in this fundamental and anthropologically universal sense is a culture's interpretive recollection of the past serving as a means to orient the group in the present.[22]

While a group's account of its past and its particular recollections of itself are not the only means of achieving orientation and constructing a coherent identity, historical narratives generated by a given group seem to be important for many groups. Familial or ethnic groups, social movements, or political organizations tell different stories, histories, for whatever purpose.[23] Others might or might not have a place in these histories; they might but need not overlap. The orientation toward the future might be explicit or implicit. Understandably, religious convictions contribute enormously to their adherents' or cultures' conceptualizing and narrating of the past – a past that in such beliefs is a past predefined by god(s) or seen as repeating itself but which might also be conceived of as a period for God or the gods to test humans. Such historical narratives are furthered by

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20 Beard 1986; 1987; 1991; Scheid 1992; and Feeney 1998.

21 There are alternatives to textual narrative, even if such narrative is crucial and probably indispensable for the generation of a concept of time and historical consciousness; see Ricoeur 1984–85. Ritual can be an important way to act out the past dramatically in a mode of memorizing or re-presentation. Images can focus on constellations and scenes, pointing to and systematizing previous narratives, or even gain narrative powers. On narrative sequences in ancient reliefs, see Torelli 1982 and Hussy 2007.

22 Rüsen 1996, 8. To this definition the element of space must be added; see Torre 2002.

23 See the concept of "minority histories" and "subaltern histories" used by Chakrabarty (2008, esp. 97–113). In contrast to Chakrabarty, I am more interest in the co-existence and interchanges than in the problem of criticizing one dominating account.

professionals in their historiographic enterprises, monumentalized by large-scale monuments,[24] memorized in school and bodily exercise,[25] and commemorated in public speech[26] and rituals.

The same efforts to interpret and identify oneself as a “city” or “nation” through one’s past could be undertaken by or for religious communities. Thus, contemporary historical practices, to use a term that does not restrict history to narrative, or later historiography could construe “confessions” as we know them for early modern Europe or “religions.” This implies the creation of boundaries and the stressing of differences. Here, then, is my interest in identifying a historicization of religion in the late Roman republic: Such a practice would be an important element of any third-order process to develop a concept of religion.[27] But that is not all.

Narratives of the past were and are present in many different forms, myth and historiography being the most important of them. I suggest history can be differentiated from myth as a practice that not only narrates a past but applies a temporal or even chronological framework to it. On that basis, some consequences have to be considered. Using a chronological framework, history allows isolated stories to be related to each other by assigning them dates. For antiquity, this is not an easy task, given the variety of eras, typically based on local rulers, in use. Evidently, an era based on the counting of the periods of office of leading magistrates or kings indicates concurrence rather than distances in time.[28] Thus, the notion of historical time might vary.[29] Exemplarity, for instance, the excellence and paradigmatic value of some action or person, is a quality of the past that relates the past to the present in a rather intensive way. This was popular far into the early modern period. By introducing contingency, however, history allows one to stress the pastness of the past, to stress its distance rather than its normative presence. But how could it be used as a source of legitimization and identity?

To answer this question, we have to step back. The evidence of the many historical accounts known or still existing suggests that conflicts and contesting claims by smaller or larger groups or people have been triggering the production

24 See Hartmann 2010 for a broader range of object-related practices; topographical places are privileged (2010, 32).

25 See Connerton 1989, 72–95.

26 See Bücher 2006, esp. 137–40.

27 Franziska Metzger (2010, 217–79) has analyzed such a process for Swiss Catholic historiography of the nineteenth century.

28 See Möller and Rüpke 2002.

29 This is delineated as a central problem by Lianeri 2011 in her introduction but not sufficiently dealt with in the volume as a whole.

of historical narratives most frequently and has led to narratives with new versions or different accents of past events. History, then, tends to be contested or endangered and should never come in a singular form.[30] Critically from the start onwards, history, as opposed to mere memory, introduces contingency in order to question the established truth of others. To introduce competition into the legitimizing repository of the past is a powerful instrument, but risky. Thus, some epochs and some areas are more prone to historiography than others.

Here the historicization of religion comes into play again. In general, religion does not seem a very likely candidate for historicization. Meta-historical claims, gods outside of time and immune to change, and traditional authority in a Weberian sense seem to be the hallmarks of religion, as indicated by the shape of many myths. They frequently tell stories of a distant past that establish norms binding for today, even though this past is categorically different from today and was another age. Nevertheless, they remain binding for the present based on the very fact of their enormous age. As an argument, old age does not easily go together with change over time. Rituals established in the beginning should have no history since they are assumed not to have changed. In Rome and in similar cases of local, city-based cultures, polytheistic religion, which is an embedded religion of a city in particular, is an unlikely example for a strategy that seems typical at best for monotheistic, prophetic religion comprising a theology of a history of salvation. What are the reasons for this rise of history of and in *religion*, if the latter is a cultural practice establishing order and fighting contingency? If there has been a historicization of religion, one has to ask what purpose it was to serve. Is it critical of religious practices, for instance sacrifice, shown to be not primordial? Is it delegitimizing those social groups or classes that fill priestly positions? Is it preparing a return to origins after a long history of deviance? Instances of such strategies do not lack in the historiography of religion.[31]

To answer the questions and thus formulate a more precise perspective for comparison with deuteronomistic historiography, a closer look at writing about religion in the Roman republic in a manner that was sensitive to change over time is necessary. As indicated previously, from the late third century BCE onwards, Romans developed a historiography of the rise of their city along the lines of Greek historiography.[32] The earliest examples were written in Greek, but the tradition

30 Such a plural is, of course, to be differentiated from serial historiography in the forms of serial biographies or hagiography. See e. g. Papaconstantinou 2010 for Byzantine and Syriac hagiography.
31 See the studies in Otto, Rau and Rüpke 2015.
32 See Grethlein 2010.

developed, culminating in the definitive account of Roman history by Titus Livy in the late first century BCE. His is a text full of religious data, for example, prodigies, temples, accessions to priesthoods, and rituals performed by magistrates presented in list form at the beginning of a year in annalistic fashion or as part of larger narratives of complex events. Although religious data were an important element of Roman historiography, Livy's interest was not in religious change but in religious practices and emotions as factors in secular history and as evidence in arguments in secular historiography.[33]

An option for the historicization of religion had, however, been opened even earlier. As part of urban history, religion could be seen as an *institutum*, something "set up" like practices introduced and traditionalized by humans in the course of establishing and organizing a city, which were even formally regulated or monumentalized in temples.[34] Such a view was not simply a given fact but the consequence of even more fundamental historicizing reflection. Like any others, religious events could easily be remembered in a piecemeal fashion, which is insufficient for detecting "historicization." A necessary precondition for the latter process is a sequencing and temporalizing of events that reflects an awareness of change. There must be a common subject to the events that are narrated, whose identity must remain in place over the course of change. This was the city, and "religion" specifically served as a concept embracing those practices that were somehow related to "gods" and divine ancestors.[35] As will be seen in the following, the historicization of religion and the development of a vague concept of religion went hand in hand. There are some incipient forms of what I would call historicization in the second century BCE, which I will briefly present, before I concentrate on the first century BCE and Marcus Terentius Varro's *Antiquitates rerum diuinarum*, a fully-fledged historicization of religion that is strategic in a particular historical situation.

Precedents in the Second Century BCE

The historiographic treatment of an incident in 181 BCE is illuminating. In that year it was claimed that the sarcophagus of the second king of Rome, Numa, had been found and interest focused immediately on books found with the body. Against all chronological possibility, the supposedly Pythagorean contents of the

33 Davies 2004.
34 Cancik 2008, 30.
35 See Rüpke 2015.

books rendered Numa a pupil of the famous Greek philosopher, Pythagoras. The incident, which put an authoritative figure of Roman religion firmly within the realm of Greek philosophical thinking, indicates the lack of existence of a unified chronological framework for Roman history at the time. After intensive public scrutiny, the books were burnt.[36] The event was a clear attempt at pseudepigraphy whose political aims go beyond the scope of the current study.[37]

The views on the no longer extant books changed in antiquity.[38] For the earliest stages we have to rely on a passage in Pliny the Elder (*Nat.* 13.84–86):

> … *libros eius* (scil. Numae) *repertos P. Cornelio L. f. Cethego, M. Baebio Q. f. Tamphilo coss. – eosque combustos a Q. Petilio praetore, quia philosophiae scripta essent. hoc idem tradit Piso Censorius primo commentariorum, sed libros septem iuris pontificii totidemque Pythagoricos fuisse, Tuditanus quattuordecim Numae decretorum fuisse.*
> … his books were found under the consuls P. Cornelius L.f. Cethegus and M. Babius Q. f. Tamphilus and they were burnt by the praetor Q. Petilius, because they were books of philosophy. Piso Censorius reports the same in his first commentary, but said that there had been seven books of pontifical law and the same number of Pythagorean philosophy. Tuditanus maintains that there had been fourteen books of decrees of Numa. (my translation)

Whereas the only potential contemporary, Cassius Hemina, speaks of Pythagorean (Greek) philosophy, by the last third of the second century BCE, Calpurnius Piso and Sempronius Tuditanus added or concentrated on an originally Roman element in the small library, raising the number of books from three to two times seven (that would to grow to two times twelve by the first century BCE). Tuditanus's claim that there were fourteen books of "decrees of Numa" added a clearly historical dimension to the transmitted memory. It reflects a move away from timeless veracities put in writing by a famous man to what is seen as a datable change and positivistic law. Nearly a century later, according to Varro, the same event was conceptualised as the finding of books, in which *sacrorum institutorum causae,* "the reasons for the institutionalisation of cults," had been written down.[39] In the middle of the first century BCE, historical change was seen to result from situational circumstances and the motives of agents.

36 Livy 40.29.
37 See Rosen 1985; Pailler 1988, 623–703; Rüpke 1995, 372–73, n. 16. The books took sides in a cultural conflict about the place of Rome in the Mediterranean world after the victories of the Second Punic War and the following wars on Greek soil. In the guise of "historical texts," they made a systematic argument about how things should be interpreted and arranged.
38 I follow Rosenberger (2003) in his reconstruction of different phases in the process of reception.
39 As quoted by Augustin, *Civ.* 7.34.

Evidence for the outlook of individual members of an educated elite a century earlier comes from a single source. In 189 BCE Marcus Fulvius Nobilior was consul with one Manlius Vulso and assumed military command on the Aetolian front.[40] Tradition records as the most important event of this campaign the siege and capture of the city of Ambracia, north of the Gulf of Actium, and the victor displayed the booty from this particular city in his triumphal procession upon his return in 187 BCE.[41] Fulvius not only brought the treasures home, but probably after reconciling in 179 with Aemilius, his former antagonist and fellow censor, he began the transformation of a temple of Hercules, perhaps Hercules Custos, the "custodian," into a "museum" in the real sense of the term: a *Museion*, a sanctuary of the Muses; the first in Rome.[42] Over the following years he provided it with a columned hall and then installed the statues of the nine Muses taken from Ambracia.[43] Hercules (Custos?) became Hercules Musarum, signifying powerful protection for cultural production – the newly acquired self-image of parts of the Roman elite.

Fulvius also installed a calendar, *fasti*, in the *aedes Herculis Musarum* in the form of a wall painting.[44] The interior of the temple was intended as a meeting place for poets, decorated, with many statues and Greek paintings in addition to the calendar. The few quotations taken from this calendar indicate a dedication formula with a heading that might have run like this:

> The consul and censor M. Fulvius Nobilior set up this calendar after the Aeolian War: Romulus had named ten months, the first in honor of his father and foremother; after having divided the people in older and younger, to ensure that one part should defend the state by advice, the other by arms, he named the third and fourth in honor of both parts; the rest was named by numbers. Numa named the two added from Ianus and the Gods of the Netherworld. A thirteenth month was intercalated according to a law by the consul Acilius in the year 562 CE.

This is not a faithful reconstruction, but a minimum hypothesis able to explain all the quotations from and references to Fulvius's calendar.[45] The cultural product of the calendar is given a history. But is this already a history of religion? It is likely that no contemporaneous, encompassing concept of religion existed that would have formed the basis for an answer. The author of the paint-

40 Livy 37.50; 38.1–11.

41 Livy 39.5.14–16.

42 Pape 1975; and Östenberg 2009.

43 Rüpke 2011b, 88–90 and the critical evaluation of the dating by Feeney (2007, 143, n. 24).

44 Rüpke 2011b, 93–95.

45 Rüpke 2006a; and Rüpke 2011b, 95.

ing added another element, a list of the annual consuls and occasional censors, perhaps beginning with the Gallic sack of Rome, an event marking a second (or even third) birth of Rome. This, clearly, was an attempt at a non-narratival historiography. It condensed and unified the most important and eponymous agents extracted and reworked from historic narratives into a coherent list that yielded sequential dating. As such, it is another instance of a cultural – and historiographical – wider Mediterranean strategy of producing abbreviated histories.[46]

The combination of these elements proves the historicizing significance of a third element and invention of Fulvius's mural calendar. The calendar record *dies natales templorum,* foundation days of urban temples. At Rome, in the half-century that followed the end of the war against Hannibal (201 BCE), temples financed from war booty were springing up like mushrooms. They were donations to the gods that had given victory to the Romans in individual battles, thereby commemorating military success. After they had seen, heard, and smelled the victories in lavish processions and games, Romans saw history in much more tangible terms in those temples.[47] This was a new element in a calendar whose purpose had been to document the political and juridical year. Religious dates had only been included where they affected (or, unexpectedly, did not affect) that purpose. Temple foundations rank highly in the list of those historical events that were the most precisely retained in Rome's collective memory.[48] Temples, however, were also monuments to a god. A temple owned by a deity that usually housed her or his statue was the most tangible sign of that god's presence and a testimony to its relationship with the Roman people. A deity might publicly enter the city as a statue, but frequently, the building of a temple took place first, after which an invitation was extended to such a divine statue to enter its new earthly home. In a polytheistic system open to the addition and multiplication of divine figures, it was the production of a statue and a temple that brought the god into social life, regardless of its earlier ontology.

Our analysis of the introduction of temple-foundation days into the only form of written representation of the calendar, the *fasti*, and the way they were combined with the magistrate lists has shown that there was a historical perspective to this integration of elements formerly alien to the *fasti*. The time-

46 See the analysis of Aubrey Buster (ch. 13 of this volume), focusing on oral performance. Such re-oralization of (abbreviated) history was, however, implied by the fact that the calendar was placed in an assembly room for poets.

47 Cf. Rachel Gilmour's analysis of the role of monuments as construed in the book of Samuel (ch. 9 of this volume).

48 Rüpke 2006a; and 2006b.

less character of the dedication days distributed across the year became transferred to the historical phenomenon of successive temple foundations, and the reading of those events as embodying the history of divine epiphanies and cult diversification acquired a political dimension. In the history of ideas, this kind of inversion is referred to as euhemerism, and it was Ennius, a poet and historian who had been a protégé of Fulvius, who introduced this type of thinking to Rome.

In his treatise, *Euhemerus*, probably written before the beginning of the *Annales* in the latter half of the 180s BCE,[49] Ennius concerned himself directly with the origins of temples and secondarily, annual festivals. He followed a Greek model in his work, and the fragments that survive contain no explicit history of the origins of *dies natales templorum* in the city of Rome. Today, it is difficult to arrive at an appropriate assessment of his position. To modern eyes, such a critique appears downright radical. It may, however, not even have occurred to Ennius and his readers that an explanation of the genesis of the gods and the cult necessarily implied atheism and denial, not to mention a call for action in the real world. This certainly would have been the last thing the temple's patron needed. Despite its critical implications, even for readers in the ancient world,[50] a philosophical treatise such as *Euhemerus* constituted less an attack on religion than the application of historicization to religion. It was a powerful instrument of ordering in a quickly changing world.

The incipient use of historicization must have been apparent already in aetiological myths. These aetiologies, however, tend to remain anecdotal, like the use of historical examples in political rhetoric.[51] Ennius' *Annales* replaced anecdotal forms of clan and tribal memory (whether in the form of inscriptions or of *laudationes funebres*) with a coherent and sequential history.[52] This is what the Fulvian *fasti* did as well, although in this case, the means used was not a narrative but the chronographic form of the calendar.

49 See Skutsch 1985, 3–6.

50 E. g. Cicero, *Nat. d.* 1.119; see Winiarczyk 1990; and 1994.

51 Stressed by Jehne (2002, 71) as characteristic for the first century BCE, too.

52 Contra Elliott 2010, it is not helpful to apply the quality of "universal history" to Ennius's *Annales* on the basis of his use of Greek models and his paradigmatic description of events of Roman history.

Varronian History and Systematics

With Varro's *Antiquitates rerum divinarum,* the sixteen books of *Antiquities of Things Divine*, we reach full blown systematization of religion at the end of the Republic. The work was dedicated in 46 BCE to Julius Caesar.[53] Does it include historicizing of religion? My claim is yes, but I admit that the thesis needs argumentation. I would not base such a claim on the aetiological stories preserved, like the origins of the Sibylline books at Rome (frag. 56). Aetiology is a very special type of narrative dealing with the past. It concentrates on a moment of origin that is thought to explain the presence of an institution or monument sufficiently, be it fully in use or just a dimly noticed survival. Aetiological myths make good stories, but they tend to remain isolated. A dozen aetiological myths do not make a history. Varro clearly transgresses the collection of such stories. How far is difficult to tell, since only snippets of his sixteen-volume work survive as isolated quotations by later, frequently polemical[54] authors, Augustine of Hippo taking pride of place and Tertullian runner-up. I gratefully rely on Cardauns's edition and accept his assumptions that the indications of these two later authors about Varro's work and some sequences of quotations are reliable.[55]

The existence of two chronologically ordered passages has been acknowledged since Agahd's edition of the first and last books.[56] Fragments 35 to 39 of the first book of Varro's *Antiquitates rerum divinarum* list the introduction of deities and cults into the city of Rome by the earliest kings:

> *(35) (Romulus) constituit Romanis deos Ianum Iovem Martem Picum Faunum Tiberinum Herculem*
> *(36) Titus Tatius addidit Saturnum Opem Solem Lunam Vulcanum Lucem ... Cluacinam*
> *(37, sc. addidit) Numa tot deos et tot deas*
> *(38, sc. regnante Numa) nondum tamen aut simulacris aut templis res divina apud Romanos constabat. (13) Frugi religio et pauperes ritus et nulla Capitolia ... sed temporaria de caespite altaria et vasa adhuc Samia ... nondum enim tunc ingenia Graecorum atque Tuscorum fingendis simulacris urbem inundaverant.*
> *(39) Hostilius ... rex deos et ipse novis Pavorem atque Pallorem propitiandos (sc. introduxit)*
> Romulus established for the Romans as gods Ianus, Iupiter, Mars, Picus, Faunus, Tiberinus, and Hercules.
> Titus Tatius added Saturnus, Ops, Sol, Luna, Vulcanus, Lux ... Cloacina.
> Numa added as many male as female deities.'

53 On Varro, see Cardauns 2001; for the *Antiquities*, Cardauns 1978; Jocelyn 1982; Lehmann 1997; and Rüpke 2005b. For his contemporary reception, see Baier 1997.
54 See e. g. O'Daly 1994.
55 Cardauns 1976.
56 Agahd 1898.

> During the reign of Numa religion did not yet consist of images or temples with the Romans. A parsimonious piety, poor rites, no Capitol-like splendor, but temporary, made of turf, and Samian (i. e. terracotta) vessels, the city of Rome was not yet flooded by the ingenuity of Greeks and Etruscans to form images. (my translation)[57]

This sequence originally was longer, as I will show shortly.

The second chronological sequence occurs in book 15. According to the reconstruction of Burkhard Cardauns, fragments 214 to 221 add further cults, enlarging the chronological realm to Hercules's visit to Rome.

> *(219) Sancus propter hospitalitatem a rege T. Tatio fanum consecutus*
> *(220b) Laren[tin]a ... scortum meritorium fuit, sive dum Romuli nutrix [et id]eo lupa quia scortum, sive dum Herculis amica est, et iam ...* [the fragment is much longer].
> Sancus received a sanctuary from the king Titus Tatius for (honoring) hospitality.
> Larentina was a prostitute with merits, either while she was the nurse of Romulus (and for that one talks of "she-wolf," because that is the name given to a prostitute, or while she was the girl-friend of Hercules) and .... (my translation)[58]

The few historical data roughly conform to the narratives found in general historiographic literature of the time. In his listing of sacred places in *On Latin Language*, Varro himself refers to his having derived the information about the introduction of Sabine deities by Titus Tatius from "annals" (*Ling.* 5.74). Such information is consistent with the combination of lists of consuls and temple foundations in the *fasti* of the temple of Hercules Musarum, where objects and actors are related chronologically, suggesting, we can suppose, causation and responsibility. Using such data derived from such lengthy visible lists in books 1 and 15, Varro places his own work in the field of historiographic genres. But there is more evidence for a historiographic strand beyond these two lists. The narratives quoted so far are embedded in a historically sensitive framework. The loss of knowledge about gods, the loss of memory, forms the starting point for the entire enterprise:

> *se timere ne pereant (sc. dei), non incursu hostili, sed civium neglegentia, de qua illos velut ruina liberari a se (dicit) et in memoria bonorum per eius modi libros recondi atque servari utiliore cura, quam Metellus de incendio sacra Vestalia et Aeneas de Troiano excidio penates liberasse praedicatur.*
> He was afraid that the gods might perish, not by attack by enemies, but by the citizens' negligence. He says that they are liberated from the latter like from a ruin by him, and the gods would be stored and preserved in the memory of the good men by books of this kind. This

57 Varro, *Ant. rer. div.* frags. 35–37. Cardauns = frag. 39a Agahd, my translations.
58 Varro, *Ant. rer. div.*, frag. 219 and 220b Cardauns.

> was a more useful task than the fact that Metellus was praised to have rescued from fire the sacred things of Vesta, Aeneas the Penates from the destruction of Troy. (my translation)[59]

It is significant that Varro here recalls two layers of disasters that might have interrupted memory but ultimately did not: the destruction of Troy, which he dates to the middle of the twelfth century BCE, and the destruction of the temple of Vesta at the end of the third century BCE.[60] What is threatened by *ignobilitas,* "obscurity" (frag. 2b), is not a *philosophia perennis,* an unchangeable truth already discovered by the ancients. Varro is more radical; in his work, religion is secondary both chronologically and logically to the foundation of society. Thus, in his view, religious institutions are products of the course of time. Such contingency, however, does not rob them of their obligatory character for all those who live after the founders' decisions:

> *ea, quae scribunt poetae, minus esse quam ut populi sequi debeant; quae autem philosophi, plus quam ut ea vulgum scrutari expediat. Quae sic abhorrent … ut tamen ex utroque genere ad civiles rationes adsumpta sint non pauca. Quare quae erunt communia cum populis, una cum civilibus scribemus; e quibus maior societas debet esse nobis cum philosophis quam cum poetis … physicos … utilitatis causa scripsisse, poetas delectationis.*
> *(12) non se illa iudicio suo sequi, quae civitatem Romanam instituisse … si eam civitatem novam constitueret, ex naturae potius formula deos nominaque eorum se fuisse dedicaturum …Sed iam quoniam in vetere populo esset, acceptam ab antiquis nominum et cognominum historiam tenere, ut tradita est, debere se … et ad eum finem illa scribere ac perscrutari, ut potius eos magis colere quam despicere vulgus velit.*
> (11) What the poets write is less than what the peoples ought to follow; what the philosophers write is more than what is useful for the common people to investigate. These writings are so different, but nevertheless quite a few items are taken from both of them for civic purposes. Therefore we will describe those of universal value together with our civic institutions. In all these we are closer to the philosophers as with the poets; the philosophers of nature have written for utility, the poets for pleasure.
> He is not to follow his own judgement concerning the institutions of the Roman polity … If he would found a new polity, he will have been dedicating gods and their names according to nature … But as he is living in an old people, he has to cling to the accepted history of names and surnames, as it has been transmitted … and he has written and researched all this to the purpose that the simple people would venerate these gods rather than despise them.[61]

History does not stop at the end of the founding phase. Politics and art history mark major steps in the history of religion. The introduction of divine images

59 Varro, *Ant. rer. div.*, frag. 2a Cardauns.
60 For the political significance of Rome's Trojan ancestorship, see Erskine 2001 and Battistoni 2010.
61 Varro, *Ant. rer. div.* frags. 11–12.

is such a step, chronologically related to the building of the large Capitoline temples. It is a major step in itself, marking the transition from the regal into the early Republican period, as stressed in all Roman historiography. Again, such contingent steps are consequential. Images are nice to see but introduce harmful change.

> *antiquos Romanos plus annos centum et septuaginta deos sine simulacro coluisse. Quod si adhuc ... mansisset, castius dii observarentur ... qui primi simulacra deorum populis posuerunt, eos civitatibus suis et metum dempsisse et errorem addidisse.*
> The ancient Romans have venerated the gods for more than 170 years without an image. If they would have kept this practice until today, the gods would be observed in a purer manner. ... Those who first put images of the gods in front of peoples have robbed their polities of fear and added error. (my translation)[62]

The cult addressed to images is a vain activity:

> *dii veri neque desiderant ea (sc. sacra) neque deposcunt, ex aere autem facti, testa, gypso vel marmore multo minus haec curant; carent enim sensu; neque ulla contrahitur, si ea non feceris, culpa, neque ulla, si feceris, gratia.*
> True gods neither need cult nor demand it, those made of bronze, terracotta, plaster or marble care even less. For, they have no senses, and you incur no blame, if you offer no cult, nor thanks, if you do. (my translation)[63]

Varro, who concentrated on language and names, did not reflect on the problem that images are necessary in order to stabilize a complex polytheistic pantheon. Regardless of any evaluation, Varro applies historical reasoning to such processes: Jupiter and Summanus were originally deities of equal power, the first responsible for lightning at daytime and the other at night. Due to the contingent factor of the building of the Capitoline temple, Summanus fell into near oblivion:

> *Romani veteres ... Summanum, cui nocturna fulmina tribuebant, coluerunt magis quam Iovem, ad quem diurna fulmina pertinerent. Sed postquam Iovi templum insigne ac sublime constructum est, propter aedis dignitatem sic ad eum multitudo confluxit, ut vix inveniatur qui Summani nomen, quod audire iam non potest, se saltem legisse meminerit.*
> The old Romans venerated Summanus, to whom they attributed nocturnal lightnings more than Jupiter, to whom the lightnings at daytime belong. But after a famous and fine temple had been built for Jupiter, such a multitude flocked to him because of the dignity of the building that hardly anybody can be found who remembered to at least have read this name, which he could not any longer hear being pronounced. (my translation)[64]

62 Varro, *Ant. rer. div.*, frag. 18. On the implications of the dating, see Van Nuffelen 2010a, 182.
63 Varro, *Ant. rer. div.*, frag. 22.
64 Varro, *Ant. rer. div.*, frag. 42.

Varro might have taken note of the foundation of temples down to his own time. Two fragments survive that relate to foundations from the latter half of the second century BCE:

> *(sc. Felicitati) Lucullus aedem constituit.*
> *(44) censuerant, ne qui imperator fanum, quod in [bell]o vovisset, prius dedicasset quem senatus probasset; ut contigit [M. Aem]ilio, qui voverat Alburno deo.*
> Lucullus built a temple for Luck (Felicitas).
> They ruled that no general should dedicate a sanctuary that he had vowed during a war, before the senate agreed; as it happened to Marcus Aemilius, who had performed a vow for the god Alburnus. (my translation)[65]

Varro was aware of opposite decisions, too. He acknowledged the driving out of Liber Pater (Dionysios) from all of Italy in 186 BCE:

> *saepe censores inconsulto populo <aedes> adsolaverunt. Certe Liberum [patre]m cum sacro suo consules auctoritate non urbe sol[u]mmodo, verum tota Italia eliminaverunt.*
> Frequently the censors leveled temples without asking the people. Surely the consuls drove out Liber Pater and his cult not only from the city but from the whole of Italy on their own authority. (my translation)[66]

For the time immediately preceding the publication of the books, Varro notes the fight between the senate and the general populace about the banning of Egyptian cults from the Capitoline hill:

> *Serapem et Isidem et Arpocratem et Anubem prohibitos Capitolio (Varro commemorat) eorumque <aras> a senatu deiectas nonnisi per vim popularium restructas. (18) Sed tamen et Gabinius consul Kalendis Ianuariis, cum vix hostias probaret prae popularium coetu, quia nihil de Serape et Iside constituisset, potiorem habuit senatus censuram quam impetum vulgi et aras institui prohibuit.*
> Varro reminded his readers that Serapis, and Isis, and Harpocrates, and Anubis were excluded from the Capitoline hill and that their altars were thrown out by the senate and only rebuilt by popular pressure. Nevertheless, on the first of January the consul Gabinius, who could hardly approve of the animal victims, due to the crowd of common people [who supported him] because he had enacted no legislation on Serapis and Isis, had stronger critique from the side of the Senate than support by the common people and forbade to build altars. (my translation)[67]

65 Varro, *Ant. rer. div.*, frags. 43–44.
66 Varro, *Ant. rer. div.*, frag. 45.
67 Varro, *Ant. rer. div.*, frag. 46a.

As before, I rely on the sequence of the fragments given by Tertullian, even if I cannot absolutely preclude the possibility that it was his own ordering. However, such a deep change in the original sequence would have been very unusual in an age of papyrus or parchment scrolls, where quotations are typically given in the sequence of the original rather than as randomly accessed ones.

Varro was interested in the exact dating of the introduction of festivals and reflected over the differences between seasonal dates and the civic calendar. Around a century later, Pliny the Elder displays the same interest, when he refers to the foundation of the Robigalia in the eleventh year of the reign of Numa and of the Floralia in year 516 of the city.[68] For Varro, the introduction of scenic games was of equal interest for him. In book 10 of the *Antiquities of Divine Things*, he discussed the topic and treated it at length in a work of at least two volumes specifically dedicated to the problem, namely, *On the Scenic Origins*.[69]

History and Identity

Historiographical texts are frequently narrations of the history of one's own city or people. In Rome, it was what we might call religious practices and symbols that were historicized in the *fasti* of Ennius and Fulvius and in antiquarian works of the second and first centuries BCE. This literature appears to be an attempt to define a group of practices of a middle-Italian, Hellenized elite as a specifically "Roman" practice and this elite as its authoritative practitioners.[70] Earlier in this article, I theorized that conflicting claims are the primary trigger for creating historical narratives. In the period I am treating, when religion had not yet been established as a clearly differentiated concept, historicization itself became a means of establishing such a concept. We have no indication that specific ritual or theological controversies could be the driving force behind histories of religion, and the lack of "religion" as an established framework for such controversies makes it rather unlikely that they were of importance, if existent.

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68 Pliny, *Nat*. 18.285–86; Varro, *Rust*. 1.1.6.

69 Cens. 17.8.

70 Cf. for comparable Deuteronomistic strategies, see the contribution by Diana Edelman (ch. 2) in this volume.

The precedence of Greek literature must be regarded as the single most decisive factor in Roman historicized writing.[71] (Of course, we have to admit that writing did not comprise all forms of historicizing, even if we include impromptu historical drama). Writing "our" history competed with accounts of Roman history by Greek authors and their interpretations. As a first step, religious practices at Rome were collected and systematized, traditions thus secured and invented.[72] But what about a history of religion? Which ends did it serve?

The painting in the temple of Hercules Musarum might be seen to establish the history of the Roman calendar, Roman temples, and Roman consuls as a subject worthy of literary elaboration. This would clearly imply a "We" of Latin-speaking urban Romans against the backdrop of literature by Greek authors, maybe even of literature in Greek in general.

In Varro, things are much more complicated. I have always read the *Antiquities of Divine things* as relating to Roman religion, but closer reading shows this interpretation to be partial, at best. Augustine discusses the sequence of the treatment of human and divine affairs in the *Antiquities*:

> *Rerum quippe humanarum libros, non quantum ad orbem terrarum, sed quantum ad solam Romam pertinet, scripsit, quos* tamen *rerum divinarum libris se dixit scribendi ordine merito praetulisse …*
> [Varro] wrote the books on human things, which do not concern the whole world, but just Rome, which nevertheless, as he said, he positioned in the order of writing fully justified before the books on divine things … (my translation).[73]

The opposition or paradox implied by Augustine's *tamen* ("nevertheless") works only if a larger than urban, probably a universal orientation of the latter part of the oeuvre is assumed. To talk of "universal" in that period always needs an additional note. The standards of universality were set by Greek thinking, based on the experience of the *oikoumene* ("inhabited region") of the Mediterranean world, Greek colonization, international trade, and the Hellenistic Empires.[74] Beyond

71 For a consideration of certain traits of Greek historiography that are relevant for a discussion of biblical historiography, see the contribution by Łukasz Niesiołowski-Spanò (ch. 14) in this volume.
72 Rüpke 2011a.
73 Aug. *civ.* 6.4, p. 25, 1ines 13–16.
74 The concept of "focalised universality" (Yarrow 2010) acknowledges the development of such a universal outlook, but the concept is easily conflated (cf. Yarrow 2010, 133) with a centristic perspective that does not treat a peripheral development as important in its own right or peripheral agents as on an equal footing. Varro's approach implies a demonstrated interest in treating peripheral events. As Van Nuffelen (2010b) rightly stresses, not all Christian historiography meets

that, the *barbaroi* ("barbarians") remained, peoples only occasionally acknowledged to have human culture.

Varro's universalistic stance is beyond doubt. He frequently uses the plural *civitates* or *urbes*.[75] The philosophical foundation of his arguments is universalistic. He is at pains to define his three types of theology as a Greek, and hence universal, classification.[76] Only on such a basis can one understand Varro's statement that the god who governs everything and is venerated on the Capitoline hill as Jupiter is called by the Jews, literally, by monotheistic and venerators obliged to aniconic cult, by another name (frags. 13–15). Read in this perspective, an astonishing number of fragments do not necessarily imply an urban Roman context.

That is not to say that Varro does not speak about Rome. Clearly, he is Roman and includes Romans in his readership already at the start of his work (e. g. frags. 3, 12). As a Roman, he marks differences from Jews (frag. 16), Chaldaeans (frag. 17), and Greeks like Spartans (frag. 32) and Eleusinians (frag. 271) or the Greeks in general (frag. 200). It should not be forgotten that Roman citizenship had been extended to most of Italy by the time of Varro's writing. Not only does he acknowledge the introduction of Italian deities to Rome by the early kings, but he also deals with a wealth of middle Italian local deities, belittled (and preserved) by Tertullian as *deos decuriones cuiusque municipii*, "town council deities":[77]

Varro was probably as serious here as he was in naming Nona and Decima as goddesses of timely birth in the "ninth" or "tenth" month of pregnancy.[78] Varro could adopt an urban perspective, too. In his introduction to the last book, dedicated to "special and selected deities," he first deals with general notions of gods before he addresses those gods defined by Roman places of worship and statues:

> *de diis … populi Romani publicis, quibus aedes dedicaverunt eosque pluribus signis ornatos notaverunt, in hoc libro scribam, sed ut Xenophanes Colophonios scribit, quid putem, non quid contendam, ponam. hominis est enim haec opinari, dei scire.*
> In this book I will write about the public deities of the Roman people, to whom they have dedicated temples, and mark them out by many images, but, as Xenophanes of Colophon wrote, I say what I believe, not what I claim. A human can merely surmise these things; only a god knows them for sure. (my translation)[79]

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the criteria of universal history despite an implicit universalistic theology of history. For Varro as a Greek scholar, see e. g. Powell 1994, 63.

75 E. g. frags. 5, 9, 18, 20, 68, and 69.

76 See frags. 6–9; Rüpke 2005b.

77 Frag. 33a = Tertullian, *Nat.* 2.8.6; for variant 33b = Tertullian, *Apol.* 24.8, see Rüpke 2011c, 187–88.

78 Frag. 98; see Rüpke 2005a.

79 Aug. *civ*. 7.17, p. 295.22 introducing frag. 228.

Even with their wrong decisions, the old Romans contributed to a very special and binding history of the urban territory and the society built in that place. Narrating in such a manner is deliberately distancing. Varro supports Roman religious tradition from the beginning and the subsequent introduction of images, even if he admits that ancient Romans had made problematic choices in this regard. A traditional religion might be even embarrassing, whether in its use of images or in the old Romans' invention of divine genealogies that presume sexual relationships among gods (frag. 19). Romans would share such a feeling with the Lavinians and their public cult of male genitals:

> *in Italiae compitis quaedam (dicit) sacra Liberi celebrata … ut in eius honorem pudenda virilia colerentur … hoc … membrum per Liberi dies festos cum honore magno plostellis inpositum prius rure in compitis et usque in urbem postea vectabatur. In oppido autem Lavinio unus Libero totus mensis tribuebatur, cuius diebus omnes verbis flagitiosissimis uterentur, donec illud membrum per forum transvectum esset atque in loco suo quiesceret. Cui membro (inhonesto) matrem familias honestissimam palam coronam necesse erat inponere. Sic videlicet Liber deus placandus fuerat pro eventibus seminum, sic ab agris fascinatio repellenda.*
> He says that in crossroads of Italy some Bacchic cults are celebrated … by venerating male genitals in his honor … This genital member was erected on carts and carried along during the festivals of Bacchus with much honor, first at crossroads in the countryside and later even into the city. In the town of Lavinium a whole month is dedicated to Bacchus. During these days all use the most shocking words until this member is driven through the central market place and put to rest in its proper place. The most dignified female head of a family had to crown this undignified member publicly. In this way evidently the god Bacchus was to be made benevolent for the issue of the seeds, and in this way the bewitching was to be warded off. (my translation)[80]

At the beginning of this essay I pointed to the use of history for strengthening groups and boundaries. Whose history did Varro write? For what purpose did he write? The answer is rather surprising. Varro does not use the history of religions to mark boundaries. He seems to be interested in the bridging capital of a shared history, a complex history to which different groups might relate, rather than in the binding capital of a unilinear history of one group only, which sets its members off against all others. This holds true on different levels. Within a universalistic framework, religious traditions of different peoples offer a heritage that might be shared. Fragment 31 names heroes from Africa and of Boetia. As already shown, the same god could be venerated under different names. Even a negative trait like images of the divine is shared by many polities (frag. 18). Roman precepts

80 Varro, *Ant. rer. div.* frag. 262.

for ritual action as well as Greek precepts for ritual abstinence were resources for the solution of human problems (frag. 49–50):[81]

> *(50) et religiones et castus id possunt, ut ex periculo eripiant nostro.*
> *(49) nostro ritu sunt facienda quam †his civilibus Graeco castu.*
> Religious observances and ascetic practices are able to rescue from the danger imminent to us.
> For these civic matters (?) cult is to be performed according to our rite as with Greek standards of purity. (my translation)

I have already pointed to the stress laid upon the importation of Italian deities into Rome by the first kings as well as upon the documentation of contemporary local deities of middle-Italian townships. Varro, born 116 BCE, had witnessed the start of the Italian civil war as a military tribune and was very aware of the problem of the unification of Italy. In a book published late in 47 or in 46 BCE, he was aware of internal cleavages in Roman society. If Caesar, the murderer, is the dedicatee of the *Antiquitates rerum divinarum*, his victim, Pompey, is the subject of a laudatory oeuvre at the same time. Varro's program of three types of theology does not aim at deepening dividing lines but at holding divergent developments together. Poetry, with its invention of embarrassing stories about the gods, serves the theatre and entertainment and still offers something to civic cult (frag. 11, quoted above). Philosophy, producing physical interpretations of religion, should be confined to smaller circles but offers something to civic theology, too (frag. 11). Both are universal phenomena and hence shared reservoirs for the many local civic variants of religion (see frag. 9).

Conclusions

In such a bridging use of history, developing a narrative of religious developments that might be shared by Romans and Non-romans, Varro was no exception. Despite all party historiography, there was a strong current in Roman historiography that aimed at creating a history common to Roman families from all over Italy and different layers of society. Annalistic history, narrating Roman history year by year with ever changing protagonists, and the projection of a long line of military victories into the calendar by means of founding dates offered the possibility to level differences in individual or tribal contributions and so write a

81 Here I prefer to follow the sequence given by Nonius, p. 197 Lindsay.

history without hierarchy. Cato attempted a history without naming individuals. This option, however, was not employed by Varro for his history of religion in *Antiquities*.

Just a few years before in his books on the war in Gaul, Caesar described Celtic and Germanic religions. He could speak about the Gallic cult of Mercury without any problem.[82] Surely, this was a translation, an *interpretatio Romana*, but it was a translation that presupposed the principal universality of the phenomenon of religion and of the gods. Differences could be easily acknowledged. Being subjected to ethnographic *topoi* or historical explanation, the importance of the differences was diminished – diversity is natural and contingent and does no harm. After all, the Romans were to build an empire. Management of diversity must have been the demand of the day.

I have arrived at a first conclusion. Varro wrote historical accounts of religion within a universalistic framework. His intended readers were Roman and his focus was Roman, but his interest was in religion as a universal phenomenon, enabling Italian and imperial communication rather than strengthening mutually exclusive ethnic or urban identities. Intellectually, Varro is to be associated with contemporaries like Diodorus Siculus or Pompeius Trogus, writers of universal histories.[83] They represent a minority position in the late Republican practice of historiography, probably dominated by the highly individualized genre of historical epic. Here is the polemical stance I postulated earlier for any historiography when I claimed that history is never written in the singular but organizes memories in alternative form.

My second conclusion is that Varro had to take a radical step. *Religio* is defined not as a tradition but as an institution, an *institutum*, something "set up" by humans. Surely, Romans had known about earlier religion before and had memories of temples being set up and games being dedicated and continued. Thus, Roman religion could accommodate a lot of Roman history. Varro, however, goes one step further. He claims the whole differentiation of the divine into endless lists of names, not just certain cultic practices, has been contingent. Contingency implies distancing: one could reflect over such decisions and even criticize them, but in a contingent world, decisions are necessary, including negative ones, like the driving out of cults. Before the age of historicism, such decisions, when invested with proper, legitimate authority, would be binding despite a possible critical perspective of them. This is the basis for Varro, the systematizing

82 Caesar, *Bell. gall.* 6.17.1.

83 On Trogus, see van Wickevoort Crommelin 1993; on the rise of universal history, Alonso-Núñez 1990.

thinker. A recipe book on religion is offered within a historical framework. In his *De natura deorum,* written in the year following the publication of Varro's work, Cicero would accept Varro's concept of religion as the contingent human reaction to a conviction that the divine existed. Only the latter is subject to philosophical reasoning, but the former definitely needs control.[84] This is not exactly what Varro wrote, it but leads back to a rather narrow "civic" definition of religion.

The fully-fledged Varronian history of religion, dimly visible through the scattered two-hundred sixty fragments of the *Antiquitates rerum diuinarum,* tried to construct not a Roman but a universal history of religion for a Roman polity that extended all over Italy and into Greece and beyond, an incipient *Imperium Romanum*. Varro and his dedicatee, Caesar, share a similar perspective in this regard. This was no unilinear development. New gods were to arrive, which demanded stories about the shrinking of diversity, about resistance to unity, and about differentiation judged secondary. In such narratives, conspirators like Sextus Tarquinius[85] and Judas replaced Numa and Fulvius Nobilior.

As in Judah/Yehud, historiographic innovations in Rome were related to social change and religious innovation. The knowledge that Varro had presented in his *Antiquities*, while systematized, was no longer subject to the remit of other and more powerful aristocratic actors, magistrates for instance, although it was at their disposal and intended for them.[86] The learned specialist decided how it had been and how it ought to be, no longer the ancestors (*maiores*), in whose mouths it had been customary to put contemporary claims and label them *mos maiorum*, "tradition."[87] Varro's critique of existing traditions could not be confined to developments in Rome itself, like his critique of the consequences of the introduction of iconic cult, although Rome is where Varro grounded it out of loyalty. Such critique could also address other specialists, even those whose field was religion, as when Varro tried to enlighten the priests in Samothrace about the character of the *penates* venerated there.[88] What Cicero had already touched upon in his universalizing project, *On the Laws*, was now consistently implemented without reliance on priests as arbiters: religious knowledge was no longer the property of the aristocracy or even of patricians.[89] Priest, patrician, but above all dictator, Caesar had seized the occasion and had appointed Varro

84 Rüpke 2010b, 750.

85 See Rüpke 2010a and Rüpke and Scheid 2010.

86 Varro, *Ant. rer. div.* frag. 2a Cardauns.

87 Wallace-Hadrill 2008, 236.

88 Varro, *Ant. rer. div.* frag. 206 Cardauns; for aniconism, see frag. 18 Cardauns.

89 Wallace-Hadrill 1997, 5–6; 2008, 215–51; and Rüpke 2012. No expectation comparable to Cicero's claims for consistency existed in the normal legislative process (Walter 2014, 17).

leader of his library project, which never materialized due to Caesar's assassination and Marcus Antonius's persecution of Varro. Augustus took Varro more thoroughly under his wing.

Why was knowledge increasingly claimed and generated by specialists? The fact that Cicero refers to the problem of newly imported or immigrant cults in the very first paragraphs of his religious laws shows the extent to which his contemporaries were aware of changes and of the forms those changes took. It not only was a question of cult practices that had arrived from the Aegean, like the worship of Isis, a goddess indigenous to Egypt, or the occasional banishment from Rome of philosophers, rhetoricians, Jews, and astrologers in the previous decades;[90] less visible factors also probably came into play, producing long-term changes. Examples include the social and economic development in Italy after the Second Punic War (218–201 BCE) and above all, the Social War (91–89 BCE), with its rapid effects on migrations and linguistic developments. The increasing Roman presence in Greece was to have similar consequences, motivating intellectuals to reinvent their traditions.[91]

In Italy, a relevant development in the area of religious practice was the decline of votive offerings as a result of a reorientation of manufacturing processes more than a reduction in demand by the temple visitors.[92] At the same time, throughout Italy, increasing numbers of temples were being provided with terracotta reliefs depicting scenes from Greek mythology, helping the theme to become prominent in the context of religious communication. Catullus's *Epithalamium* (= *Carmen* 64) relating the marriage of Peleus and Thetis may have reflected developments such as these,[93] and the groups of statuary with Niobids at Sosius's Temple of Apollo in Rome also illustrate this Greek presence.[94] Roman aristocrats placed marble candelabras in their houses in free imitation of archaic Etruscan bronze incense burners.[95] The old and the brand new were present in superabundance, no longer to be kept within bounds by the mere assertion of a vague code of conduct. Varro himself arranged to be buried in the style of the Pythagoreans.[96] Universalist thinking had opened very individual choices in religious matters and was enabling the construction of new identities without losing one's Romanness.

90 See Cramer 1954; and Barton 1994.
91 Deshours 2011, 303–16.
92 See Gentili 2005; Rüpke 2018.
93 On the *Campana reliefs* (*lastra Campana*), see Strazzulla 1993.
94 For groups of statuary, see Ellinghaus 2004, 119.
95 Bubenheimer-Erhart 2004, 58–59.
96 Plin. *HN* 35.160. For the biography, see Sallmann 2002.

Deuteronomistic historiography and the traditions of historiography and writing on religion from the western Mediterranean, in particular Rome, have never been compared. The findings presented here question popular assumptions about the lack of a presence of linear notions of time, a historical perspective on religious beliefs and practices, and the spread of universalist notions in Roman historiography. This chapter has not performed such a comparison but invites it. Profitable points of comparison could include political and cultural change and the social position and agenda of producers of literary texts and their relationship to religious institutions like temples and priests. As has been pointed out, the very fact that religious practices are not related to a time immemorial but to a narratable and historiographically accessible past is perhaps the most important among these. Two major differences that need exploration are the function of universalism in each tradition and the function of the history-writing. Deuteronomistic historiography has a strong component of identity-building,[97] while I have argued that Roman historiography dealing with religion does not. Under specific conditions, which might be summarized as processes of rationalisation, religion is historicised in ancient Rome between the second century BCE and the first century CE. As I have shown in several instances, such historiography not only built on some memory of a past of religion, but critically engaged with it. Shifting authority from tradition and local elites to authors and their universalist frames of reference was not the least part in this.

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97 See, for example, the essays in Part 1 of this volume.

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