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# The secret of the totem : religion and society from McLennan to Freud

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Abstrak

THE NOTION of writing a book about the study of totemism had its origin in the late ?970s, when I received a grant from the National Science Foundation that allowed me to spend a year at Cambridge University. At the time, I had for several years been teaching the history of social theory in the sociology department at the University of Illinois, and I fancied myself an emerging authority on the works of Émile Durkheim. Inspired by some ideas found in Steven Lukes?s Durkheim, I?d become particularly interested in Les Formes élémentaires de la vie religieuse (?9?2), Durkheim?s magnum opus and indisputably a ?classic text? in social theory. Unlike my sociologist colleagues, however, I was less interested in whether or not Durkheim?s theories were ?true? than in the institutional and intellectual processes whereby they emerged. For I was, both by training and inclination, a historian rather than a sociologist. Despite an early interest in social theory, for example, I?d managed to take undergraduate courses in history and philosophy as well as sociology, and as a graduate student at the University of Pennsylvania, I was fortunate to find a program that afforded a similar degree of disciplinary latitude.