



Hermeneutics, Politics, and the History of Religions: The Contested Legacies of Joachim Wach and Mircea Eliade

Christian Wedemeyer, Wendy Doniger

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This volume comprises papers presented at a conference marking the 50th anniversary of Joachim Wach's death, and the centennial of Mircea Eliade's birth. Its purpose is to reconsider both the problematic, separate legacies of these two major twentieth-century historians of religions, and the bearing of these two legacies upon each other. Shortly after Wach's death in 1955, Eliade succeeded him as the premiere historian of religions at the University of Chicago. As a result, the two have been associated with each other in many people's minds as the successive leaders of the so-called "Chicago School" in the history of religions. In fact, as this volume makes clear, there never was a monolithic Chicago School. Although Wach reportedly referred to Eliade as the most astute historian of religions of the day; the two never met, and their approaches to the study of religions differed significantly. Several dominant issues run through the essays collected here: the relationship between the two men's writings and their lives, and in Eliade's case, the relationship between his political commitments and his writings in fiction, history of religions, and autobiography. Both men's contributions to the field continue to provoke controversy and debate, and this volume sheds new light on these controversies and what they reveal about these two `scholars' legacies.

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