The concept of “The invention of tradition” was formulated 30 years ago in the now famous book edited by Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger and is still highly influential. Taking stock of its current (theoretical) understandings and focusing on the Roman world, this workshop aims to explore the concept as a means to understand processes of cultural change in the Roman West in particular. Four case studies from different periods and regions around the world will open the discussion and serve as theoretical introductions to analyze how “the invention of tradition” works as a cultural process. On the basis of rich archaeological and literary evidence, the program will zoom in on the Roman oikumene subsequently. Three lectures will provide an overview of how processes of “inventing traditions” were played out in the Roman present with regard to the Greek, Near Eastern and Egyptian pasts. This will set the scene for the final group of five lectures that will explore difficult and important questions about the indigenous pasts in the “Roman” present in Northwestern Europe. Why were some traditions forgotten, others invented and some (just) continuing?
THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 14

16.30  Dietrich Boschung (Köln), Alexandra W. Busch (Rom) and Miguel John Versluys (Leiden) Welcome and introduction

Theoretical introductions. Processes of the invention of tradition in past and present: four case studies

17.00  Michael Zelle (Detmold) Arminius – Cheruskerfürst und deutscher Held. Zur Rezeptionsgeschichte einer antiken Figur in der Neuzeit

17.45  Andreas Niehaus (Gent) The political dimension of performing “Japanese tradition”

18.30  Coffee Break

19.00  Keynote lecture

Hartmut Leppin (Frankfurt) From traditions to tradition: The invention of church history

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 15

09.00  Katja Sporn (Athen) Vergangenheit in der Gegenwart: Spurensuche in der griechischen Antike

Between Egypt, the Orient and Greece: Rome and its (invented) traditions

09.45  Miguel John Versluys (Leiden) Haunting traditions. The material presence of Egypt in the Roman world

10.30  Coffee Break

11.00  Michael Sommer (Oldenburg) Through the looking glass – Zenobia and ‘Orientalism’

11.45  Onno van Nijf (Groningen) Re-inventing agonistic traditions: Greek festival culture under Rome

12.30  Lunch Break

invented, forgotten and continuing traditions in the Roman West

13.45  Alexandra W. Busch (Rom) Back to the roots? Indigenous pasts and the Roman present in north-western Europe

14.30  Peter S. Wells (Minneapolis/St. Paul) Indigenous forms, styles, and practices in provincial Roman Europe: continuity, resistance, or reinvention?

15.15  Coffee Break

15.45  David Fontijn (Leiden) Im Westen nichts Neues? Cultural attitudes towards prehistoric ritual sites in the Roman West


17.15  Hella Eckardt (Reading) Indigenous and migrant identities in Britain – memories of home and Roman diasporas?

18.00  Final discussion