



# MONDAY LECTURES | WISE 2024/25

## IN RELIGIOUS, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL STUDIES

RESEARCH BUILDING "WELTBEZIEHUNGEN" | C19.00.02/03 | 16:15 - 17:45

### LECTURE SERIES BY FRANCESCO MASSA

## BEYOND LAST PAGANS: ROMAN POLYTHEISM RESHAPING IN LATE ANTIQUITY

**02.12.2024 | PART III**

### NEW SACRIFICES? PERFORMING ORTHOPRAXY IN THE FOURTH AND FIFTH CENTURIES

This lecture will offer some thoughts on the topic of animal sacrifice in the late antique Roman Empire. To explore sacrifices in Late Antiquity, we need to move away from the paradigm of "survivals" – pagan rituals that continued to be celebrated far from the city, if not secretly (what is sometimes called "crypto-paganism"). We will focus on the second half of the fourth and early fifth centuries, which are often considered the dying stage of polytheism and its sacrificial practices. The goal is to highlight that beyond the processes of spiritualization and decline that historiography attributes to sacrifices in Late Antiquity, ancient sources show instead that sacrifice (including animal sacrifice) continued to be an essential element of religious conception in the Roman Empire.

From this perspective, it is useful to combine the study of urban contexts (Rome, Antioch, Athens) with the analysis of rural contexts, such as the countryside around Turin or the valleys of Trent (e.g. Maximus of Turin, Sermons and Vigilius of Trent, Letters). The analysis will allow us to reconsider the models of "pagan persistence" or "ruralization of paganism" still used to study late polytheistic sacrifices.

**ALL GUESTS WELCOME.  
NO REGISTRATION NECESSARY.**