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Abstracts

FRANCESCO FILOTICO, Reinhard Wenskus e il concetto di etnicità nell'età delle invasioni barbariche

In the monumental monographic volume entitled *Stammesbildung und Verfassung* appearing in 1961, the German historian Reinhard Wenskus lays the groundwork for a new reading of ethnic phenomena at the end of the ancient world. Central to this work is his proposed development of the concept of *gens*, given the noun *Stammesbegriff* in German: the barbarian *gentes* usually presented by late antique and early medieval sources as a community of common origin (*Abstammungsgemeinschaften*) in their historical actuality, in his opinion were instead multi-ethnic groups formed around a political leadership that gave to the entire group their ethnic name. Such processes of aggregation came into fruition when members of a *gens*, ethnically heterogeneous in origin, developed a collective “conscience of we” (*Wir-Bewusstsein*), the foundation of which was often perceived as adhering to a tradition common to the whole group and hegemonized by élite political groups Wenskus called “nuclei of tradition”. If while defining the subjective nature of ethnic identities Wenskus draws extensively from the work of German historian Alfred Dove (1916) coming to him through authors such as Heinz Löwe, Helmut Beumann and, in particular, Wolfgang Fritze, one can also state that the influence of *Stammesbildung und Verfassung* from the ethno-sociological disciplines in general, and the German ethnologist Wilhelm Emil Mühlmann in particular, is decisive and far more important than previously thought: concepts such *Ethnosbegriff* (concept of *ethnos*) *Traditionskern* (nucleus of tradition), *Wir-Bewusstsein*, and *Abstammungsgemeinschaft* are closely related to the theoretical elaboration Mühlmann has been defining from the late 1930's.