

## **Mapping the Religious History of Latium: The Challenges and Potentiality of Constructing a Database of Religious History**

While scholarly research on the world's religious traditions—ancient and modern—is both rich and extensive, there has yet to be any kind of rigorous synthesis that collects the breadth of such information and makes it readily accessible to researchers interested in cross-cultural and long-term patterns of religiosity. In the hopes of filling this niche, the Cultural Evolution of Religion Research Consortium has embarked on a seven year Database of Religious History (DRH) project that will collect information on religious traditions spanning time and space, histories and cultures. This paper explores the potential of the DRH for the study of antique biblical religions, with specific emphasis given to the religious history of Latium (ca. 1000 B.C.E.–1500 C.E.). After first providing a general introduction to the DRH as a whole, I will explore the pragmatic and conceptual challenges that emerge when collecting and quantifying information for historically conditioned religious traditions. Specific attention will be given to the process of capturing both long- and short-term religious variety and variation (e.g., periodization, tradition demarcation, etc.). Finally, this paper will conclude by offering critical reflection on how the DRH can (a) bolster the study of early Christian groups within the context of comparative antique religions, and (b) inform both historical and cognitive studies of religion that concern the investigation of so-called “past minds.” In particular, the ability to locate ancient religious expressions within the context of broader patterns of religious thought and practice is an exciting prospect that brings both qualitative and quantitative potentialities.