

# Plagues, Famines and other Disasters: interpreting the signs from the gods

Judy Simpson

Bachelor of Ancient History, Macquarie University

Supervisor: Professor Ray Laurence

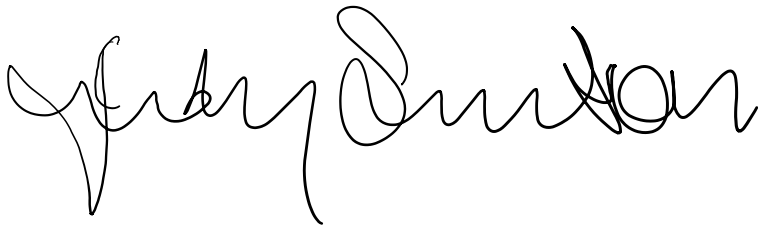
Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Research

Department of Ancient History

Macquarie University, Sydney, Australia

12 October 2019

*This work has not previously been submitted for a degree or diploma in any university. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the thesis itself.*

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Gary Duncan'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name 'Gary' written in a more compact, stylized manner and the last name 'Duncan' written in a more extended, flowing script.

12 October 2019

# Abstract

My thesis concerns the *decemviri sacris faciundis* - a college of priests from Republican Rome who were in charge of the Sibylline books, considered the most sacred possession of the Romans. When Rome was besieged by disastrous events, their role was to search these books for remedies that would appeal to the gods, thus maintaining the *pax deorum*. The aim of my thesis is to show how the *decemviri*, through their responses to disasters, changed the sacred landscape of Rome. Firstly, I analyse the role of this college, which consisted in equal part patrician and plebeian, in the intertwined system of religion and politics that saw Rome expand its empire across Italy and into the Mediterranean. My aim is to understand how these priests might use religion for political ends. My analysis is therefore concerned with the prestige of this college in the Republican period. Secondly, I examine the psychological responses of disasters as a way of understanding the impact of these events. This is a necessary element in analysing the subsequent responses of the senate and the *decemviri* to disasters. Although ancient historians consistently avoided this type of emotional analysis, Livy, in his descriptions of wartime disasters, provided a thorough record of the fears and anxieties associated with disastrous events. Thirdly, I consider the reliability of Livy, and other ancient authors, as a source for religious traditions, an essential component in establishing how and why the *decemviri* were called upon to consult the Sibylline books. Finally, I investigate how the *decemviri* responded to disasters. I consider the built spaces, the celebrations and the transitory religious observances that pervaded the city at the behest of these priests. My thesis provides a better understanding of how the *decemviri* were important to the religious and physical development of Rome.

## Acknowledgements

Andrew for his patience, Ray for his advice and the PFS for their moral support.

# Table of Contents

<b>CHAPTER 1. Introduction, Literature Review and Methodology .....</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1. Introduction .....	1
1.2. Literature Review .....	1
1.3. Methodology .....	5
1.4. Scope and limitations .....	9
1.5. Conclusion .....	9
<b>CHAPTER 2. Decemviri Sacris Faciundis: Historical Overview .....</b>	<b>11</b>
2.1. Introduction: Roman religion and the priesthoods .....	11
2.2. And then there were ten .....	13
2.3. Prestige and the decemviri .....	16
2.4. Priestly power .....	19
2.5. Conclusion .....	21
<b>CHAPTER 3. The Experience of Disasters .....</b>	<b>23</b>
3.1. Introduction: the disaster narrative and Livy .....	23
3.2. What is a disaster? .....	24
3.3. Reporting the devastation .....	26
3.4. Psychological responses: alarm, fear and despair .....	28
3.5. Conclusion .....	32
<b>CHAPTER 4. Religious Responses to Disasters .....</b>	<b>34</b>
4.1. Introduction: divine anger and the peace of the gods .....	34
4.2. Expiation: who did what? .....	35
4.3. The Sibylline books .....	37
4.4. Problems with sources .....	41
4.5. Conclusion .....	45
<b>CHAPTER 5. Space and Memory .....</b>	<b>47</b>
5.1. Introduction .....	47
5.2. Sites of memory .....	48
5.3. Permanent sites: temples .....	49
5.3.1. Temple of Ceres, Liber and Libera .....	51
5.3.2. Temple of Apollo .....	52
5.3.3. Temple of Aesculapius .....	53
5.3.4. Temples of Venus Erycina and Mens .....	55
5.4. Banquets, games and festivals .....	56
5.4.1. Lectisternium: a banquet for the gods .....	57
5.4.2. Ludi Tarentini – Ludi Saeculares .....	58
5.4.3. Movement and repletion: memory making practices .....	60
5.5. Conclusion .....	64
<b>CHAPTER 6. Conclusion .....</b>	<b>65</b>
 <b>APPENDIX I. Tables .....</b>	 <b>68</b>
<b>APPENDIX II. Inscriptions .....</b>	<b>73</b>
<b>APPENDIX III. Images .....</b>	<b>75</b>
 <b>BIBLIOGRAPHY</b>	
Ancient Sources .....	79
Modern Sources .....	83

# Chapter 1. Introduction, Literature Review and Methodology

## 1.1 Introduction

The *decemviri sacris faciundis* – the ten men who interpreted the sacred books - was a college of priests from Republican Rome whose duties included consulting and interpreting the Sibylline books when Rome was beset by disastrous events.<sup>1</sup> Disasters in Rome were commonplace, and for the most part, considered a normal, albeit unfortunate, part of life. However, they did cause considerable suffering and were often perceived as an indication that the usual ordering of the world was collapsing. Thus, as a way of making sense of these events and alleviating the emotional toll, they were frequently viewed on religious terms. They were often considered a sign of divine anger and an indication that the *pax deorum*, the peace that would normally exist between men and the gods, was needed. When the senate viewed disasters on these terms, they would order the *decemviri* to consult the Sibylline books. Their role was to discover, within these books, the actions required for expiation and to report to the senate the appropriate responses that would restore the natural order. As they sought to ease the anxieties associated with disasters, these responses were of interest to the whole community; and although they fell within Roman religious traditions, they frequently included the introduction of new religious rituals and cults, and the building of new temples. The *decemviri* were therefore responsible for the creation and recreation of sacred spaces within the city of Rome which in turn shaped the religious landscape of the city.

## 1.2 Literature Review

Although the *decemviri* are well-attested in the ancient evidence, a search for these priests in modern scholarship yields remarkably few results; much of the

---

<sup>1</sup> Originally these priests numbered two, (*duumviri*). According to Livy, they became ten (*decemviri*) in 367 B.C. and by 51 B.C., Cicero indicated they numbered fifteen. The exact date for this increase is unknown but it is commonly held to be in the time of Sulla. As this project is mainly concerned with the period leading up to the first century A.D., these priests will be referred to as *decemviri* unless an ancient text specifically refers to them as *quindecimviri*. Liv. 6.42.2; Cic. *Fam.* 8.4.

scholarship focuses on the role and functions of the these priests. In an early but still important work, Boyce analyses the development of the *decemviri*: he examines how their role evolved slowly over time and how these priests were increasingly interested in the introduction of new religious rituals.<sup>2</sup> He provides ample evidence of the innovative nature of these rites and cults, but notes that they were always steeped in Roman traditions. This is an important point, as it illustrates that although the *decemviri* were known as the priests responsible for the institutionalisation of foreign rites, these rites were familiar to the Roman people, hinting at their easy acceptance. More recently, Santi's short book on the *decemviri* also outlines the functions of these priests in the Republican period until 83 B.C., when the Sibylline books were destroyed by fire.<sup>3</sup> She too emphasises the various duties of the *decemviri* but is also concerned with the development of the Sibylline books. She provides an interesting theory that these books existed as a Republican counterpart to the commentaries of Numa. In the Livian narrative, every element of these commentaries was opposed to the characteristics of the Sibylline books: they were consulted as a result of a public initiative by a collegiate of men, as opposed to the private actions and musings of a king. The Sibylline books were thus related to the ideal of the Republican state, suggesting that they were constituted, revised and augmented to suit the needs of the community.

This theme is extended by Février.<sup>4</sup> She is concerned with the nature of the Sibylline books and how this affected the functions of the *decemviri*. She identifies three phases in their existence: the original Tarquinian collection; the Sullanian collection, constituted after the fire on the Capitol; and the Augustan collection, which she argues had nothing to do with the earlier collections and were mainly prophetic in nature. Thus, during the Republic, the main function of the *decemviri* was the institution of innovative *remedia* which, during the anxious years of the Hannibalic wars, became progressively more Hellenised. They were later imbued with a prophetic character. Although she acknowledges that there are examples of the Sibylline books being used by the *decemviri* for prophetic purposes, she rightly

---

<sup>2</sup> Boyce 1938: 161-87.

<sup>3</sup> Santi 1985: 5-42.

<sup>4</sup> Février 2002: 821-41.

argues that these may be anachronistic ideas of authors who had a contemporaneous relationship with the later collection of books.

Mazurek argues against Février's premise, stating that, in their recommendations for expiation, the *decemviri* regularly revealed prophecies.<sup>5</sup> His examples have merit, particularly in relation to the construction of the Marcian aqueduct in 144 B.C. and the restoration of King Ptolemy in 56 B.C.<sup>6</sup> Mazurek demonstrates how the prophetic nature of the Sibylline books was used by the *decemviri*, who were mostly members of the senate, to manipulate the political system. Although, unlike Février, Mazurek does not allude to the potential anachronisms of his sources, he does consider the documentation that these priests would have produced as a result of their consultations. As these documents were most likely stored in the archives, they would have provided an important source of reference not only for future *decemviri* but also future historians. Mazurek thereby argues that the prophecies revealed by the *decemviri* may have come from an archival source.

This concept of priestly archives is examined by Scheid, who considers the types of documents the *decemviri* would have produced.<sup>7</sup> Scheid argues that each consultation of the Sibylline books would have resulted in a number of written documents: a sacerdotal edict, a senatus-consultum and an edict of the magistrates. Thus, there was an easily accessible archive of previous decisions which the *decemviri* were able to consult. These types of archives would have existed in all the priestly colleges. Although Scheid suggests that only a few of these documents survived, he argues that they must have been voluminous as they were able to generate in the minds of both ancients and moderns, the myth of a priestly book. The existence of such archives adds legitimacy to the ancient authors and Mazurek and Scheid's papers provide an important starting point for an analysis of the reliability of the sources of the ancient authors, which is addressed in Chapter Three.

Two papers consider the development of the *virī sacris faciundis* from a membership of two patricians, to a college of ten, composed of five patricians and

---

<sup>5</sup> Mazurek 2004: 151-68.

<sup>6</sup> These topics are covered in more detail in Chapter one.

<sup>7</sup> Scheid 1998: 11-26.



five plebeians. Santi sees this development as an evolving relationship between the *concordia ordinum*, a political principle and the *pax deorum*, a religious concept.<sup>8</sup> That is, by increasing the number of priests to ten, and including equal numbers of patricians and plebeians, the two orders had to share the role of maintaining the peace with the gods. On the other hand, Satterfield argues that the formation of the *decemviri* indicated the strong link between this college of ten and the consulship.<sup>9</sup> She argues that the status of this priesthood lay in its links to the consulship and that the plebeians specifically chose to join this priesthood because of their pursuit of the highest office in the state. Although these separate notions are discussed in more detail in Chapter One, it suffices to say that both papers illustrate the essential role of the *decemviri* in the maintenance of the *pax deorum*, thus preserving the vital relationship between Rome and its gods. It was in this capacity that the *decemviri* accrued prestige and power. Questions of power are analysed in more detail by Gillmeister, who claims that the authority of the *decemviri* were completely subsidiary to the supreme powers of Rome.<sup>10</sup> That is, he argues that after consulting the Sibylline books and presenting their findings to the senate, the *decemviri* had no control over what happened next. While Gillmeister is essentially correct in his description of the procedure of consulting the Sibylline books, his conclusions regarding the power relationships in Rome fail to convince. His attempts to explain the link between the *decemviri* and the senate in terms of discrete events, ignores the overlapping, interrelationships between religion and politics, senate and *collegia*, and magistrate and priest. Gillmeister's premise is also analysed more thoroughly in Chapter one.

Although this corpus of scholarship provides a springboard from which to begin an analysis of the *decemviri*, overall it fails to illustrate how these priests responded to disastrous events and how their subsequent actions impacted on the religious landscape of Rome. Existing scholarship on Roman disasters does not fill this gap as it mostly concentrates on specific disaster types, such as earthquakes, famine and flooding. For the most part, this scholarship fails to relate these events to Roman religious practices. Toner, for example, in his book on Roman disasters,

---

<sup>8</sup> Santi 2006: 171-84.

<sup>9</sup> Satterfield 2013: 217-35.

<sup>10</sup> Gillmeister 2007: 58-74.

completely ignores the role of the *decemviri* in relation to disasters and mentions the Sibylline books but once.<sup>11</sup> However, he does analyse the psychological reactions of Romans to disastrous events. This concept forms an indispensable element of this thesis: in order to understand why the senate and the *decemviri* responded to disasters in the ways that they did, an appreciation of the effects of these events on the Roman psyche is essential.

In a study devoted to the psychological reactions to disasters, Wolfenstein provides a detailed assessment of how people experience these events: their reactions when faced with the threat of a disaster; their behaviours and struggles during the impact; and their emotions and resolutions in the aftermath.<sup>12</sup> This book was first published in 1957 before the current onset of mass media and twenty-four-hour news cycles that increasingly regard disasters as public spectacles. These recent narratives overinflate extreme behaviours such as panic, or the exploitation of victims, and disasters are often seen as a break-down of society. In contrast, the subjects of Wolfenstein's study often exhibit as calm reserve: these events were frequently viewed as a reminder of the unpredictability of life. Her study therefore provides an accessible lens through which to view the psychological effects of disasters in Rome, descriptions which are mostly missing in the ancient narratives.

### 1.3 Methodology

Although investigating the psychological effects of disasters in the distant past is a precarious undertaking, it is an essential aspect of my thesis. By understanding the impact of these events, it is possible to ascertain the importance of the *decemviri* as a priesthood and consider how their actions benefited the whole community. This task is made difficult, however, because ancient historians mostly ignored how the Romans experienced disasters, particularly if they were natural.<sup>13</sup> Frequently, they were simply regarded as prodigies and their role in ancient texts was to emphasise the importance of preserving the good relationship with the gods.<sup>14</sup> For example, they often imparted allegorical notions such as divine punishment or moral lessons.<sup>15</sup>

---

<sup>11</sup> Toner 2013.

<sup>12</sup> Wolfenstein 1957.

<sup>13</sup> Natural disasters are defined as earthquakes, famine and drought, fire, flooding and pestilence; man-made disasters are war-time defeats and civil unrest.

<sup>14</sup> Scheid 2015: 86

<sup>15</sup> Alexander 2005: 30-34.

These notions stress the importance of viewing ancient disasters on their own terms, free from modern analyses that focus on human suffering and the enormity of the event. The Romans, in contrast, lived in a risk society and were accustomed to the setbacks related to disasters - there was a sense of inevitability and acceptance towards these events that is mostly missing in today's tendency towards over reporting.<sup>16</sup> My thesis, therefore, avoids an analysis of disasters in Rome that equates the lived experiences of Romans with a modern mindset. Instead, it involves a detailed analysis of ancient texts to explore how the Romans gave these events meaning – how they interpreted disasters, how they chose to report them and how they responded to them.

The responses of the *decemviri* to disasters involved the introduction of religious cults, the building of temples, and the performance of rituals, both new and old. As it is impossible to separate religious practices from the environment in which they were expressed, these responses involved the reshaping and creation of sacred spaces in the city of Rome.<sup>17</sup> In turn, these sacred spaces became “sites of memory”. This term is borrowed from the French cultural historian Pierre Nora, who describes how the past finds expression in a wide variety of public spaces and “memory takes form in the concrete, in spaces, gestures, images and objects”; it may include events or actions of historical significance; and it is part of everyday experiences that extend beyond geographical boundaries.<sup>18</sup> Therefore my thesis not only examines the creation of new sacred spaces at the behest of the *decemviri*, but analyses how they became “sites of memory”. As much of these spaces involved the performance of rituals, difficulties arise in attempting to define space as either sacred or non-sacred. A temple, for example, would obviously fall into the category of the sacred, but what of the spaces that surrounded it, the spaces where sacrifices were performed, the routes of religious processions or political spaces which also involved religious rites? As all spaces in Rome might be defined in respect to the sacred, it is difficult to ascertain the limits of these sacred spaces purely on archaeological evidence.<sup>19</sup> Lefebvre claims that “any search for space in literary texts will find it

---

<sup>16</sup> Aldrete 2007: 6; Toner 2013: 9-10.

<sup>17</sup> Droogan 2013: 1.

<sup>18</sup> Nora 1989: 9.

<sup>19</sup> Russell 2016: 98-100.

everywhere and in every guise: enclosed, described, projected, dreamt of, speculated about.”<sup>20</sup> Thus, my thesis relies heavily on textual evidence for details of how sacred spaces were conceived and created by the *decemviri*, how these same spaces were experienced and perceived by the Romans and how they were preserved in the collective memories of the Roman citizens.

Livy (c. 59 B.C.– A.D. 17) in his monumental history, *Ab Urbe Condita Libri*, provides one of the main sources for Roman Republican history and as such, is a major source for my thesis.<sup>21</sup> As much of this history was concerned with the importance of religion to the Roman political system, it abounds with descriptions of religious rituals and cults. Livy frequently referred to natural disasters, but usually these descriptions were additions aimed at highlighting the precarious nature of the *pax deorum* and the steps involved to ensure its continuing benefits. These descriptions were therefore brief: they frequently lacked details of the experiences and reactions of those involved and were devoid of any emotional involvement of the author. Livy’s descriptions of wartime disasters, however, tell a different story. Although these disasters were still concerned with religion and the gods, Livy’s retelling of these events was preoccupied with moral lessons. Battle narratives were carefully organised to allow him to feature behaviours which should either be followed or avoided.<sup>22</sup> Livy set this agenda in the preface to his first book, where he referred to the moral value of history, and invited the reader to seek examples from the “illustrious history of a nation”.<sup>23</sup> According to Chaplin, these *exempla* range from stories about legendary figures, such as Camillus, to those of “unnamed and obscure individuals, ... battle tactics, constitutional precedents, and religious affairs.”<sup>24</sup> In the chapters concerning Rome’s defeat at Cannae, for example, Livy devoted twice as many to the reactions of the Romans to this disaster than the battle itself. Thus, unlike his brief descriptions of natural disasters, Livy’s war-time disasters were more detailed and filled with psychological assessments of those involved. He often featured scenes stressing the emotional impact of these events.<sup>25</sup> In this way, he

---

<sup>20</sup> Lefebvre 1974: 15.

<sup>21</sup> Although the exact year of Livy’s birth and death are unknown, the dates 59 B.C. – A.D. 17 will be assumed for this thesis.

<sup>22</sup> Chaplin 2000: 34-35.

<sup>23</sup> Liv. 1.pref.10: *inlustri posita monument intueri*; Chaplin 2000: 1; Ogilvie 1965: 28.

<sup>24</sup> Chaplin 2000: 2-6.

<sup>25</sup> Walsh 1967: 170-71.

was frequently less concerned with facts than dramatic elaborations that suited his narrative intentions.

This highlights one of the main problems when analysing Livy's history, accurately identifying authentic and invented details.<sup>26</sup> Although he made great use of his many historical sources, Livy practiced a certain independence from these same sources - he included dimensions of Roman culture that were often missing from other ancient narratives.<sup>27</sup> From book twenty-one, Livy relied heavily on Polybius (c.200-118 B.C.) and often adapted this Greek historian for his own purposes, adding scenes, changing circumstances or deleting details as he saw fit.<sup>28</sup> For example, whereas Polybius merely dismissed religion as a tool by which the elite controlled the masses, Livy continually emphasised its importance to the Roman political system.<sup>29</sup> As Oakley rightly notes, within Livy's literary elaborations and distortions, there is a plethora of dependable information.<sup>30</sup> Thus, for the purposes of my thesis, the search for authenticity in the way a wartime disaster unfolded, is less important than Livy's descriptions of the psychological and emotional effects of these disastrous events. These aspects are mostly ignored by other ancient historians and they say much about the way the Romans responded to anxiety and fear.

In concentrating on the responses of the *decemviri* to disasters, there is a risk of missing vital evidence provided by their responses to less severe events that do not fall under this category. Therefore, the actions of the *decemviri* to these events are also considered where necessary. Likewise, evidence of responses to disasters that did not involve the *decemviri* is also examined when required. Where available, literary sources are augmented by archaeological, epigraphic and numismatic evidence. My thesis has a thematic approach that concentrates on the distinctiveness and functions of the *decemviri* and the religious ideologies that emanated therewith. Thus, the ancient evidence is investigated in a logical rather than chronological order.

---

<sup>26</sup> Oakley 1997: viii and 3.

<sup>27</sup> Champion 2015: 197.

<sup>28</sup> Briscoe provides a thorough synopsis of these types of adaptations. Briscoe 1973: 6-8.

<sup>29</sup> Polyb. 6.56.

<sup>30</sup> Oakley 1997: viii.

## 1.4 Scope and Limitations

There are forty-three literary sources that deal specifically with the consultation of the Sibylline books in times of disaster. Although these sources cover a period from 496 B.C. until A.D. 272, most of the records occur during the Republican period, up to 48 B.C. For example, there are no known records during Augustus' reign, and only five after his death. My thesis, therefore, is firmly situated within the Republican period. Livy records seventeen consultations in response to disasters between 436 and 173 B.C. Many of these and other consultations are also recorded by diverse sources, such as Dionysius of Halicarnassus (b.c. 60-7 B.C.), Ovid (43 B.C.- A.D. 17), Velleius Paterculus (b.c. 20 B.C.), Pliny the Elder (A.D. 23-79), Valerius Maximus (early first century A.D.), Plutarch (c. A.D. 50-120), Dio Cassius (c. A.D. 164-229), Augustine (A.D. 354-430), Festus (fourth century A.D.), Julius Obsequens (fourth to fifth century A.D.), Orosius (late fourth to fifth century A.D.) and Macrobius (early fifth century A.D.). To avoid unintentional biases that may arise from previously translated sources, I will provide my own translations for all ancient texts.<sup>31</sup>

The major limitation to my thesis is Livy's missing books. In relation to records of Sibylline consultations due to disasters, the years covered by these books have unfortunately not been filled by other ancient authors. In the period covered by the missing second decade, 291-219 B.C., there are only two recorded consultations of the Sibylline books in response to a disaster. Of these, one is reported by Augustine and one by Orosius, both late fourth century A.D. authors. After the last recorded consultation by Livy in 173 B.C., there are only five more recorded instances during the Republican period, three from Obsequens in 165, 143 and 142 B.C., and finally, in 54 and 48 B.C., two from Dio Cassius.

## 1.5 Conclusion

My thesis examines how the *decemviri*, in their response to disasters, reshaped the sacred landscape of Rome from the beginning of the fifth century B.C, until the middle of the first century B.C. In Chapter two, I provide an historical overview of the *decemviri* and consider the justifications for the creation of a college

---

<sup>31</sup> All abbreviations for ancient texts follow the Oxford Classical Dictionary.

of ten. I examine these priests in terms of prestige and power. I conclude that the *decemviri*, as part of the political powerhouse of Rome, were capable of effecting religious changes in Rome. In Chapter three I analyse how the Romans experienced disasters. I investigate how they defined a disaster, how they chose to report them and consider the psychological responses to these events. In Chapter four, I look at the religious responses to disasters, and the process of expiation and consultation of the Sibylline books. I examine inconsistencies related to these events in the ancient evidence. I therefore consider the reliability of the sources used by ancient authors. I argue that the *decemviri* were the priests most responsible for the expiation of disasters and that Livy, and other ancient authors, provide reliable sources for many of these disaster narratives. In Chapter five I consider the concept of the Greek rite and argue that the changes to the religious space in Rome at the behest of the *decemviri*, although Greek in appearance, were essentially Roman. I investigate how the *decemviri*, through their responses to disasters, created sacred spaces through the introduction of new temples, festivals, and other such rituals. I analyse how these “sites of memories” became part of the Roman collective consciousness.

## Chapter 2. *Decemviri Sacris Faciundis*: Historical Overview

### 2.1 Introduction: Roman religion and the priesthoods

According to Cicero (106-43 B.C.), religion in Republican Rome was divided into three categories, ritual, auspices and the interpretation of prophetic warnings derived from prodigies.<sup>1</sup> Rites were the responsibility of the *pontifices*, the *augures* oversaw the auspices and the role of the *decemviri* fell into the last category.<sup>2</sup> These separate categories of religion formed the “great colleges of priests” in Rome, with each college in charge of its own area of expertise.<sup>3</sup> Roman priests were not like their Christian counterparts - they offered no moral advice nor were they involved in religious teachings. The role of mediator between the gods and men, so important in Christianity, was largely filled by the senate: it was this body of men who made most of the important religious decisions.<sup>4</sup>

Priests instead were “repositories of religious knowledge”, their authority lay in their role as specialist advisors to the senate.<sup>5</sup> Their separate concerns meant that religious authority was diffuse and followed the Republican ideal that power be shared between the leading families.<sup>6</sup> However, the priestly colleges, and Roman religion in general, were not independent of the political order of Rome. Religion and politics were so entwined that it not only makes no sense to separate them, but is an anachronism to view this inseparable link as a failing on the part of the Romans.<sup>7</sup> Indeed, Cicero commented on the wisdom of the ancestors who determined that “the same men should have charge of the worship of the immortal gods and the highest interests of the state.”<sup>8</sup> The colleges of priests were therefore composed of sitting magistrates, members of the senate and aspiring political candidates, all of whom belonged to the most powerful families. Unlike the annual magistracies, they held

---

<sup>1</sup> Cic. *Leg.* 2.20-21, *Nat. D.* 3.5.

<sup>2</sup> Cic. *Har. resp.* 18.

<sup>3</sup> Suet. *Aug.* 100: *sacerdotes summorum collegiorum*.

<sup>4</sup> Beard 1989: 31-34; Wissowa 1912: 479.

<sup>5</sup> Beard 1989: 43.

<sup>6</sup> Beard 1989: 42-43; North 1986: 257-58.

<sup>7</sup> Beard and Crawford 1985: 30; North 1990: 527-28; Wardman 1982: 20.

<sup>8</sup> Cic. *Dom.* 1.1: *eosdem et religionibus deorum immortalium et summae rei publicae praesse voluerunt*.



their positions for life. Thus, as diffuse and as specialised as their authority may have been, it was not limited by time: in their dual role of priest and politician, there was scope to appeal to religious traditions that would influence political decisions.<sup>9</sup> The best example was the college of *augures* - “In ancient times, neither public nor private matters were indeed transacted without first taking the auspices”.<sup>10</sup> In short, laws could only be passed, elections held, or senate meetings convened in spaces defined by augural ritual; public meetings could only proceed if the auspices were taken; and the validity of public decisions was dependent on the correct performance of rituals overseen by the *augures*.<sup>11</sup> This college could therefore either endorse or hinder public business.

Polybius, in his analysis of Roman religion, claimed that cohesion in the Roman state was maintained through *δεισιδαιμονία*, the fear of the gods: “these religious matters are exaggerated and introduced into their private and public life to such an extent that nothing can exceed them”.<sup>12</sup> This fear was physically manifested by the appearance of prodigies. The senate decided whether a phenomenon was a prodigy and who was responsible for its interpretation and expiation: they would then choose either the *haruspices*, or in the case of severe disasters, the *decemviri*, to perform this task. The senate would subsequently order the magistrates or priests to carry out the prescribed actions for expiation. In this way the senate was able to control or manipulate prodigy reports for political purposes.<sup>13</sup> Indeed, Polybius claimed that religion in Rome was a way of controlling the “fickle masses”.<sup>14</sup> Although his argument was somewhat contradicted by focussing on the religious piety, and superstitions, of the ruling elite, his theory at least illustrated the communicative power of these religious practices.<sup>15</sup> When Rome was threatened by prodigies, the senate and the priestly colleges used their specialised religious skills as a way of centralising the “religious fears” of the people: dangers would be forestalled through *remedia*.<sup>16</sup> Even though there was no guarantee that these

---

<sup>9</sup> Beard 1989: 43; Wardman 1982: 20.

<sup>10</sup> Cic. *Div.* 1.28: *nihil fere quondam maiores rei nisi auspicato ne privatim quidem gerebatur.*

<sup>11</sup> Beard *et al.* 1998: 23.

<sup>12</sup> Polyb. 6.56.8: *ἐπὶ τοσοῦτον γὰρ ἐκτετραγώδηται καὶ παρειαῖται τοῦτο τὸ μέρος παρ’αὐτοῖς εἶς τε τοὺς κατ’ἰδίαν βίου καὶ τὰ κοινὰ τῆς πόλεως ὥστε μὴ καταλιπεῖν ὑπερβολήν.*

<sup>13</sup> Warrior 2006: 49.

<sup>14</sup> Polyb. 6.56.11: *πληθὺς ... ἐλαφρόν.*

<sup>15</sup> Beard *et al.* 1998: 108-9; Liebeschuetz 1979: 4-5.

<sup>16</sup> Polyb. 6.56.11: *ἀδύλοις φόβοις.*

remedies would work, they offered the “opportunity for holding elaborate ceremonies, sometimes including festivals or new entertainments, so boosting public morale by civic display.”<sup>17</sup> Livy was particularly fond of this picture: the ruling elite “warding off terrifying, divine manifestations” and thereby alleviating the unrest and fear of the masses.<sup>18</sup> The priesthoods played an important role in this process and when these prodigies were particularly harsh, it was the *decemviri* who provided the *remedia*, reinforcing the power dichotomy of Rome, where the ruling classes maintained the *pax deorum* and masses reaped the benefit of their rational leadership.<sup>19</sup>

## 2.2 And then there were ten.

Dionysius of Halicarnassus claimed that during the reign of Tarquinius Superbus (534-510 B.C.), the Sibylline oracles were purchased from a foreign woman and that Tarquinius subsequently “appointed two distinguished men” to guard and interpret them.<sup>20</sup> Although these men, the *duumviri*, were patricians, in 367 B.C. membership of the college was raised to ten and for the first time included plebeians.<sup>21</sup> Livy associates this increase with the ongoing conflict between these political orders which involved the plebeian pursuit of the consulship:

“The tribunes, Sextius and Licinius, resolved to carry through a law that part of the *decemviri sacris* should be plebeians. Five patricians and five plebeians were elected, and it seemed that, by this step, a pathway was now made to the consulship.”<sup>22</sup>

By the end of the year, they had achieved their aim and, according to Livy, “after their long animosity, the orders were finally reconciled”.<sup>23</sup> Satterfield argues that the creation of the *decemviri* indicates the strong link between this priesthood and the consulship: although the *decemviri* interpreted prodigies and recommended expiation, it was the consuls who carried out their advice.<sup>24</sup> Thus, when the plebeians sought admission to the *virī sacris faciundis*, it was because “it was closely

---

<sup>17</sup> Beard et al. 1998: 38.

<sup>18</sup> Mineo 2015b: 127-28.

<sup>19</sup> Mineo 2015b: 126-129.

<sup>20</sup> Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom.* 4.62.4-5: ἄνδρας ἐπιφανεῖς δύο προχειρισάμενος; Zonar. 7.11.

<sup>21</sup> Liv. 6.37.12.

<sup>22</sup> Liv. 6.42.2: *tribuni Sextius et Licinius de decemviris sacrorum ex parte de plebe creandis legem pertulere. create quinque partum quinque plebis; graduque eo iam via facta ad consulatum videbatur.*

<sup>23</sup> Liv. 6.42.12: *ab diutina ira tandem in concordiam redactis ordinibus.*

<sup>24</sup> Satterfield 2013: 232.

connected to one of their primary goals: the sharing of political power through the opening of the consulship.”<sup>25</sup>

The consul's connection with prodigies is clearly illustrated in Livy: on twenty-six occasions, between 218 and 167 B.C., he recorded their involvement in expiation.<sup>26</sup> However, as prodigy reports in Livy's first decade are sporadic, there are no such records before 218 B.C. Although the better-preserved records for the later Republic might account for this discrepancy, consular involvement in the expiation of prodigies for the earlier period is difficult to establish. Livy's lost books mean that there are no records of when the consuls regularly became involved in this process.<sup>27</sup> And herein lies the problem with Satterfield's theory. The Licinio-Sextian law, that allowed Plebeians to join the *decemviri*, was enacted in 367 B.C. and therefore, it cannot be assumed that the consuls were actively involved in expiation at that time. Furthermore, from 444 until 367 B.C., the consuls were regularly replaced by consular tribunes. Livy suggests that this office gave the plebeians more access to “consular authority”, but his own evidence contradicts this statement, as up to 400 B.C., there were no plebeian consular tribunes.<sup>28</sup> Many details regarding the consular tribunate remain an enigma: it is uncertain why this magistracy was established and why consular tribunes were appointed in some years and not others.<sup>29</sup> With so many unexplained and unsatisfactory details, care must therefore be taken before making assumptions about the religious duties of either the consuls or the consular tribunes at this time.<sup>30</sup> The inability to establish a close relationship between the *decemviri* and the consulship suggests that the wrong question has been asked. Rather than question why Sextius and Licinius sought entry to this college, instead, it should be asked why the patricians allowed plebeian membership? Were there specific religious and political reasons?

---

<sup>25</sup> Satterfield 2013: 235.

<sup>26</sup> Satterfield identified eighteen: Liv. 22.1.8-20, 25.7.7-9, 27.23.1-4, 28.11.1-7, 30.2.9-13, 31.12.5-10, 32.1.10-14, 32.9.2-4, 32.29.1-2; 33.26.6-7; 34.55.1-5, 36.37.2-6, 38.44.7, 39.22.3-5, 40.19.1-5, 40.37.1-3, 41.15.3-4, 43.13.3-8. I have added seven more: 21.46.1-3; 24.11.1; 24.44.7-9; 27.11.1-6; 27.37.1; 35.21.2; 37.3.1; Satterfield 2013: 232 *n.* 49.

<sup>27</sup> Pina Polo 2011: 23-24.

<sup>28</sup> Liv. 4.6.8: *consulari potestate*.

<sup>29</sup> Cornell provides a detailed analysis of the establishment of the consular tribunate. Cornell 1995: 333-40.

<sup>30</sup> Oakley 1997: 367-76.

Santi suggests that the leading factor was the relationship between the *concordia ordinum* (the harmony of the orders), and the *pax deorum*.<sup>31</sup> Civil tensions between the patricians and the plebeians had begun in the second half of the fifth century B.C. and continued for almost a century. These tensions were frequently associated with the *ira deorum* (the anger of the gods) and therefore interpreted as a urgent need to appeal for the *pax deorum*.<sup>32</sup> In 461 B.C., for example, when the Terentilian law was proposed by the tribunes for the second time, Livy and Dionysius both related that several prodigies were reported.<sup>33</sup> The Sibylline books were consulted by the *duumviri*, who issued a warning of impending war unless civil factions were avoided. This warning was ignored, and the plebeians continued to repropose this law and incite the *populus* to sedition. Whenever Livy reported an escalation in the tensions between the patricians and the plebeians, prodigies would frequently be reported, although Livy did not specifically acknowledge a connection.<sup>34</sup> However, he did acknowledge that civic rivalries were the most destructive forces to nations and the most likely cause of “the wrath of the gods”.<sup>35</sup> Santi, therefore, claims that *pax civium* in Rome was an expression of the *pax deorum*. The Roman *civitas* owed its very existence to the harmonious relationship between the gods and men. As such, *pax deorum* could not exist without *concordia ordinum*.<sup>36</sup> From the moment the plebeians entered the *virī sacris faciundis* they could no longer be a threat to this peace, for they would be called, in the same manner and number as the patricians, to maintain the *pax* and when necessary, seek it afresh from the gods. The reform of the *virī sacris faciundis* from two to ten thus instituted the long-awaited *concordia ordinum*, established afresh the *pax deorum* and set the conditions for the creation of the first plebeian consul, L. Sextius, elected in 366 B.C.<sup>37</sup>

The role of these religious agents in maintaining civic harmony therefore illustrates the entwining nature of politics and religion in Republican Rome.

---

<sup>31</sup> Santi 2006: 172.

<sup>32</sup> Santi 2006: 174-75.

<sup>33</sup> The Terentilian law was first proposed by Gaius Terentilius in 462 B.C. and was aimed at restricting the power of the patricians by a codification of all the laws. Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom.* 10.2.2-6; Liv. 3.9.1-13, 10.6-7; Foster 1922: 30 *n.1*.

<sup>34</sup> Liv. 3.10.6-8; 3.29.8-9; 4.20.2-3; 4.25.1-3; 5.13.4-5.

<sup>35</sup> Liv. 4.9.2-3: *deum iras*.

<sup>36</sup> Santi 2006: 178.

<sup>37</sup> However, the formation of this college of ten did not end the struggle between the orders which continued into the first century B.C. Liebeschuetz 1979: 21; Santi 2006: 181.

However, it also raises questions concerning the significance of membership of the priestly colleges. How important were they for political advancement? Would membership of any college be enough or was one more prestigious than another?

### 2.3 Prestige and the *decemviri*

In his monumental work on Roman history, the nineteenth century historian, Mommsen, proposed the concept of ranking of the priestly colleges. He argued that Sextius and Licinius sought membership to the *virī sacris faciundis* because the patricians would have been reluctant to surrender control of the older, more established priesthoods, such as the *pontifices* and *augures*. The *duumviri*, being a younger college involved in the performance of foreign rites, was therefore the better choice for these new plebeian members.<sup>38</sup> Halm continues with Mommsen's theme of ranking by claiming that between 218 and 167 B.C., the *decemviri* was the least favoured of the three major priesthoods. He bases this assertion on the age of co-optation into the colleges: as the *augures* were consistently younger than both *pontifices* and the *decemviri* when co-opted, this priesthood was clearly the most sought after and consequently, the most prestigious. He alleges that the *decemviri*, who were "slightly older at co-optation" than both the *augures* and the *pontifices*, had probably "spent several years in unsuccessful attempts to obtain a more prestigious priesthood."<sup>39</sup> Halm therefore ranks the colleges in order of prestige as the *augures*, the *pontifices* and the *decemviri*. As such, Mommsen's assertion that the college of the *decemviri* was sought by the plebeians because it was the only college open to them and Halm's analysis of the relative prestige of the priestly colleges, suggests that regarding their prestige and subsequent power, the *decemviri* came in a poor, third place.

Szemler, in his analysis of the priesthoods of the Roman Republic between 210 and 43 B.C., appears to confirm this theory: seventy-two percent of *augures* during this time went on to become consuls, compared with sixty-seven percent of *pontifices* and just forty-two percent of the *decemviri*.<sup>40</sup> These figures imply that either the augurate was sought more often by men with their eyes on the highest

---

<sup>38</sup> Mommsen 1888: 295-96.

<sup>39</sup> Halm 1963: 75-76.

<sup>40</sup> The names and details of the priests in Szemler agrees with those of Rüpke in his more recent prosopography on Roman priests. Rüpke 2005: 70-131; Szemler 1972: 182-187

position in the state or that membership of this priesthood was the most likely to favour political advancement. Either hypothesis suggests that the *augures* were the more prestigious of the three colleges. However, there is a flaw in Szemler's analysis - the number of *decemviri* for whom information is available is small compared to the other colleges. These men constituted only twenty per cent of the total number of priests from the three major priesthoods in his study. Further, many of the priests are described as unknowns: priests for whom the "evidence is either inconclusive or unsatisfactory".<sup>41</sup> All that is known of these men is that they held a priesthood - there are no additional details concerning their careers. Thirty-nine percent of the *decemviri* surveyed fall into this category, along with thirty percent of the *augures* and twenty-six percent of the *pontifices*. Once these unknowns are removed from the sample groups, only nineteen *decemviri*, thirty-eight *augures* and fifty-three *pontifices* remain.<sup>42</sup> The small number of *decemviri* means that assessments regarding their career paths becomes unreliable. Overall, the *pontifices* and the *augures* are far better documented in the ancient evidence compared with other priesthoods. Thus, there is far more available material to allow detailed investigations of these men compared with the *decemviri*, a point made by Beard when she chose the *pontifices* and *augures* to analyse in her examination of priests during the Roman Republic.<sup>43</sup>

Wissowa maintains that the *decemviri*, although the more recently established of the colleges, differs from the *pontifices* and the *augures* only by the fact that its title indicates the number of members. The increase in membership in 367 B.C. and the increasing significance of both the Sibylline books and the *Graecus ritus*, extended to them the same importance as the other two colleges.<sup>44</sup> The *lex Domitia* of 103 B.C. is a case in point: when election to the priesthoods was changed from co-optation to election, the *decemviri* was subject to this law along with these older colleges.<sup>45</sup> Although they operated independently with separate rules and traditions, North argues that this law suggests the major colleges were groups "with a common status and common regulations."<sup>46</sup> Beard *et al.* also argue against the concept of a

---

<sup>41</sup> Szemler 1972: 182.

<sup>42</sup> Szemler 1972: 182.

<sup>43</sup> Beard 1989: 35.

<sup>44</sup> Wissowa 1912: 534-35.

<sup>45</sup> Cic. *Leg. agr.* 2,18; Vell. Pat. 2,12,3

<sup>46</sup> North 1990: 531; Scheid 1985: 68-69.

strict ranking of the priestly colleges as each college had its own specialised area of expertise which was their responsibility, and theirs' alone.<sup>47</sup>

According to Dionysius, "there is no possession of the Romans, either sacred or profane, that they guard as carefully as the Sibylline oracles."<sup>48</sup> As Dionysius' history, written in Greek, was composed to appeal to an educated and politically aware audience, there seems no reason to doubt his claim.<sup>49</sup> Thus, Halm's theory, that the men entrusted with the guardianship of these books had joined the college in charge of their preservation because they had failed entry to another, seems unlikely. Halm also oversimplifies the entry process, which according to North, was not straightforward.<sup>50</sup> For example, Dio claimed that men from the same *gens* were not usually members of the same priesthood at the same time.<sup>51</sup> Although Szemler suggests that Dio was referring only to the colleges of *augures*, North argues that the implications of the *lex Domitia*, as detailed above, suggest otherwise.<sup>52</sup> Indeed, it was in the interest of the ruling nobles that the available spaces in these colleges were shared among different families to avoid a concentration of power.<sup>53</sup> As such, priesthoods were usually not passed from father to son. There were of course exceptions to the rule, occasionally one family may be overrepresented in a college, and there are examples of men being a member of more than one priesthood at the same time. But these cases are unusual. Szemler records only seven men who held dual priesthoods.<sup>54</sup>

On average, thirty-six percent of men who entered a priesthood did so before achieving a higher magistracy compared with thirteen percent who entered after this accomplishment.<sup>55</sup> This suggests that these colleges were an important stage in the careers of many men. Two well-known examples are Julius Caesar (100-44 B.C.) and Cicero. Caesar, from an established patrician family, was elected pontifex maximus, the chief priest of the state, early in his career.<sup>56</sup> Conversely, Cicero, a

---

<sup>47</sup> Beard *et al.* 1998: 20.

<sup>48</sup> Dion. Hal. 6.42.5.

<sup>49</sup> Gabba 1991: 67; Goold 1961: 189-96.

<sup>50</sup> North 1990: 533-35.

<sup>51</sup> Dio Cass. 39.17.1.

<sup>52</sup> North 1990: 531; Szemler 1972: 190.

<sup>53</sup> Beard 1989: 42-43; North 1990: 534.

<sup>54</sup> Szemler 1972: 190.

<sup>55</sup> Before: *pontifices* 42%, *augures* 39% and *decemviri* 29%; after: *Pontifices* 15%, *augures* 13%, *decemviri* 10%. Szemler 1972: 182-87.

<sup>56</sup> Plut. *Caes.* 7; Suet. *Iul.* 13; Vell. Pat. 2.43.

non-patrician from the provinces, was admitted to the college of *augures* only after he had served as a consul.<sup>57</sup>

So, what does this all suggest? Although the college of *augures* and *pontifices* seemed more popular, and hence the more prestigious, of the three major colleges, these priesthoods were better documented than the *decemviri*, thus skewing the evidence.<sup>58</sup> With the entwining nature of politics and religion, a priesthood was an important step in the political careers of many men, although not essential. Entry to all these colleges was therefore competitive and they favoured men from the most powerful families. The *lex Domitia* was an attempt to wrest some of this power from these families and enforce recruitment to these colleges by popular election. This law, its subsequent reform under Sulla and its renewal by Labienus in 63 B.C., illustrates the important role played by members of the priestly colleges to the political powerhouse of Rome.<sup>59</sup>

## 2.4 Priestly power

How much power then, did the *decemviri* wield? Not much, according to Gillmeister. He claims that the powers of the *decemviri* were completely subsidiary to the supreme powers of Rome. That is, “in presenting their findings to the senate they had no influence (at least not as priests) on what happened to them next”.<sup>60</sup> Gillmeister provides evidence for his claim by maintaining that on several occasions, the senate rejected the findings of the *decemviri*. However, he cites but one.<sup>61</sup> In 144 B.C., the senate commissioned the praetor Marcius to increase the water supply to the city. Members of the college of *decemviri* subsequently objected to the construction of the proposed Marcian aqueduct, citing that the Sibylline books, which had been consulted for another reason, said that it was not right for water from the Anio to be brought into Rome.<sup>62</sup> Although the senate rejected this proposal, the fact that they debated it, both in 144 and again three years later, indicates that this declaration carried weight.<sup>63</sup> So, rather than illustrating a lack of autonomous power,

---

<sup>57</sup> Cic. *Fam.* 4.5, *Phil.* 2.4.

<sup>58</sup> Beard: 1989: 35.

<sup>59</sup> For details of the *lex Labiena*, see Dio 37.37.1-2; North 1990: 539-41; Scheid 1985: 69-70.

<sup>60</sup> Gillmeister 2007: 59.

<sup>61</sup> I have been unable to locate another. Gillmeister 2007: 59-60.

<sup>62</sup> Frontin. *Aq.* 1.7.

<sup>63</sup> Mazurek 2004: 160.



I believe it illustrates that these men assumed that they could use religious means to influence the decisions of the state. The attempt to block construction of the aqueduct was not the action of powerless men, but the action of men who recognised the utility of religion and the role it could play in forcing state decisions. Although, in this case, the pressing need for water outweighed their desires, the objection of the *decemviri* to the construction of this aqueduct was most likely motivated for political considerations.

The motivation to use religion as a political tool was again illustrated in 56 B.C. when the statue of Jupiter on the Alban Mount was struck by lightning. This was considered a prodigy by the senate who ordered consultation of the Sibylline books. They contained advice pertaining to King Ptolemy, who having been expelled from Egypt, was residing in Rome and bribing members of the senate to assist in his restoration as king.<sup>64</sup> The sacred books decreed that although he should be offered friendship, he was not to be supported by Roman military force, as it “would bring sufferings and dangers” to the state.<sup>65</sup> This oracle was in direct opposition to a decree previously voted by the senate: it was therefore widely believed to be an invention aimed at Pompey and his supporters by their political opponents.<sup>66</sup> In an effort to gain popular support, the contents of the oracle were announced to populace, an unlawful event unless voted by the senate. Although Dio argued that this was carried out through the whim of the young tribune Porcius Cato, the fact that Cato managed to convince fifteen men of this feat strongly suggests that members of this college had a vested interest in the result. This event not only illustrates the political exploitation of religion but again, the entwining nature of religion and politics. That the *decemviri* agreed, against precedent, to release the contents of this oracle, suggests that their role as political proponents took precedence over their role as priests.<sup>67</sup>

Many innovative religious traditions were introduced through the Sibylline books. New cults and unusual rituals were proposed, and great temples were built by

---

<sup>64</sup> Dio suggests that Ptolemy left Egypt at his own volition. Cicero, a contemporary observer, says he was expelled. Dio Cass. 39.12.1-3; Cic. *Rab. Post.* 4.

<sup>65</sup> Dio Cass. 39.15.3: *πόνους καὶ κινδύνους ἔξετε.*

<sup>66</sup> Cic. *Ad Fam.* 1.7.4.

<sup>67</sup> Dio Cass. 39.15.3; Liebeschuetz 1979: 18; Siani-Davies 1997: 326.

their advice to the senate.<sup>68</sup> As members of the political elite, it is not unlikely that when consulting the books, these men knew the types of responses which were required from the senate. The most powerful example involved the *Carmina Marciana*. In 213 B.C., the ongoing war with Hannibal led to an increase in superstitious fears in Rome and Livy reports that the relationship between men and the gods altered. Religious traditions were abandoned, and men turned more and more to “prophetical books and prayers” of dubious origin and quality. The senate ordered that these non-official prophecies be collected by the city praetor, Marcus Aemilius.<sup>69</sup> Among those collected were a set of verses by a noted seer Marcius which contained two prophecies. The first, which was only made known after the event, predicted the disaster at Cannae; the second, harder to interpret, proposed that the *decemviri* should order a festival to Apollo if the Romans wished “to drive out (their) enemies”.<sup>70</sup> A year later, continued military campaigns brought new religious concerns, particularly regarding the second Marcian prophecy. The *decemviri* were therefore ordered to consult the Sibylline books. The books agreed with the contents of the prophecy and the first *Ludi Apollinares* were decreed.<sup>71</sup> MacBain claims that the *Carmina Marciana* were decemviral fabrications which may have been aimed at either appeasing the people in times of public stress or at increasing the power of the *decemviri*.<sup>72</sup> While this theory in itself is difficult to prove, I believe MacBain is right in claiming that the whole affair illustrates the entwining nature of the religious and the political. The priestly powers of the *decemviri* and the legal powers of the city praetor converged “to turn a potentially dangerous outburst of religious hysteria to the advantage of the state through religious means.”<sup>73</sup>

## 2.5 Conclusion

The entwining nature of religion and politics in Rome was no failing on their part: it was through the careful adherence to religious traditions that the Romans had won battles, overcome civic disorder, survived disasters and expanded their empire.<sup>74</sup> Indeed, Cicero claimed that the empire was won by those commanders

---

<sup>68</sup> North 1976: 9.

<sup>69</sup> Liv. 25.1.6-12: *libros vaticinos precationesve*.

<sup>70</sup> Liv. 25.12.9: *hostis ... expellere*.

<sup>71</sup> Liv. 25.12.11-15.

<sup>72</sup> MacBain 1982: 40.

<sup>73</sup> MacBain 1982: 40.

<sup>74</sup> North 1976: 1.

who obeyed the rules of religion.<sup>75</sup> The college of *decemviri* was therefore an essential part of this interconnected system and their role was categorically tied to the *pax deorum*. The equal balance of patricians and plebeians ensured that both orders of men were responsible for this peace.

Although many men sought membership to this college as a way of advancing their careers, the religious role of this priestly college should not be underestimated. Their recommendations in response to disasters, although of a political nature, were concerned with the welfare, and hence the future, of the state.<sup>76</sup> Their responsibility for maintaining and seeking the *pax deorum* through the introduction of rituals and cults, provided psychological relief from the alarms and anxieties associated with disastrous events.<sup>77</sup> Their responses were no doubt influenced by the conditions and circumstances of the day. When the circumstances were particularly pressing, and caused considerable stress and anxiety, they would direct the fears of the people towards a common purpose of hope and optimism.

---

<sup>75</sup> Cic. *Nat. D.* 2.8.

<sup>76</sup> Boyce 1938: 165.

<sup>77</sup> MacBain 1982: 41-42.

## Chapter 3. The Experience of Disasters

### 3.1 Introduction: the disaster narrative and Livy

In Livy's lifetime, Rome and Italy were subject to many disasters, both natural and man-made. He was born as Rome plunged into years of civil war, and it is against this backdrop that he spent his youth. It is not known when he moved to Rome or where in the city he resided, but it may be assumed that he was witness to the precariousness of life in a large, overcrowded city, full of poorly built wooden buildings.<sup>1</sup> Fire was a common hazard, and as much of the city was built on low-lying swampy ground, it was subject to frequent flooding.<sup>2</sup> Ancient evidence also accounts for five earthquakes between 44 B.C. and A.D. 5, two incidences of famine in 42 and 5 B.C., and four outbreaks of pestilence between 46 and 22 B.C.<sup>3</sup> These disasters are no doubt a small sampling of the sort of calamities with which Rome's citizens had to contend and which ensured a continuous source of disruption and suffering. Dio, for example, reports that the pestilence of 43 B.C. spread over nearly all of Italy and that the famine of 42 B.C. left many dead in the city of Rome.<sup>4</sup> Although the poorest and most vulnerable were usually the most affected by disasters, outbreaks of disease knew no such social boundaries. It seems unlikely that Livy would be unaffected by these events. However, in his history, Livy usually gave these types of disasters a glancing note. Although his descriptions of war-time disasters were more detailed and highlighted the emotional impact of these events, his ignorance of military tactics and his careless siege descriptions strongly suggest that he did not see military service.<sup>5</sup> Consequently, it may be assumed that Livy drew from a continual source of suffering that surrounded him for his vivid retellings of the emotional effects of war-time disasters. Therefore, although Livy's descriptions of natural disasters were limited, his detailed depictions of the impact of wartime

---

<sup>1</sup> Mineo 2015a: xxxiii-xxxiv.

<sup>2</sup> Aldrete 2007: 4; Toner 2013: 19.

<sup>3</sup> Earthquake: **44 B.C.** Obseq. 68; Verg. G. 1.469-98; **43 B.C.** Dio Cass. 43.17.4; **17 B.C.** Obseq. 71; **2 B.C.** Dio Cass. 55.10.9; **A.D. 5** Dio Cass. 55.22.3.  
Famine: **42 B.C.** Dio Cass. 48.18.1, 48.31.1; App. *B Civ.* 5.8.67; **5 B.C.** Dio Cass. 54.1.2, 55.22.3.  
Pestilence: **46 B.C.** Cic. *Fam.* 5.15.4; 43 B.C. Dio Cass. 45.17.8; **23 B.C.** Dio Cass. 53.33.4; **22 B.C.** Dio Cass. 54.1.2.

<sup>4</sup> Dio Cass. 45.17.8, 48.18.1.

<sup>5</sup> Champion 2015: 196; Walsh: 157-63.

disasters on the Roman psyche conveniently capture how they responded to anxiety and fear. His retelling of history may be subjective and at times irrational, but it conveys a sense of human suffering that is missing from other ancient writers.<sup>6</sup> Clearly illustrated in Livy's battle narratives, therefore, is the Roman experience of disasters.

### 3.2 What is a disaster?

From the Latin sources, the terms most commonly employed to describe a disastrous event were *clades*, *calamitas*, and *casus*. These terms referred to disasters of all types. For example, Livy recorded that in 453 B.C., Rome was affected by both famine and pestilence:<sup>7</sup>

“Next, two great misfortunes appeared simultaneously, famine and pestilence, deadly to both men and herd animals ... the year was tainted by these numerous disasters (*multiplici clade*)”.<sup>8</sup>

Cicero argued that some natural disasters were relatively rare:

“Fortune herself causes other less common disasters (*casus rariores*): first by inanimate causes, hurricanes, storms, shipwrecks, catastrophes, conflagrations ...”<sup>9</sup>

And Suetonius (c. A.D. 70-130), writing of Caligula's reign (A.D. 37-41), describes how the emperor frequently lamented the lack of public disasters through which he might have gained renown:

“He used to openly complain about the circumstance of his times, which was not distinguished by public disasters (*calamitatibus publicis*) ... and often

---

<sup>6</sup> Walsh views this type of writing as “emphatically unscientific history” but acknowledges that it illustrates “authentic human suffering”. Walsh 1967: 172.

<sup>7</sup> Outbreaks of disease will be referred to as pestilence. I have done this to avoid the term plague which may be confused with the bubonic plague. According to Little, the first appearance of bubonic plague in Europe was in the sixth century A.D. Little 2007: 3.

<sup>8</sup> Liv. 3.32.2-4: *dein duo simul mala ingentia exorta, fames pestientique, foeda homini, foeda pecori ... multiplici clade foedatus annus.*

<sup>9</sup> Cic. Off. 20.19: *haec igitur ipsa fortuna ceteros casus rariores habet: primum ab inanimis procellas, tempestates, naufragia, ruinas, incendia ...*

wished for a massacre of his troops, a famine, a pestilence, conflagrations or any earthquake.”<sup>10</sup>

As well as pestilence and famine, Livy also used *clades* to describe other natural disasters such as earthquakes and fire. For example, he recorded both events in Rome in 192 B.C:

“At Rome, in the same period, there were two extensive warnings, one long lasting but more sluggish: the earth shook for thirty-eight days ...the other no groundless fear, but to many, a genuine disaster: a fire broke out in the Forum Boarium, and for a day and a night, the buildings facing the Tiber burned ...”<sup>11</sup>

Interestingly, Livy never used the term *clades* in relation to floods, although he frequently recorded these events. He related nine separate flooding events, often detailing the severe damage they caused:

“Twice that year there was extensive flooding and the Tiber inundated farmlands, with much destruction to buildings and cattle, and loss of human life.”<sup>12</sup>

Mostly Livy used *clades* to describe man-made disasters associated with war. Indeed, of the 180 instances where he used this term in his history, over ninety per cent referred to war-time disasters. These disasters included grave defeats in battle, the sack of cities, and ruthless massacres. For example:

“And yet, the disaster on the battlefield was overshadowed when the Tarquinienses killed for sacrifice, three hundred and seven captured Roman soldiers.”<sup>13</sup>

Greek historians writing about Rome often described disasters in terms of destruction and ruin, misfortune, pestilence or famine, employing terms such as

---

<sup>10</sup> Suet. *Cal.* 31.1: *queri etiam de condicione temporum suorum solebat, quod nullis calamitatibus publicis insignirentur ... atque identidem exercituum caedes, famem, pestilentiam, incendia, hiatum aliquem terrae optabat.*

<sup>11</sup> Liv. 35.40.8: *Romae per idem tempus duo maximi fuerunt terrores, diutinus alter, sed segnior: terra dies duodequadraginta movit ... ille non pavor vanus, sed vera multorum clades fuit: incendio a foro Bovario orto diem noctemque aedificia in Tiberim versa arsere ...*

<sup>12</sup> Liv. 24.9.6: *aquae magnae bis eo anno fuerunt Tiberisque agros inundavit cum magna strage tectorum pecorumque et hominum pernicie.*

<sup>13</sup> Liv. 7.15.10: *nec in acie tantum ibi cladis acceptum quam quod trecentos septum milites Romanos captos Tarquinienses immolarunt.*

*φθορά, συμφορά, λοιμικός* and *λιμός*. For example, Polybius (c.200-118 B.C.) questioned the wisdom of ascribing public misfortunes to fate and listed these misfortunes as:

“Extraordinary, heavy and continuous rain and snow, or on the other hand, the destruction (*φθορά*) of crops by drought and frost, or the unremitting outbreak of plague (*λοιμικαί*) or other similar things ...”<sup>14</sup>

And Dionisius of Halicarnassus (c. 60 B.C.– after 7 B.C.) reported the long-lasting distress suffered by the Romans after their disastrous defeat at Lake Regulus in 495 B.C:

“Not only was this an enormous disaster (*συμφορά*) for the Latins, through which they suffered greatly, but the losses (*φθόρος*) of men were as great as ever before.”<sup>15</sup>

Throughout its history, Rome suffered many such disasters both through natural causes and the effects of war. Occasionally, these were reported by ancient historians in great detail: Tacitus’ provided a thorough description of the fire in A.D. 64 during the reign of Nero.<sup>16</sup> However, mostly these events were mentioned almost in passing. For this reason, it is often difficult to understand how an event came to be thought of as a disaster and how the Romans experienced and made sense of these events.

### 3.3 Reporting the devastation

In his study of how natural disasters were narrated by ancient historians, Newbold notes that these men were more interested in reporting structural damage than how individuals, or groups of individuals, experienced these events. Consequently, many reports of ancient disasters were simply a recording of their occurrence or a list of the damage to buildings and agricultural lands.<sup>17</sup> Newbold’s observations are well-illustrated by Diodorus Siculus (first century B.C.), whose

---

<sup>14</sup> Polyb. 36.17.2: *οἷον ὄμβρων καὶ νιφετῶν ἐξαισίων ἐπιδορὰ συνεχῆς ἢ ταναντία πάλιν αὐχμῶν καὶ πάγων καὶ διὰ ταῦτα φθορὰ καρπῶν ὁμοίως λοιμικαὶ διαθέσεις συνιχίς ἄλλα παραπλήσια τούτοις ...*

<sup>15</sup> Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom.* 6.12.6: *συμφορά τε αὕτη μεγίστη Λατίνοις ἐγένετο δι’ ἣν ἐπὶ πλεῖστον ἐκακώθησαν καὶ φθόπος σωμάτων ὅσος οὕτω πρότερον.*

<sup>16</sup> Tac. *Ann.* 25.38-40.

<sup>17</sup> Newbold 1982: 30-31.

record of an earthquake in Sparta in 464 B.C. merely reported that many buildings collapsed, and that more than twenty thousand Spartans were killed.<sup>18</sup> Likewise, Dionysius recorded a pestilence in Rome in 463 B.C. that affected both animals and humans. His report contained a list of casualties, which initially involved herd animals, herdsman and farmers. Having spread to Rome, he estimated that a quarter of the senate perished and reported that bodies of the dead were heaped onto carts and eventually disposed in the river.<sup>19</sup> Livy told of a similar disaster in 366-364 B.C., as Rome was again blighted by pestilence. Considering the length of this outbreak, Livy's record was brief: he advised that many citizens died, including the former dictator Camillus, and that the ongoing epidemic was considered a sign of divine displeasure.<sup>20</sup>

In these narratives, Diodorus, Dionysius and Livy are seemingly disinterested in the sociological aspects of the disasters and the psychological effects on the people involved. For Diodorus the earthquake was merely a catalyst for a subsequent war between the Helots and the Messenians, and Sparta.<sup>21</sup> Dionysius' disaster allowed him to excuse Rome's lack of accomplishments that year and to explain their increased vulnerability to attacks by neighbouring peoples.<sup>22</sup> And the objectives of Livy's disaster narrative were threefold: it introduced an obituary to Camillus, it provided the motive for the third *lectisternium* in Rome and it gave voice to one of Livy's rare digressions - the origins of the *ludi scaenici*.<sup>23</sup> Toner argues that often, disasters "were fitted into a variety of narrative forms in order both to give them a purpose and to meet a purpose."<sup>24</sup> Whatever the purpose, missing from these narratives are community experiences, human interactions and individual viewpoints that often dominate modern disaster reports.<sup>25</sup>

---

<sup>18</sup> Diod. Sic. 4.63.1-2.

<sup>19</sup> Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom.* 9.67.1-3.

<sup>20</sup> Livy 3.32.2-3.

<sup>21</sup> Dio. Sic. 4.63.4.

<sup>22</sup> Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom.* 9.67.

<sup>23</sup> Livy 3.32.4.

<sup>24</sup> Toner 2013: 108.

<sup>25</sup> Alexander 2005: 27-28.



### 3.4 Psychological responses: alarm, fear and despair

In her modern study of the psychological reactions to disasters, Wolfenstein argues that human nature often develops an attitude of denial to impending threats, either by choosing to ignore them or refusing to believe that such a thing would happen.<sup>26</sup> However, when denial is no longer possible, panic is the most common expected reaction to this impending threat; the terrified mob giving way to extreme, uncontrolled and unthinking behaviours, fleeing with little concern for the welfare of others. Reality, however, tells a different story. Wolfenstein argues that while an impending disaster may cause abject terror in individuals or groups, it usually does not lead to what she refers to as “non-useful behaviour”, nor does it necessarily precipitate flight or loss of regard for others.<sup>27</sup> Instead, communal resolutions are common and concerns for the well-being of others are heightened.<sup>28</sup> She states that immediately following a disastrous event, survivors may experience feelings of abandonment, which intensifies their feelings of anxiety and fear. This is especially prevalent in wartime disasters when trusted leaders are lost.<sup>29</sup> These expressions of anxiety and fear are often determined by cultural forces and different values may be placed on the control of fear and the restraint of intense emotional responses.<sup>30</sup> And, human emotions are often expressed in religious terms - either feelings towards the supernatural are intensified, or there is a feeling of having been abandoned by these same forces.<sup>31</sup>

In many pre-industrial societies, disasters were a reminder of “one’s own mortality and the impermanence and precariousness of life”.<sup>32</sup> This perhaps explains the lack of emotional involvement by ancient authors when they reported natural disasters and is clearly illustrated when Livy related, almost in passing, that a pestilence had attacked Rome in 347 B.C:

---

<sup>26</sup> Wolfenstein 1957: 3

<sup>27</sup> Wolfenstein 1957: 85-89.

<sup>28</sup> Wolfenstein 1957: 91-103, 110-118, 189.

<sup>29</sup> Wolfenstein 1957: 62-63.

<sup>30</sup> Wolfenstein 1957: 106.

<sup>31</sup> Wolfenstein 1957: 61.

<sup>32</sup> Alexander 2005: 31.

“a pestilence attacked the citizens, and the senate assembled and ordered the decemviri to consult the Sibylline books; and by their advice a lectisternium was held.”<sup>33</sup>

The reactions described by Wolfenstein are more commonly reported by ancient historians when describing disasters associated with war. Livy repeatedly stressed the emotions of the Romans after they suffered major defeats in battle. Walsh argues that Livy was interested in the psychological considerations of those faced with these challenging situations:

“Livy perpetually seeks to communicate with the minds of men of the past, to relive the mental and emotional experiences felt. Only thus, he implies, can one begin to understand that though the accidents of place and time are different, the essential experiences of humankind never change.”<sup>34</sup>

Many of the psychological reactions detailed in Wolfenstein are evident in Livy's accounts of wartime disasters. For example, in 391 B.C., after the Gauls had invaded Italy and were making their way towards Rome, Livy related that the Romans would not conceive that a hostile force, of which so little was known, would possibly besiege their city. As a result, they failed to properly prepare and refused to elect a dictator to counter the threat.<sup>35</sup> When the Gauls finally invaded Rome in 390 B.C., Livy described their reactions in terms of suspense, fear and dread, but not panic.<sup>36</sup> Indeed, following the news that the Gauls had breached the walls of their city, despite this fear, many Romans decided to stay and defend the Citadel. Free men of military age and able-bodied senators, their wives and children withdrew to the Capitol to defend its gods and the name of Rome.<sup>37</sup> But in an ultimate display of altruism, elderly senators refused to enter the Citadel, preferring to die rather than use the already limited resources required to keep them alive.<sup>38</sup> People did leave

---

<sup>33</sup> Liv. 7.27.1: *pestilentia civitatem adorta coegit senatum impetrare decemviris ut libros Sibyllinos inspicerent; eorumque monitu lectisternium fuit.*

<sup>34</sup> Walsh 1967: 168-172.

<sup>35</sup> Livy 5.37.1-3.

<sup>36</sup> Livy most commonly uses the terms *pavor* and *terror* to describe the reactions of Romans to severe stress. English translations consistently translate these terms as panic. However, I believe they are incorrect. Although they might mean extreme fear, dread, anxiety and fear, I do not believe that Livy used them in terms of panic, at least not in the modern sense of the word.

<sup>37</sup> Liv. 5.39.3-10.

<sup>38</sup> Liv. 5.39.13.

Rome - mainly plebeians - but there was an order to their movement, said Livy, “as though an army on the march”.<sup>39</sup> Although Oakley argues that this narrative was aimed at illustrating the change of behaviour of the Romans after a series of inept, “out-of-character, and at times comical,” behaviours, Livy’s retelling of this event does provide an idea of how the Romans may have responded to similar stressful situations.<sup>40</sup>

In 212 B.C., the Romans suffered a severe defeat in Spain which involved the loss of two trusted commanders, Publius and Gnaeus Scipio. Livy described the reactions of the soldiers:

“They remembered the generals who had recently led them, and the fine forces which usually gave them confidence in battle, and they suddenly began weeping and beat their heads; some raised their hands to the heavens, blaming the gods; others flung themselves onto the ground, calling aloud the name of their own dead commander.”<sup>41</sup>

In the aftermath of this disaster, these soldiers were reduced to intense feelings of despair, lamenting that even the gods had abandoned them. Their new commander Lucius Marcius, however, “rebuked them for giving themselves up to womanly and useless weeping” – it seems that, for Roman soldiers, high value was placed on emotional restraint.<sup>42</sup>

These psychological responses to war-time disasters are not limited to Livy. Dionysius related the fear felt by the Romans following an attack by the Sabines in the late sixth century B.C: he reported Romans wailing for the dead and of their feelings of compassion for the survivors.<sup>43</sup> Diodorus told of the emotional outpourings in Rome after news reached the city of the disastrous defeat of the Roman army at Cannae in 216 B.C. - women weeping *en masse* in the temples and elderly men bemoaning the loss, waiting helplessly by the city gates for news of

---

<sup>39</sup> Liv. 5.40.5: *ex urbe effuse velut agmine*.

<sup>40</sup> Oakley 2015: 236.

<sup>41</sup> Liv. 25.37.9: *recordati quos Paulo ante imperatores habuissent quibusque et ducibus et copiis freti prodire in pugnam solatia essent, flere omnes repente et offensare capita et alii manus ad caelum tendere deos incusantes, alii strati humi suum quisque nominatim ducem implorare*.

<sup>42</sup> Liv. 25.37.10: *et ... increpante Marcio, quod in muliebris et inutiles se proiecissent fletus*.

<sup>43</sup> Dion. Hal. Ant. Rom. 5.44.4.

survivors.<sup>44</sup> And, although Polybius was critical of Greek historians for their exaggerated and emotionally charged descriptions of human suffering, and their propensity to conflate history with tragedy, he recalled that the destruction of men in the battle of Chios in 201 B.C. was so vast, that all who witnessed the aftermath were filled with horror.<sup>45</sup>

Perhaps the most telling example of the psychological effects of repeated and unrelenting suffering, however, came after the disaster at Cannae in 216 B.C., when Rome, already terrified as a consequence of the defeat, was further besieged by a number of prodigies. Livy told of two vestal virgins who were convicted of unchastity:

“This impious act, happening amid so many disasters, was turned into a prodigy and the decemviri were ordered to consult the Sibylline books”.<sup>46</sup>

Livy described how, by the directions of the Sibylline books, two couples, “a Gallic man and woman and likewise a pair of Greeks were buried alive in the Forum Boarium”.<sup>47</sup> More than anything else, this barbaric act illustrates the immense emotional reactions of the Romans to devastating calamities.<sup>48</sup> Polybius, the most contemporaneous historian to this event, related that at such times there were no rites that the Romans would consider unbecoming or beneath their dignity.<sup>49</sup> Albrecht *et al.*, in their analysis of the act of cursing in Rome, provide an analogy that may also be applied to this scene:

“The issue here is not the ‘objective’ ... justification for [such a barbaric act] but rather the degree of anxiety, fear, anger or distress that subjectively warranted recourse to [this action].”<sup>50</sup>

Certainly, Livy himself argued that this was an “un-Roman sacrifice”: he offered no moral justification other than the terrifying times.<sup>51</sup> However, as this sacrifice was

---

<sup>44</sup> Diod. Sic. 25.19.

<sup>45</sup> Polyb. 2.56.1-9; 16.8.8-9.

<sup>46</sup> Liv. 22.57.4: *hoc nefas cum inter tot, ut fit, clades in prodigium versum esset decemviri libros adire iussi sunt.*

<sup>47</sup> Liv 22.57.6: *Gallus et Galla Graecus et Graeca in foro Bovario sub terram vivi demissi sunt.*

<sup>48</sup> This sacrifice was commented on by both Pliny the Elder and Plutarch. Plutarch condemns it as a “barbaric or unnatural practice”. Plin. *HN* 28.3; Plut. *Marc.* 3.4: *βαρβαρικὸν ... οὐδ’ ἔκφυλον ἐπιτηδεύοντες*; Várhelyi 2007: 298.

<sup>49</sup> Polyb. 3.112.

<sup>50</sup> Albrecht *et al.* 2018: 575.

<sup>51</sup> Liv. 22.56.4-5, 57.2, 6: *minime Romano sacro.*

ordered “by a decree of the Sibylline books”, the *decemviri* themselves may have provided the objective justification for such an extraordinary sacrifice: their role as priests was to seek the *pax deorum*, no matter what the cost.<sup>52</sup>

### 3.5 Conclusion

Ancient evidence provides two undeniable facts about natural disasters: they were commonplace and given the often-casual descriptions of these events, they were an accepted part of life. They also caused considerable suffering and distress, although, for the most part, this is only alluded to by ancient authors. However, in the battle narratives of Livy, evidence for the psychological and emotional reactions of the Romans in severe stress situations becomes evident. Many of these reactions mirror those described by Wolfenstein in her modern-day examination of the psychological responses to disasters. Although, psychological comparisons may be problematic when considered across cultural, ethnic and temporal boundaries, there is a remarkable similarity between the reactions described by Livy to those of Wolfenstein, suggesting that Livy’s descriptions were sourced from his own observations of human suffering.

Livy’s descriptions of natural disasters were usually brief and frequently, he conveyed the strong religious feelings and beliefs and the superstitious fears that these events engendered:

“The violence of the disease spread among them and the senate, finding no help in man, turned to the gods in prayer.”<sup>53</sup>

These types of religious responses were the norm. In the aftermath of a disaster, those affected would often turn to the gods as a way of making sense of the devastation. According to Livy, the resulting vows and expiations “did much to relieve the minds of men of fears relating to the gods”.<sup>54</sup> Disasters were therefore religious events: signs that the gods were angry and as such, an indication of the need to seek their favour.

---

<sup>52</sup> Liv. 22.57.6: *ex fatalibus libris*.

<sup>53</sup> Liv. 3.7.7: *late vagata est vis morbi inopsque senatus auxilii humani ad deos populum ac vota vertit*.

<sup>54</sup> Liv. 21.62.11: *magna ex parte levaverant religione animos*.

## Chapter 4. Religious Responses to Disasters

### 4.1 Introduction: divine anger and the peace of the gods

In Rome, natural disasters were often viewed as prodigies – extraordinary events which were not linked to the actions of men and were therefore warnings from the gods.<sup>1</sup> Cicero said that prodigies foretold that a disaster would occur if precautions were not taken.<sup>2</sup> Pliny the Elder warned that the evil of an earthquake was not just the danger it brought, but the greater evil it portended.<sup>3</sup> Indeed, in the years before both the defeats at Lake Trasumennus and at Cannae, Livy reported many prodigies in Rome, presumably foretelling these disasters. Prodigies, however, were not only viewed as warnings, frequently they were manifestations of the wrath of the gods (*ira deorum*). Livy attributed *ira deorum* as belonging to the “most extreme public misfortunes”, namely foreign wars, famine and disease.<sup>4</sup> Mostly, when he used this term, he was signifying that people were suffering.<sup>5</sup> Santangelo therefore suggests that *ira deorum* “can almost be evoked as a byword for disaster.”<sup>6</sup>

When prodigies were associated with the *ira deorum*, modern scholarship claims that they signified a rupture of the *pax deorum* – the peace that would normally exist between the gods and the state.<sup>7</sup> Indeed, Linderski states that throughout Livy’s history, the *pax deorum* was ruptured and restored on many occasions.<sup>8</sup> However, Satterfield argues that prodigy reports in Livy did not indicate that the *pax* was ruptured, only that it was needed:

“The Romans frequently sought (*impetrare*) or asked for (*exposcere*) or prayed for (*adorare*) the *pax deorum*, and sometimes found it (*invenire*); but it was never lost or ruptured or restored.”<sup>9</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Distelrath 2006.

<sup>2</sup> Cic. *Div.* 1.16.29, 18.35.

<sup>3</sup> Plin. *HN* 2.86.

<sup>4</sup> Liv. 4.9.3: *ultima publicorum malorum*.

<sup>5</sup> Livy used this term sixteen times. Ten times it was related to disasters, and eight of these were pestilence. Satterfield 2016: 167.

<sup>6</sup> Santangelo 2011: 169.

<sup>7</sup> Satterfield provides a thorough analysis of this scholarship. Satterfield 2015: 431-37.

<sup>8</sup> Linderski 1993: 611.

<sup>9</sup> Satterfield 2015: 432-33.

And certainly, in Livy, the *pax deorum* was always associated with one of these verbs. It may therefore be argued, that Livy did not think of the *pax deorum* in terms of it having been ruptured or restored. Barton suggests that the perception of *pax deorum* in the Republic was one of restraint which was imposed by the supreme powers in response to the pleas of the defeated:

“One sued for peace on one’s knees, with one’s arms extended in supplication. This peace was the settlement, the order imposed by the gods on man”.<sup>10</sup>

As Livy always used this term with a verb of pleading, the sense of *pax deorum* in Livy focused on this idea of appeal, a notion he introduced early in his history when Rome was afflicted by pestilence:

“The only support left for their diseased bodies was to entreat for peace and mercy from the gods”.<sup>11</sup>

According to Linderski, this appeal for *pax* ensured the “security of the Roman state”: it was the fundamental concept on which Rome was founded and built, and how it subsequently conquered the world.<sup>12</sup> The *pax deorum*, was therefore the purpose of every religious ritual, and its appeal, the concern of every priest.<sup>13</sup>

## 4.2 Expiation: who did what?

One of the crucial responsibilities of the priesthoods therefore, when Rome was beset by disastrous and other, less severe events, was to seek the *pax deorum* through ritual.<sup>14</sup> According to Livy, the Roman king, Numa (712- 672 B.C.) decreed that it was the role of the pontifex maximus to decide “what prodigies sent by lightning or other visible signs were to be acknowledged and averted.”<sup>15</sup> This role eventually fell to the senate, although Livy did not indicate when.<sup>16</sup> Once the senate

---

<sup>10</sup> Barton 2008: 247.

<sup>11</sup> Liv. 1. 41.8: *unam opem aegris corporibus relictam si pax veniaque ab dis impetrare esset*.

<sup>12</sup> Livy uses the term *pax deorum* on sixteen occasions, eight of these are in reference to disasters and three to other prodigies. Linderski 1993: 55-56.

<sup>13</sup> Satterfield 2015: 433-34.

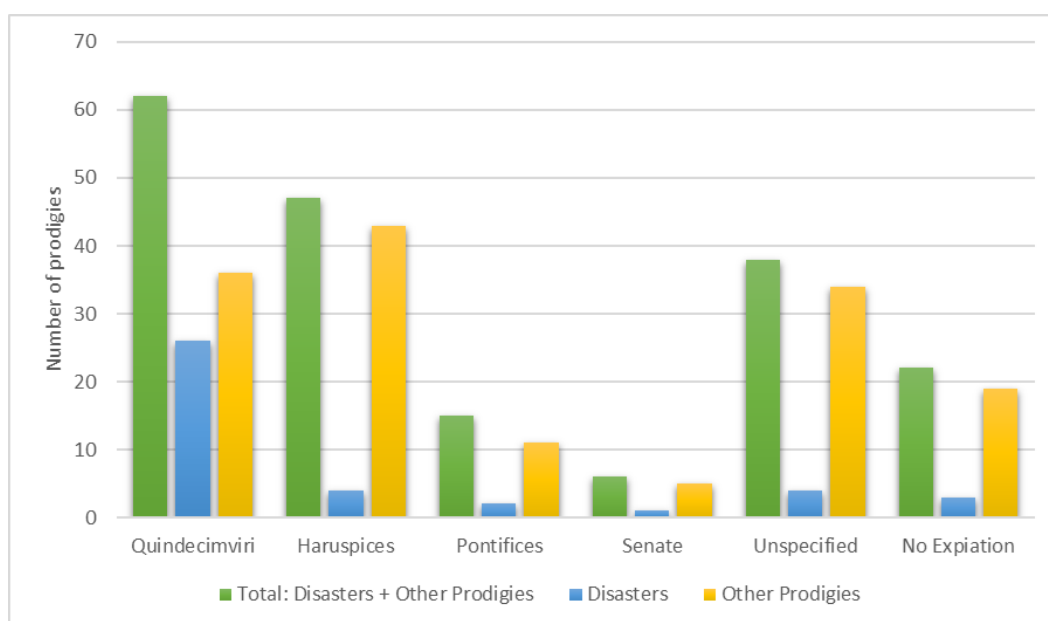
<sup>14</sup> Livy wrote of “rites which concerned the peace of the gods”. Liv. 24.11.1: *quae ad pacem deum pertinebant*.

<sup>15</sup> Liv. 1.20.7: *quaeque prodigia fulminibus aliove quo visu missa susciperentur atque curarentur*.

<sup>16</sup> Although Santangelo argues that the involvement of the pontiffs continued and was most likely either overlooked or taken for granted in the first steps in the process of expiation. Santangelo 2011: 171-72.

identified authentic prodigies, they would ask either the *pontifices*, the *haruspices* or the *decemviri*, for the appropriate responses for expiation.<sup>17</sup> The *haruspices* were members of the Etruscan aristocracy who were “well practiced in the interpretation of portents” and were therefore often called upon to interpret prodigies and propose remedies.<sup>18</sup>

Using data from McBain’s index of prodigies, 168 separate prodigy reports between 504 and 37 B.C. have been analysed.<sup>19</sup> As the amount of data in MacBain’s index is large, it was placed onto a bar graph to easily illustrate the relationships between the different priesthoods involved in the expiation of these prodigies (Graph I). The men involved in these expiations were the *decemviri*, the *haruspices* and the *pontifices*, although at times, only the senate was mentioned. For thirty-eight prodigies, the priesthoods were unspecified and for twenty-two, there was no mention of expiation. I have divided these prodigy reports into two groups, those involving disastrous events, and all other prodigies.



Graph I: Expiation of prodigies including disasters, 504 B.C –37 B.C.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Kearns 2016.

<sup>18</sup> Cic. Div. 1.93: *crebrius hostias immolabant*.

<sup>19</sup> McBain lists 173, and Rasmussen, 150. McBain included in his list apocryphal and some private prodigies which I have omitted. My number thus arises from McBain’s adjusted list. McBain 1982: 83-104; Rasmussen 2003: 53-116.

<sup>20</sup> This graph follows McBain’s prodigy lists. McBain 1982: 83-104.



For many of these prodigies it is impossible to ascertain why they were assigned to a particular priesthood for expiation. Livy, who usually began his account of each year with a list of prodigies, unfortunately did not make this process clear. Compare for example, in his reports for the years 218 and 214 B.C., there is little difference in the type or number of prodigies reported; he begins both accounts with a sceptical note regarding their reliability; and he ends each with a statement concerning the newly found religious peace (Table I).<sup>21</sup> These reports are seemingly interchangeable. McBain notes that there were very few prodigy types which were not handled by all the priesthoods on at least one occasion. For example, although he provides a list of prodigy types which appear to be characteristic of the *haruspices*, he acknowledges that there were few prodigies that were the exclusive domain of these priests.<sup>22</sup> However, what is clear from Graph I, is that the *decemviri* were the priests most often involved in the expiation of disastrous events. They did this by consulting the Sibylline books. Aulus Gellius, in his critique of the philosopher Favorinus, accuses him of discoursing with a “stern and heavy voice, as if he were the interpreter and arbiter of Sibyl’s oracle”.<sup>23</sup> What Gellius indicates by this passing comment, is that the process of consultation of the Sibylline Books was a solemn and meaningful undertaking.

### 4.3 The Sibylline books

The Romans came into possession of the Sibylline books during the reign of Tarquinius Superbus (534-510 B.C.). Dionysius said that these books were consulted:

“Whenever ordered by the senate, when the state is seized by factions or some great misfortune has happened to them in war or some important prodigies and apparitions are seen which are difficult to interpret, as often happens.”<sup>24</sup>

---

<sup>21</sup> Liv. 21.62.1,11; 24.10.6, 11.1.

<sup>22</sup> McBain 1982: 118-19.

<sup>23</sup> Gell. 4.1.1: *vocisque et vultus gravitate composita, tamquam interpres et arbiter Sibyllae oraculorum*.

<sup>24</sup> Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom.* 4.62.5: ὅταν ἡ βουλή ψηφίσῃται στάσεως καταλαβούσης τῆς πόλιν ἢ δυστυχίας τινὸς μεγάλης συμπεσοῦσης κατὰ πόλεμον ἢ τεράτων τεράς τινῶν καὶ φαντασμάτων μεγάλων καὶ δυσσευρέτων αὐτοῖς φανέντων οἷα πολλάκις συνέβη.

Between 504 B.C. and 38 B.C., there are seventy-two records in the ancient evidence for consultation of the Sibylline books by the *decemviri*. Livy recorded thirty-seven. This is no doubt not an accurate record of the number of consultations over a three-hundred and fifty-year period, especially when Livy's missing books are considered. Cicero, like Dionysius, implied that these books were frequently consulted: "How many times the senate ordered the decemviri to consult the Sibylline books!"<sup>25</sup> Livy stated that they were turned to when "some dreadful prodigies [were] announced".<sup>26</sup> Yet many consultations seemed to be in response to relatively inoffensive events. For example, in 344 B.C., they were examined in response to a shower of stones and a solar eclipse in Rome and in 38 B.C., Dio reported that they were consulted after the sprouting of olive oil on the banks of the Tiber.<sup>27</sup> However, in both these incidents, the prodigies were set against a background of fear and anxiety: before the prodigies of 344 were announced, Rome became involved with a war against the Volsci and the Aurunci; and the prodigies of 38 B.C. were related to civil unrest as a result of an insurgency against the tax-collectors.<sup>28</sup> Prodigies, therefore, were never mere events, they occurred at specific times with specific purposes. Even when they appeared in times of supposed peace, they carried meaning: the historical context against which these prodigies were reported was of great importance.<sup>29</sup>

Twenty-eight of the recorded Sibylline consultations were in relation to disasters – the sort of events that Dionysius might have referred to as "some great misfortunes" or Livy as "some dreadful prodigies" (Table II).<sup>30</sup> Twenty-three of these disasters were natural and consisted of famine, earthquake, pestilence, flood, drought, fire and severe weather. Only three consultations were in response to war-time disasters. Six of the disasters were associated with divine anger: four of these were in response to outbreaks of disease between 433 and 180 B.C., one to the disastrous defeat at Lake Trasumennus in 217 B.C., and one to flooding of the Tiber

---

<sup>25</sup> Cic. *Div.* 1.97: *quoties senatus decemviros ad libros ire iussit.*

<sup>26</sup> Liv. 22.9.8: *nisi cum taetra prodigia nuntiata sunt.*

<sup>27</sup> Liv. 7.28.7; Dio Cass. 48.43.4.

<sup>28</sup> Dio Cass. 48.43.1.

<sup>29</sup> Altheim 1938: 198.

<sup>30</sup> Dion. Hal. *Rom Ant.* 4.62: *δυστυχίας πινὸς μεγάλης*; Liv. 22.9.8: *taetra prodigia*

in 54 B.C. Only one disaster narrative, a plague of locusts in 173 B.C., associates the consultation of the Sibylline books with seeking the *pax deorum*:

“As war with Macedonia was expected the senate resolved that before it began, prodigies should be expiated, and they should seek the peace of the gods through prayers found in the books of fate.”<sup>31</sup>

In seven disaster events, mention is made that the expiations recommended by the *decemviri* were successful, whereas three indicate that expiation was unsuccessful. The latter were all expiations in response to pestilence. For example, in 436 B.C., despite expiations recommended by the *duumviri* in response to an outbreak of disease, Livy reported that it was worse the following year.<sup>32</sup> In the rest of the narratives, it is not stated if the expiations were successful or not.

The ancient sources reported that the main impetuses for consulting the books were an increasing severity of a disaster, a failure of man-made solutions or the interference with the every-day operations of life. Dionysius reported that they were examined in 399 B.C. because of a pestilence that was “incurable by human skill”.<sup>33</sup> In 336 B.C., when a pestilence attacked Rome, Livy recorded that its increasing strength gave concern as did other alarms, such as frequent earthquakes - a supplication was therefore ordered by the *duumviri*.<sup>34</sup> In 292 B.C., after a pestilence had attacked Rome for three years running, Valerius Maximus related that “when [the Romans] saw that neither divine mercy nor human aid could end this long-lasting evil, the Sibylline books were examined”.<sup>35</sup> The devastation of this same pestilence was so great, said Livy, that it was “now like an omen”.<sup>36</sup> In 193 B.C., Livy noted that a series of earthquakes caused consternation, not only for the danger they imposed but because the constant rites of expiation were interfering with public business; the *decemviri* were subsequently ordered to consult the books.<sup>37</sup> And in 181 B.C., Livy reported that a pestilence in the country was so great that the people

---

<sup>31</sup> Liv. 42.2.3: *cum bellum macedonicum in expectatione esset priusquam id susciperentur prodigia expiari pacemque deum peti precationibus qui editi ex fatalibus libris essent, placuit.*

<sup>32</sup> Liv. 4.21.5-6.

<sup>33</sup> Dion. Hal. Ant. Rom. 12.9.1: ὑπὸ τέχνης ἀνθρωπίνης ἀνίατος.

<sup>34</sup> Liv. 4.21.5.

<sup>35</sup> Val. Max. 1.8.2: *tam diutini mali neque divina misericordia neque humano auxilio imponi videret.*

<sup>36</sup> Liv. 10.47.6: *portentoque iam similis clades erat.*

<sup>37</sup> Liv. 34.55.1.

were “barely able to take care of the funerals”; as a result, the senate decreed that the sacred books should be consulted.<sup>38</sup>

There are many inconsistencies in the disaster narratives that involve Sibylline consultations. Why for example, are there so few recorded in response to disasters, when both Dionysius and Cicero imply that the Sibylline books were frequently consulted in relation to these types of events? The data in Graph I clearly indicates that the *decemviri* were the priests most often named in the responses to disasters, yet there are many incidences, particularly in Livy, where no reference is made to the *decemviri*, the Sibylline books or indeed, any other priesthood. For example, fourteen of the twenty-eight Sibylline consultations in response to disasters were ordered because of pestilence and ten of these sources came from Livy. Yet, outbreaks of pestilence are recorded many more times by Livy and many of these outbreaks have religious significance. In 463 B.C., Rome was overwhelmed by an outbreak of disease which attacked both farm animals and people. Livy related that the Romans “could scarcely withstand these pressing disasters” and that they were afflicted “in a sudden visitation of divine anger”.<sup>39</sup> Eventually, “the senate, finding no help in man, turned the people to the gods in prayer.”<sup>40</sup> Despite this appeal to the gods, Livy made no mention of the priests involved.

Similar inconsistencies are found in Livy’s reporting of the first five *lectisternia* decreed in Rome in the fourth century B.C.<sup>41</sup> The first and fourth *lectisternium*, were held in 399 and 347 B.C. respectively, and were decreed on the advice of the Sibylline books in response to pestilence.<sup>42</sup> The third, in 364 B.C., was also in response to pestilence and was held “to earnestly ask for the *pax deorum*”.<sup>43</sup> However, there was no mention of who decreed this religious ceremony. The fifth *lectisternium*, in 326 B.C., “was held for the sake of appeasing the same gods as before”.<sup>44</sup> However, Livy neither referred to why it was decreed, nor the priesthoods involved. Neither Livy, nor any other ancient historian, broached the second

---

<sup>38</sup> Liv. 40.19.3: *funeribus vix sufficeret*.

<sup>39</sup> Liv. 3.6.4-5: *vix instantes sustinentibus clades ... subita deum ira*.

<sup>40</sup> Liv. 3.7.7: *inopsque senatus auxilia humani ad deos populum ac vota uertit*.

<sup>41</sup> The process of a *lectisternium* will be discussed in more detail in Chapter five.

<sup>42</sup> Liv. 5.13.4-5; 7.2.1-2.

<sup>43</sup> Liv. 7.2.2: *pacis deum exposcendae causa*.

<sup>44</sup> Liv. 8.25.1: *iisdem quibus ante placandis habitum est deis*.

*lectisternium*, its existence is only evident by Livy's discussion of the first and the third.

These inconsistencies raise questions of sources and how Livy and other historians gathered their information. Oakley argues that Livy's "careful notices both of each individual *lectisternium* and its place in the series suggest that his material goes back to an archival source."<sup>45</sup> According to Dionysius, details of the first *lectisternium* were available in the annals of Piso, suggesting, says Oakley, that these details "were present in the annalistic tradition at an early date."<sup>46</sup> However, the many inconsistencies in Livy's prodigy reports, suggest that these sources were either unreliable, that Livy was careless in conveying information or that he was adapting and inventing data for his own narrative intentions. Livy himself, suggested the former when he complained of the number of errors regarding both dates and the order of the magistrates due to different arrangements made by different writers.<sup>47</sup> Inadvertently, Livy's complaints raise misgivings regarding his own reliability as a record keeper. Questions regarding the sources of the annalists and their reliability has long occupied modern scholarship. Much of this scholarship points to the annual records to the pontifex maximus – the *annales maximi*.

#### 4.4 Problems with sources

The *annales maximi* were chronicles kept by the pontifex during the Republican period and recorded information such as the names of magistrates and details of public events.<sup>48</sup> Presumably, these public events included lists of prodigies.<sup>49</sup> As the chronicles contained important material for early Roman historiography, many modern historians consider that they are an important source for the early annalistic tradition.<sup>50</sup> This is despite uncertainty about their contents, the dates they were kept, whether or not they were published, how susceptible they were to falsification and doubts about whether the annalists even used them.<sup>51</sup> Thus, other scholars doubt their reliability and even question whether they were used as an

---

<sup>45</sup> Oakley 1998: 38.

<sup>46</sup> Dion. Hal. *Rom. Ant.* 12.9.10; Oakley 1998: 38.

<sup>47</sup> Liv. 2.21.4.

<sup>48</sup> Cic. *De or.* 2.52.

<sup>49</sup> Cato quoted by Gell. 2.28.6-7; Kierdorf 2006.

<sup>50</sup> See for example, McBain 1982: 7-24; Cornell 1995: 16-18; Rasmussen 2003: 16-17.

<sup>51</sup> Oakley 1997: 24.

historical source. Rawson argues that the many inconsistencies in Livy's prodigy lists indicate that they were more likely a distorted conflation of a number of different sources and that he did not draw from the *annales* at all.<sup>52</sup> Briscoe, however, argues against this premise, stating that inconsistencies, where present, simply indicate uncertainty about what happened, not that everything was an invention. As such, he claims it is impossible to say that Livy's prodigy lists do not come from the *annales*.<sup>53</sup> Oakley too, considers that inconsistencies simply illustrate that the ancient historians falsified prodigies not that the records of the pontiffs would not have been used.<sup>54</sup> Frier maintains that:

'Only a very ardent defender would claim that Livy's prodigy lists represent a word-for-word reproduction of contents of the chronicle, or that they are uncontaminated by the introduction of non-chronicle material.'<sup>55</sup>

He prefers to regard the chronicle as "one source of many", a view supported by Oakley, who claims that "there were several routes by which authentic material might be transmitted".<sup>56</sup> However, Oakley does acknowledge that substantial proportions of Livy's narrative are probably inventions, if not by him, then the earlier annalists from which he sourced his material.<sup>57</sup>

Rasmussen, however, argues against debates regarding invention in Livy's history. Regardless of his sources, or whether he, or other historians, invented or even believed in what they were writing, these prodigies acknowledge important social, religious, and political aspects of Roman society. Although Livy may have treated the past as an idealised moral exemplum, she argues that the *annales maximi* would have been an important "guideline for religious norms and practices."<sup>58</sup> Furthermore, she considers the formulaic style and language, used by Livy, to portray annual events, such as the appointment of new magistrates and priests, meetings of the senate, temple foundations and the reporting of prodigies. This is compared with his more dramatic retelling of political and military intrigues. This suggests, she argues, an annalistic source, such as the *annales maximi*, or at least,

---

<sup>52</sup> Rawson 1971: 158-59.

<sup>53</sup> Briscoe 1973: 12.

<sup>54</sup> Oakley 1997: 26-27.

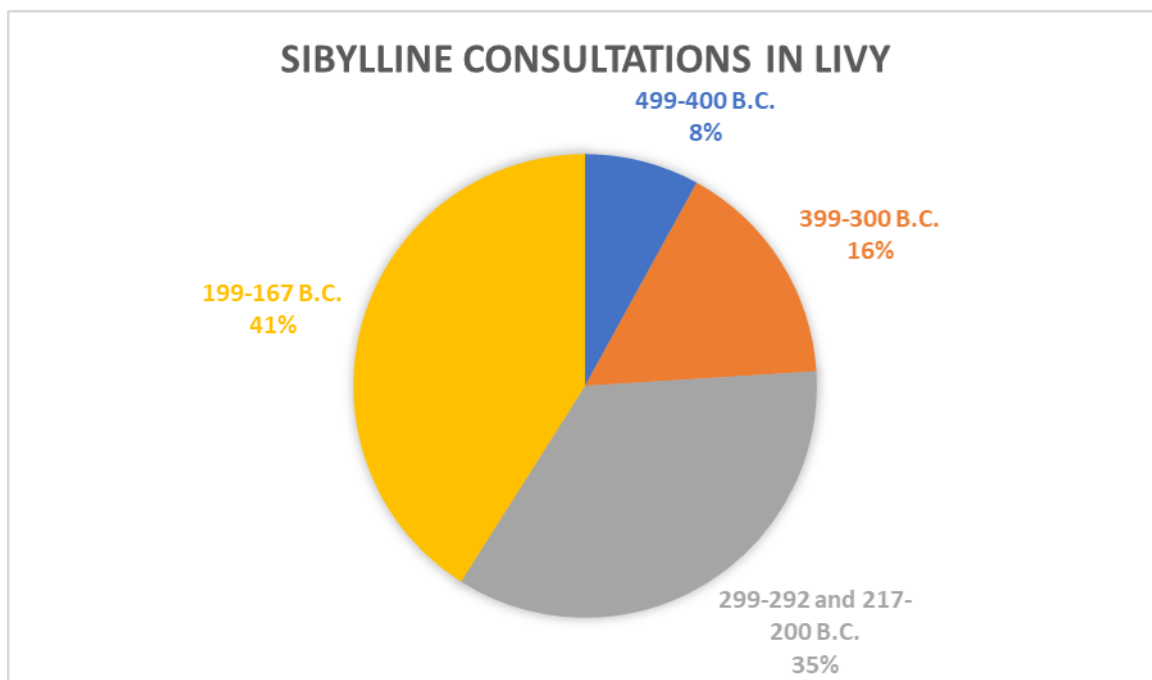
<sup>55</sup> Frier 1999: 20.

<sup>56</sup> Frier 1999: 22; Oakley 1997: 72.

<sup>57</sup> Oakley 1997: 72.

<sup>58</sup> Rasmussen 2003: 17.

other annalists, for the aforementioned lists.<sup>59</sup> This theory is supported by Cato the Elder, who when singing the praises of his own historical methods, was critical of older historians who reported from the wooden tablet of the *pontifex maximus*: these men, he complained, were preoccupied with the price of grain and eclipses of the sun.<sup>60</sup> Graph II illustrates that Livy recorded significantly more consultations of the Sibylline books in the third and second centuries B.C., compared with the first two hundred years combined. Although Livy's narrative of the increased anxiety related to the Hannibalic wars may account for this increase in third century B.C., it is important to note that Livy's history only accounts for twenty-seven years of this hundred-year period. Similarly, in the second century B.C., only thirty-three years are covered. Livy's sources were seemingly more available and reliable for these later periods.



Graph II: Sibylline consultations in Livy, showing the percentages of the total consultations between 499-167 B.C.

<sup>59</sup> Rasmussen 2003: 18; Walsh 1967: 35.

<sup>60</sup> This was the white tablet that the pontifex set up in his official residence and recorded, each year, the names of magistrates and the important events. Cato in Gell. 2.28.6-7; Altheim 1937: 198-99; Frier 1999: 22.

If the *annales maximi* were used by Livy and his sources, it may be assumed that they also drew from the records of other priesthoods. Phlegon of Tralles (A.D. 117-138) preserved the details of two Sibylline oracles which are possibly dated to 125 B.C. One of them contains details of expiatory rites recommended after the birth of a hermaphrodite. This ceremony consisted of twenty-seven young women performing rites in the Greek manner.<sup>61</sup> Livy recorded this same ceremony in both 207 and 200 B.C., executed for the same reasons as in 125. Although there are many debates concerning the date these verses were composed, why they were made public and how they came to be preserved by Phlegon, these oracles at least illustrate that the *decemviri* composed a corpus of oracles, senatus-consultations or edicts of magistrates which would have formed an easily accessible archive of previous decisions.<sup>62</sup> The presence of such documents is confirmed by the ancient historians. Livy, for example, stated that in 173 B.C., after the Sibylline books were consulted in response to a plague of locusts in the Pomptine district, “sacrifices were performed according to the written announcements of the decemviri.”<sup>63</sup> In *De Die Natali*, the third century A.D. grammarian, Censorinus, referred to the commentaries of the *quindecimviri*.<sup>64</sup> According to Rüpke, commentaries of this sort were a “kind of official priestly document”. He claims that an inscription from A.D. 60, describing the ritual actions of the *Fratres Arvales*, would have been copied directly from this type of written record.<sup>65</sup> This inscription, with its details of cult acts, accounts of procedures and descriptions of rituals, is therefore a reliable example of the sort of details incorporated into other priestly records (Inscription I).<sup>66</sup> Certainly, commentaries of the pontiffs are mentioned in several ancient sources and Rüpke claims that the *annales maximi* were a published edition of these documents.<sup>67</sup>

---

<sup>61</sup> Phlegon *Mir.* 10.1.16.

<sup>62</sup> Interestingly, Livy does not indicate the *decemviri* ordered the ceremony in 207, only that they were involved in its performance; it was prescribed by the *pontifices*. This indicates that the *decemviri* possibly drew from a general corpus of archives to make their recommendations for expiation. Liv. 27.37.1-15; 31.12.5-10; Hansen 1996: 126-127; Scheid 1998: 15-18.

<sup>63</sup> Liv. 42.2.7: *itaque sacrificatum est ut decemviri scriptum ediderant*.

<sup>64</sup> Censorinus *DN* 17.

<sup>65</sup> The *fratres arvales* were a Republican priesthood, consisting of twelve members, which was possibly ceased at the end of the Republic and revived under Augustus. Most of the information regarding these priests comes from inscribed records. Beard 2015; Rüpke: 2005: 33.

<sup>66</sup> All inscriptions in my thesis are sourced from the Epigraphik-Datenbank Clauss-Slaby. CIL 6.2042; Rüpke 2004: 35; Rüpke 2005: 33.

<sup>67</sup> For mention of the *annales maximi* see: Cic. *De or.* 2.52, *Dom.* 136, *Brut.* 55; Liv. 6.1.2; Plin. *HN* 18.3; Gell. *NA* 16.6.13; Rüpke 2005: 33-37.



Although Censorinus provided few details of what the commentaries of the *quindecimviri* contained other than the cyclical nature of the *Ludi Saeculares*, he did give examples of how dates recorded in the commentaries differed from the annals of Valerius Antisas, Livy, Calpurnius Piso, Gnaeus Gellius, Cassius Hemina and Varro. Livy's complaints regarding the record-keeping of his predecessors at least gains credibility. Censorinus indicated that, according to these commentaries, the first *Ludi Saeculares* were celebrated in the consulship of Marcus Valerius and Spurius Verginius. Thus, the information they contain dates to at least 456 B.C.<sup>68</sup> There is no doubt that Censorinus was not sourcing his material from original documents. Numerous fires in Rome over the centuries had repeatedly damaged the city. Canter claims that between 390 and 36 B.C., there were fifteen major fires: most of these were widespread and involved the loss of many important buildings.<sup>69</sup> Livy himself said that after the sack of Rome in 390 B.C., the subsequent destructive fire destroyed nearly all public documents, including the commentaries of the pontiffs. Hence, from 398 B.C., said Livy, "a clearer and more faithful account of the city's domestic and military history will be related".<sup>70</sup> But Rüpke, in his analysis of the sources for the prosopography of Republican priests, argues that the commentaries of the pontifex "provide contemporary reliable material only after 249 B.C.". From this point onwards, he claims, the priestly records in Livy are dependable.<sup>71</sup> Assuming the commentaries of the *quindecimviri*, and those of other priesthoods, underwent a similar history as those of the pontifices, these would also have been available as historical sources.

### 4.5 Conclusion

In Republican Rome, when earthquakes, famine, floods, pestilence or grave defeats in battle were deemed to be divine warnings or manifestations of divine anger, the senate would order members of the colleges of priests to appeal for the *pax deorum*. Most often, these priests were the *decemviri* who would search the Sibylline books to find the appropriate religious responses for the expiation of these prodigies. Livy provides the most records of these consultations, yet his reiterations

---

<sup>68</sup> Censorinus *DN* 17.

<sup>69</sup> Canter 1932: 270-73.

<sup>70</sup> Liv. 6.1.2-3: *clariora deinceps certioraque ...urbis gesta domi militiaeque exponentur*.

<sup>71</sup> Rüpke 2005: 37.

usually imparted little information about their nature and were frequently marred by inconsistencies. However, the increasing number of Sibylline consultations, as his history approached a more contemporaneous timeline, suggest that his sources at least became more available and were presumed, more reliable. Whether or not these sources were trustworthy as far back as 389 B.C., as suggested by Livy or became dependable only after 249 B.C., as proposed by Rüpke, is immaterial. What is important is that Livy, and other annalists, were able to access records of priestly activities which would have recorded the prodigy lists for each year. These records would doubtless have also reported the grave and unusual disasters that led the senate to order the consultation of the Sibylline books. In turn, they would have provided documentary evidence of the responses ordered by the *decemviri*.

## Chapter 5. Space and Memory

### 5.1 Introduction

To obtain a picture of how the *decemviri*, in their responses to disasters, influenced the sacred landscape of Rome from the beginning of the fifth century until the middle of the first century B.C., it is necessary to examine how the memories of these spaces were instilled into the Roman collective consciousness as the Republic drew to an end. Over this four-hundred-year period, Rome grew from a small city to a large metropolis. Periods of great temple building, which began at the end of the regal period, saw an increase not only in the number and size of these structures, but in their decorative themes, which became increasingly elaborate.<sup>1</sup> Sacred spaces in the form of shrines, altars, sanctuaries, and groves and springs likewise grew in number. Indeed, by the second half of the first century B.C., Varro illustrated that the Roman sacred landscape encompassed the entire city and consisted of more than just its buildings. He discussed not only the built spaces, but emphasised the importance of holidays, games, festivals and rituals to the Roman people; the entire city was alive with religious activity of all kinds.<sup>2</sup> The first century B.C. prefect, Aelius Gallus, stated that “the sacred existed in whatever place and time a civic community consecrated to a god: the temple, the altar, the sacred images or the location.”<sup>3</sup> Thus, although sacred divisions existed, for example, the *pomerium* formed a religious boundary within Rome which involved the taking of the *auspicia*, sacred spaces extended beyond these divisions.<sup>4</sup> With so much of the city occupied with concepts of the sacred, the influences of the *decemviri* on these sacred spaces must be defined in order to form a clear picture of how they were experienced and recalled by its citizens.<sup>5</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Pensabene and Gallochio 2012: 134-35.

<sup>2</sup> In her paper on space and movement in *De Lingua Latina*, Spencer provides a thorough analysis of Varro’s literary tour through the sacred spaces of Rome. Varro in August. *De civ. D.* 6.3, *Ling.* 5.41-54; Bendlin 2013: 461; Spencer 2011: 75-77.

<sup>3</sup> Festus 424: *Gallus Aelius ait sacrum esse, quocumque modo atque instituto civitis consecratum sit, sive aedis, sive ara, sive signum, sive locus.*

<sup>4</sup> Bendlin 2013: 462-63.

<sup>5</sup> Russell 2016: 99.

## 5.2 Sites of memory

In his analysis of the distinction between memory and history, Nora argues that the latter is a genre where the past is organised, constructed, analysed and open to criticism. Memory however:

“is life, borne by living societies founded in its name. It remains in permanent evolution, open to dialectic of remembering and forgetting, unconscious of its successive deformations, vulnerable to manipulation and appropriation, susceptible to being long dormant and periodically revived.”<sup>6</sup>

In Republican Rome, written history was the proclivity of the elite and most of the population did not have access to scribed reconstructions of past events. Thus, memory of the sacred was entwined with experience: encounters with temples, the performance of rituals, religious processions or the celebrations of festivals and games. These experiences created memories that imbued these “sites” with meaning. These meanings provided a continuity with a historic past, whether that past was far distant or close at hand. The *decemviri*, through their religious responses to disasters, were part of this memory making process. They created or recreated rituals which at the same time were both symbols of traditional Romanness and innovative solutions to new problems.<sup>7</sup>

Many of these rituals were of Greek origin and once introduced, the *decemviri* frequently oversaw their practice. They therefore became known as the priests who worshipped according to the *Graecus ritus*. Indeed, this is how Livy referred to them, indicating that by the end of the first century B.C., they were thus perceived, at least by the educated elite.<sup>8</sup> Scheid, however, warns against notions that cults worshipped according to the *Graecus ritus* were viewed as foreign cults.<sup>9</sup> Rome was an open city and foreign cults were a fully integrated part of their culture. Rites were something that all ancient religions shared - what was different were the peculiarities that were specific to each of these systems of worship. *Graecus ritus*, therefore, was a specific way of performing rituals: their nature differed from what would otherwise be the

---

<sup>6</sup> Nora 1989: 8.

<sup>7</sup> Hobsbawm 2012: 1-2.

<sup>8</sup> Although Livy often mentioned that the *decemviri* sacrificed in a Greek manner, he only uses the term *Graecus ritus* once in connection with these priests. Liv. 25.12.10-13; Linderski 2006.

<sup>9</sup> Scheid 1995: 16.

same as Roman ceremonies. They were, thus, typically Roman institutions.<sup>10</sup> Here, the Sibylline books are a good example. Although supposedly of foreign origin, they were stored, until the time of Augustus, in the temple of Jupiter, a Roman god. Consultation was made by Roman priests and the expiation most often consisted of Roman rituals.<sup>11</sup> Their assumed foreignness did however, provide a way for the senate to assume a mask of innovation within a controlled context; in times of extreme need, the senate was willing to adopt 'foreign' rites for the benefit of the state. However, these rites were acceptable to both the senate and the people.<sup>12</sup>

Indeed, Diels argues that although the Sibylline oracles preserved by Phlegon were written in Greek, they contain Latinisms indicating they were written by a man more knowledgeable in Greek rites than Greek speech.<sup>13</sup> Thus, rather than change the nature of Roman religion, the rituals associated with the *decemviri* were Roman but with Greek elements. That is, the gods honoured were often Greek, the priests often sacrificed with their heads uncovered and they wore laurel wreaths or fringed tunics.<sup>14</sup> These ceremonies were therefore a mixture of Roman and Greek elements presented in ways that were palatable to the Romans. Wallace-Hadrill also argues that the Hellenising aspects of Roman culture does not mean that concepts of Romanness were sacrificed.<sup>15</sup> Indeed, he suggests that the easy acceptance of many Greek cults lay in *their* "Romanisation".<sup>16</sup> The process of Hellenisation of Roman religion, and the role played by the *decemviri*, is a topic beyond the scope of my thesis.<sup>17</sup> Therefore, I am less concerned with the cultural aspects of the introduction of foreign rites by the *decemviri* than with how these rites created "sites of memory" and how these sites became enmeshed in the consciousness of Rome.

### 5.3 Permanent sites: temples

Between 509 and 55 B.C. seventy public temples were vowed and dedicated in Rome, the majority in response to the *gloria* of the individual general following

---

<sup>10</sup> Scheid 1995: 18-19.

<sup>11</sup> Scheid 1995: 25-29.

<sup>12</sup> Orlin 1997: 115-16.

<sup>13</sup> Diels 1890: 76.

<sup>14</sup> Greek rites: Varro *Ling.* 7.88, CIL 6.32329; Greek gods: Liv. 5.13.6, 40.37.2; Head uncovered: CIL 6.32323; Wreaths: Liv. 25.12.15, 34.55.4; 36.37.5; 40.37.3, 43.13.8

<sup>15</sup> Wallace-Hadrill 2008: 6.

<sup>16</sup> Wallace Hadrill 2008: 26.

<sup>17</sup> Wallace-Hadrill provides a thorough analysis of the scholarship surrounding Hellenisation of Roman cultural identity. He makes no mention of the *decemviri*. Wallace-Hadrill 2008: 17-28.

successful military campaigns, or to ensure success in these same undertakings.<sup>18</sup> However, a small number of temples, there are records for nine, were built by the senate after consultation of the Sibylline books. Of these nine, six were in response to disastrous events (Table III). Situated on the Aventine, the Campus Martius, the Tiber Island and the Capitoline, these six temples were spread across the major areas of the city (Image I). Like all such monuments in Rome, they “were built for the sake of preserving memory”; they formed permanent “sites” of collective consciousness and shaped the way Romans thought about the past.<sup>19</sup> However, memories evolve: the experiences of the Romans continued to add meaning to existing monuments and preserved memories were often reshaped over time.<sup>20</sup> Temples themselves were modified, restored and even rebuilt; fire was a frequent hazard in Rome. The Romans, it seems, were less tied to notions of the antique in their buildings than they were in their ancestors. As Seneca ( A.D. 1- 65) noted of Augustan Rome: “public works were razed by fire, but better ones sprang up than those destroyed”.<sup>21</sup> When Pliny the Younger (c. A.D. 61-112) planned to move an ancient temple of Magna Mater, his concern was for a possible loss of religious sanctity, rather than the loss of the existing visible monument.<sup>22</sup> This suggests that the memories associated with temples were often tied to the religious awe they inspired rather than their physical manifestations.<sup>23</sup>

The six temples built at the behest of the *decemviri* in response to disasters, were not immune to this process of change. Originally the memories associated with these temples were tied to the disasters to which they owed their existence and the remediation processes that followed. They were monumental examples of the need to appease the gods and the importance of the *pax deorum* to the Romans. However, for some of these temples, memories were reconstructed over time, and new meanings were created which borrowed from contemporary circumstances.<sup>24</sup> In this section, five of these temples are examined. The sixth, the temple of Flora, will be discussed in the next section with the *Floralia*.

---

<sup>18</sup> This number follows Orlin 1997: 1-7 and 199-202.

<sup>19</sup> Varro *Ling.* 6.49: *facta memoriae causa monimenta dicta*; Orlin 2015: 115.

<sup>20</sup> Orlin 2015: 139-40.

<sup>21</sup> Sen. *Ben.* 6.32.6: *saevitum est in opera publica ignibus surrexerunt Meliora consumptis*.

<sup>22</sup> Plin. *Ep.* 10.49.

<sup>23</sup> Jenkyns 2014: 17-18.

<sup>24</sup> Halbwachs 1950: 69.

### 5.3.1 Temple of Ceres, Liber and Libera

Although the Temple of Ceres, Liber and Libera was vowed after consultation of the Sibylline books in response to a famine in 496 B.C., memories associated with this temple were tied to the Plebeian order.<sup>25</sup> As Ceres was the Roman goddess of grain and agricultural fertility, the vowing of her temple following this famine had, according to Dionysius, ensured a future bountiful harvest.<sup>26</sup> It may be assumed therefore, that the preserved memories of this temple were related to the importance of this goddess to the food supply of the Romans. Indeed, Varro claimed it was the site of free distributions of grain and a place of refuge for the needy.<sup>27</sup> However, this temple was infrequently mentioned in ancient texts in this context: Livy, for example, never referred to Ceres in relation to agriculture. Instead, both he and Dionysius dated the first plebeian succession to the same year as the dedication of this temple, although neither made this connection explicit.<sup>28</sup> Dionysius, however, did identify the goddess Ceres with the tribune of the plebs, by relating that the security of this magistracy was protected by an oath sworn in her name.<sup>29</sup> Livy, who frequently linked this temple to the plebeians, noted that this was where the decrees of the senate were delivered to the aediles of the plebs.<sup>30</sup> Presumably, they were also stored there.

Even the location of the temple, on the slopes of the Aventine, suggests a plebeian connection, as this hill was long known as a refuge for the plebeian order.<sup>31</sup> Unfortunately, as the sources regarding this temple date from the first century B.C., it is impossible to know how far back the relationship with this social order extended. If the synchronism between the vowing of the temple and the succession of the plebs is historic, then this link may extend back to the beginning of the Republic. However, most likely, the literary sources reflect the close association between the plebeians and the temple of Ceres in the consciousness of the later Romans – it had become a

---

<sup>25</sup> From here on this temple will be referred to simply as the temple of Ceres. Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom.* 6.17.

<sup>26</sup> Cato *Agr.* 134; Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom.* 6.17.2-4; Ovid *Fast.* 1.673-74.

<sup>27</sup> Varro in Non. 63.

<sup>28</sup> Liv. 2.33.1-3.

<sup>29</sup> Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom.* 6.89.3.

<sup>30</sup> Liv. 3.55.7-8, 13, 10.23.13, 27.6.19, 27.36.9, 33.25.3.

<sup>31</sup> Spaeth suggests that the choice of location for this temple may have been due to this connection. Spaeth 1996: 82-83.

powerful rallying point for the political organisation of the plebeian order.<sup>32</sup> Thus, as the original memories connected with this temple were reshaped by later events, the role the *decemviri* played in the creation of this cult place seemingly faded over time. Nevertheless, the temple maintained an important place in Roman sensibilities.

### 5.3.2 Temple of Apollo

In a similar manner, memories associated with the temple of Apollo were reconstructed after it was rebuilt by Gaius Sosius in c.34 B.C. However, this temple still maintained some of its original focus and the *decemviri* and the Sibylline books long continued their association with Apollo.<sup>33</sup> Originally vowed in response to pestilence in 433 B.C., and dedicated two years later, this temple was the first and only temple to Apollo in Rome until 31 B.C., when Augustus built a new temple on the Palatine.<sup>34</sup> In the tradition of Greek healing cults, it was built outside the city walls on the Circus Flaminius.<sup>35</sup> As Apollo was associated with healing, the temple was known as Apollo *Medicus* until at least 179 B.C.<sup>36</sup> Over time, however, this temple became associated with victory: the new temple built by Sosius completely replaced the original and archaeological evidence clearly suggests that the focus of this new temple was victory rather than healing.<sup>37</sup> This new vision of victory was aimed at highlighting the glory that Augustus had brought to Rome and goes far in explaining Livy's claim that the original games of Apollo, in 212 B.C., were instituted by the *decemviri* "to secure victory not health, as most people believe".<sup>38</sup> However, Livy's assertion that most people believed that the games of Apollo were instituted to secure health, strongly suggests that this temple still carried its former significance in the consciousness of many Romans.<sup>39</sup> In the fifth century A.D., Macrobius referred to

---

<sup>32</sup> Spaeth 1996: 91.

<sup>33</sup> Broughton says that Sosius restored the temple but Orlin argues archaeological evidence indicates that the temple was rebuilt. Broughton 1950: 412; Orlin 2015: 128.

<sup>34</sup> Liv. 4.25.3, 27.9.7.

<sup>35</sup> Bendlin 2013: 466.

<sup>36</sup> Liv. 40.51.7.

<sup>37</sup> Orlin suggests that the temple was probably not completed until the twenties and was most likely part of Augustus' programme of reshaping the southern part of the Campus Martius. He provides a detailed discussion of the archaeological features of the new temple that point to victory as its primary significance. This temple was henceforth known as Apollo Sosianus. Plin. *HN* 13.53, 36.28; Orlin 2015: 127-32.

<sup>38</sup> Liv. 25.12.9-15: *victoriae non valetudinis ergo ut plerique rentur*.

<sup>39</sup> Orlin 2015: 129, n. 44.



Apollo as the source of general well-being and healing and claimed the Vestal Virgins invoked him with “Apollo healer” and “Apollo Paeon”.<sup>40</sup>

Interestingly, Sosius himself was a *quindecimvir*, suggesting that his role in rebuilding this temple was tied to this priestly college.<sup>41</sup> According to Livy, the *decemviri* had long been associated with Apollo, although assumedly they did not introduce his cult to Rome: Livy reported a pre-existing cult place to Apollo on the same site that the temple Apollo *Medicus* had been built.<sup>42</sup> By the first century B.C., the relationship between the *decemviri* and Apollo was explicit as illustrated in coins issued in 65 B.C. by Lucius Torquatus. The obverse shows the head of Sibyl wearing an ivy-wreath and the reverse shows a tripod, which had long been the symbol of Apollo (Image II).<sup>43</sup> As the new temple of Apollo on the Palatine was built by Augustus in response to his defeat of Marcus Antonius at Actium, it too carried a message of victory.<sup>44</sup> As part of his programme of religious reform, Augustus was a member of all the major priesthoods, including the *quindecimviri*. Thus, when he transferred the Sibylline books to his new temple of Apollo, in c.12 B.C., it may be assumed he did this in connection with his own association with this priestly college.<sup>45</sup> Moreover, Augustus’ actions ensured was that the *quindecimviri* retained a strong connection to Apollo even after Apollo *Medicus* ceased to be associated with its original purpose, as a place of healing.<sup>46</sup>

### 5.3.3 Temple of Aesculapius

In contrast, the temple of Aesculapius, on the Tiber Island, long maintained its association with healing. Aesculapius was a Greek god of healing, and his cult was centred at Epidaurus in southern Greece. His introduction in 293 B.C., directly from Greece, rather than through Magna Graecia, indicates the general acceptance of

---

<sup>40</sup> Macrob. 1.17.13-15: *Apollo Medice, Apollo Paeon*.

<sup>41</sup> CIL 6.32323.

<sup>42</sup> Liv. 3.63.7, 10.8.2.

<sup>43</sup> The tripod has a long association with Apollo and was also used on Roman coins to represent the *decemviri*, and later the *quindecimviri*. The laurel wreath is also an attribute of Apollo. Crawford 2001: 439 and 456; Mattingly 1936: xli.

<sup>44</sup> Verg. *Aen.* 6.69-76; 8.671-705.

<sup>45</sup> Although Suetonius indicates he moved the books as part of his new role as pontifex maximus. Suet. *Aug.* 31.

<sup>46</sup> Orlin argues that the Sibylline books only became connected with the temple of Apollo after they were moved to Augustus’ new temple. However, Torquatus’ coin issue of 65 B.C. suggests otherwise. According to Livy, the games to Apollo were instituted at the bidding of the *decemviri*. Liv. 25.12.11-15; Orlin 1997: 97.

these foreign gods, especially one who brought the optimism of relief from disease.<sup>47</sup> Like the temple of Apollo, his cult was introduced into Rome after consultation of the Sibylline books in response to a pestilence.<sup>48</sup> His temple, dedicated three years later, quickly became popular as a site of healing as can be seen by dedicatory inscriptions dating from the third century B.C., which were found near the Tiber (see Inscriptions II, III and IV).<sup>49</sup> In the first century B.C., two stone bridges, the pons Fabricus (62 B.C.) and the pons Cestius (46 B.C) were built to replace earlier structures. At the same time, modifications were made to the island so that its embankments resembled an ancient trireme, no doubt in honour of the legend of its foundation.<sup>50</sup> The remnants of the prow are still visible today, as is the faint carving of Aesclepius' healing staff entwined with a snake (see Image III).<sup>51</sup> These improvements indicate that the island remained an important cult site and that the temple of Aesculapius was still associated with healing, in spite of Varro's assessment that by the first century B.C., it was an ancient building.<sup>52</sup> Further inscriptions, dated to the second and third centuries A.D., record healings that occurred "by order" or "by the watchful eyes" of Aesculapius.<sup>53</sup> The island was still being referred to as the island of the serpent of Epidaurus at the end of the fifth century A.D., even after the suppression of pagan cults by Theodosius in A.D. 391.<sup>54</sup> Although, it is not known whether the temple was still standing at this time, the island itself remained a site of healing: it continued to function as an infirmary during the middle ages and even today, is the site of the Ospedale dei Fatebenefratelli, a hospital that was founded in 1548.<sup>55</sup>

---

<sup>47</sup> Scullard 1981: 55.

<sup>48</sup> Liv.10.47.6.

<sup>49</sup> CIL 6.30842, 30843, 30845.

<sup>50</sup> The story goes that Roman envoys were sent to Epidaurus, the centre for the cult of Aesculapius, the Greek god of healing. The envoys took a snake from this city, which the Epidaurians worshipped as Aesculapius. They sailed back to Rome, where the snake left the trireme and swan across to the island on the Tiber. Here a temple to the god was dedicated. Ov *Met.*15.622; Plut. *Quaest. Rom.* 94; Val. Max. 1.8.2

<sup>51</sup> Claridge 1998: 227-28.

<sup>52</sup> Varro *Ling.* 7.57.

<sup>53</sup> CIL 6.14: *ex iusso*; CIL 6.8: *ex viso*.

<sup>54</sup> Carafa and Pacchiarotti 2012: 552; Sid. Apoll. *Epist.* 1.7.12

<sup>55</sup> Coarelli 2014: 348.

### 5.3.4. Temples of Venus Erycina and Mens

Two temples were vowed by the *decemviri* after the Roman defeat at Lake Trasumennus in 217 B.C., the temple of Venus Erycina and the temple of Mens.<sup>56</sup> In Livy's version of the events at Trasumennus, disaster befell Rome when Flaminius failed to make proper vows to the gods.<sup>57</sup> This possibly explains the Capitoline as the choice of location for these temples. Although the smallest of the seven hills, it was the centre of Roman religion and home to the triad of its greatest gods, Jupiter, Juno and Minerva.<sup>58</sup> These gods, in turn, were the source of Rome's dominancy. Thus, the temples of Mens and Venus Erycina, standing side-by-side and built amongst the great monuments to these gods, formed lasting reminders of the importance of maintaining religious rituals and perhaps, the importance of the Capitoline as the head of Roman religion.<sup>59</sup> Interestingly, although Livy lay the blame for the defeat at Trasumennus on Flaminius' neglect of his religious duties, Polybius considered it was due to the general's rashness, undue boldness and conceit.<sup>60</sup> If Polybius' version of events is to be believed, Mens, the goddess of good sense and modesty, was presumed chosen by the *decemviri* because these were the qualities lacking in Flaminius.<sup>61</sup> Scullard suggests that this goddess conveyed a sense of reminder – here, that the Romans do not neglect their religious duties, especially in times of crisis.<sup>62</sup>

In a similar fashion was the cult of Venus Erycina imported from Sicily. The Romans traced their ancestry back to this goddess: she was, according to Diodorus, the reason that they were successful in all their undertakings.<sup>63</sup> It was only fitting therefore that this temple be vowed after such a devastating loss. Filippi argues that these temples are the two which are depicted on the *Forma Urbis* fragments, 31a, 31b and 31c, a marble plan of Rome which possibly dates to the third century A.D. (Image IV).<sup>64</sup> If Filippi is correct, these temples stood as reminders to the Romans for centuries to come: reminders of the importance of religious duties and the

---

<sup>56</sup> Liv. 22.9.10.

<sup>57</sup> Liv. 22.9.7-8.

<sup>58</sup> Platner and Ashby 1929: 95-98.

<sup>59</sup> Jaeger 1997: 4.

<sup>60</sup> Polyb. 3.81.9.

<sup>61</sup> Foster: 1929: 230, n. 3.

<sup>62</sup> Scullard 1981: 148-49.

<sup>63</sup> Diod. Sic. 4.83.4-5.

<sup>64</sup> Filippi 2012: 160.

benefits of good sense in times of crises and perhaps, the role the *decemviri* played in these measures.<sup>65</sup>

As Varro rightly claimed, these temples were monumental preservers of past events and the people responsible for their construction.<sup>66</sup> While some maintained memories from a distant past, others were open to new forms of interpretation: they were capable of being read in different ways, at different times, by different people. In this way, they served to shape memories not only in the present, but for the future.<sup>67</sup> Although they were an “open text”, and the memories associated with them evolved over time, they continued to maintain their sense of awe and veneration. It was in this way that they became part of the collective memory of the city.<sup>68</sup> Thus did the *decemviri* contribute to the memory making processes of Rome. They were responsible for the building of temples that occupied many of the public spaces in the city and which maintained a place in the consciousness of the Romans at some level. As such, they permanently altered the religious landscape of Rome.<sup>69</sup>

#### 5.4 Banquets, games and festivals

However, in their responses to disasters, the *decemviri* created more than just monumental sites of memory – other forms of transmission were equally important. They introduced and recreated many rituals in the form of banquets, games and festivals. These ceremonies were aimed at honouring the gods and often involved the whole city. They usually impeded civic life: courts were closed, holidays were declared, and restrictions were placed on the type of agricultural work that could be carried out.<sup>70</sup> They were either held annually on a fixed date or on a date fixed each year by the magistrates or priests. However, they could also be irregular events proclaimed to celebrate a victory or vowed in response to an emergency.<sup>71</sup> Polybius believed that the pageantry of these ceremonies was exaggerated as a way of controlling the unruly masses.<sup>72</sup> But I believe Polybius was being disingenuous: in

---

<sup>65</sup> Although Najbjerg and Trimble acknowledge that these fragments provide valuable evidence for the organisation of the Capitoline, they argue that the identity of the temples is unknown. Najbjerg and Trimble 2016.

<sup>66</sup> Varro *Ling.* 6.49.

<sup>67</sup> Jenkyns 19.

<sup>68</sup> Hölkeskamp 2014: 63-64.

<sup>69</sup> Hölkeskamp 2006: 481-82.

<sup>70</sup> Cato *Agr.* 138; Cic. *Leg.* 2.29.

<sup>71</sup> Parke and Price 2015; Scullard 1981: 38-39.

<sup>72</sup> Polyb. 6.56.7-11.

times of extreme stress, elaborate rituals were a way of alleviating anxiety as they instilled a sense of hope and unity of belief. For example, when Cicero's friend Atticus took his convalescing daughter to the *ludi Apollinares*, Cicero wrote:

“Concerning Attica, I approve. It is important for the mind to be lifted as well, not only from watching the show but from the general belief of its religious significance”.<sup>73</sup>

Cicero is correct in that the religious and psychological significance of these events should not be dismissed. However, nor should the physical impact on the city. The *ludi Apollinares*, for example, took place in front of the temple of Apollo in the Circus Flaminius.<sup>74</sup> Thus, as with many religious festivals in Rome, the distinction between sacred and non-sacred space was blurred, as ceremonies and processions spilled onto the streets and sites of memory were created throughout the city. As these rituals became a regular part of the Roman religious landscape, their selective and stylised version of past events shaped the way the Romans understood their own history and the importance the gods played in this process.<sup>75</sup>

#### 5.4.1 *Lectisternium*: a banquet for the gods

After the devastation at Lake Trasumennus in 217 B.C., the *decemviri* declared that “great games to Jupiter” and temples to Venus Erycina and Mens must be vowed, and that a supplication and *lectisternium* be celebrated.<sup>76</sup> Although games, temples and supplications were frequent manifestations of the sacred in Rome, a *lectisternium* was an unusual ceremony introduced into Rome by the *decemviri* in 399 B.C., following an outbreak of pestilence. It was most likely adopted from the Greek *theoxenia* (θεοξένια) which was an the entertainment of the gods by humans, usually at a meal. It contrasted with normal sacrifice in that the gods were worshipped on a human scale: although the usual order of the relations between men and the gods remained, the gods were invited to share a banquet with humans and this was shared equally between the divine and human guests.<sup>77</sup> Both Livy and Dionysius' account of the first *lectisternium* involved the gods Apollo and Latona,

---

<sup>73</sup> Cic. Att. 13.44.2: *de Attica probo. est quiddam etiam animum levare cum spectatione tum etiam religionis opinion et fama.*

<sup>74</sup> D'Alessio 2012: 500.

<sup>75</sup> Wiseman 2014: 51.

<sup>76</sup> Liv. 22.9.10: *Iovi ludos magnos.*

<sup>77</sup> Estienne 1997: 20; Kearns 2015.

Diana and Hercules, and Mercury and Neptune, who were displayed in pairs on three couches for eight days.<sup>78</sup> In the celebration of 217, six couches were displayed and for the first time in Rome, the twelve great Olympian gods were arranged in pairs, in the Greek fashion: Jupiter and Juno, Neptune and Minerva, Mars and Venus, Apollo and Diana, Vulcan and Vesta, and Mercury and Ceres.<sup>79</sup>

The celebration involved the participation of the whole community and had religious, social and political implications.<sup>80</sup> The temples were open, divine images were more accessible and temporary ritual spaces were created throughout the city. Livy tells of banquets where everyone, including strangers, were welcomed, of a truce on legal proceedings and lawsuits, and of prisoners released from their chains during the festival.<sup>81</sup> Having been introduced by the *decemviri*, *lectisternia* became a regular part of Roman ritual practice. Livy claimed that sacrifices offered by the consuls at the beginning of their term in 192 B.C. were performed at “all the shrines that *lectisternia* were usually practiced for most of the year”.<sup>82</sup> By the first century A.D., a *lectisternium* was held annually on the thirteenth of December to Tellus.<sup>83</sup> Although the connection of the *decemviri* with the *lectisternium* was not always acknowledged, it was implied when, in 17 B.C., Augustus, a *quindecimvir* himself, included a modified version of this ritual in his reconstructed *Ludi Saeculares*, games that were closely tied to this priestly college.

#### 5.4.2 *Ludi Tarentini* - *Ludi Saeculares*

These games celebrated the end of the civil wars and the arrival of a new age, thanks to the greatness and munificence of Augustus. Their predecessor was the *Ludi Tarentini*, which had been performed during the Republic under the supervision of the *decemviri* and the Sibylline books. Sources for these earlier games are fragmentary and details often contradictory.<sup>84</sup> However, Plutarch indicates that they were first celebrated in 509 B.C. by direction of the Sibylline books in response to an outbreak of disease that affected pregnant women.<sup>85</sup> They

---

<sup>78</sup> Liv. 5.13.5-8; Dion. Hal. Ant. Rom. 12.9.1-2.

<sup>79</sup> Liv. 22.10.9; Pind. *Ol.* 5.5; Dowden 2007: 43-45.

<sup>80</sup> Estienne 1997: 18-20.

<sup>81</sup> Liv. 5.13.4-8.

<sup>82</sup> Liv. 36.1.2: *in omnibus fanis in quibus lectisternium maiorem partem anni fieri solet.*

<sup>83</sup> InscrIt 13.2.17.

<sup>84</sup> Bilynskj Dunning 2016: .

<sup>85</sup> Plut. *Public.* 21.1.

were repeated every 100 or so years, were overseen by the *decemviri*, took place on the Campus Martius and included the sacrifice of black animals to Pluto and Proserpine.<sup>86</sup>

The new games of Augustus in 17 B.C. incorporated many new rituals that included older elements from these original games. The Augustan *Acta* of the *Ludi Saeculares*, for example, recorded many recreated rituals from Republican ceremonies, including: *sellisternia* which offered food to the gods, sacrifices of black animals to chthonic deities and a hymn performed by a chorus of twenty-seven boys and girls (see description below).<sup>87</sup> In his reconstruction, Augustus transformed the purpose of these games from their role in expiation in times of duress to one that emphasised fertility: women and children were actively involved, and the deities worshipped were connected with fertility and childbirth.<sup>88</sup> However, they were still performed under the supervision of the *quindecimviri* – the *Acta* records a full list of these priests and records that the college made a proclamation at the end of the games.<sup>89</sup> The *Ludi Saeculares* were repeated at varying intervals: the historian Tacitus, a *quindecimvir*, noted that he had been especially involved in the games of A.D. 88 that were exhibited by Domitian.<sup>90</sup> The last recorded games were those of Philip I in A.D. 248 which had continued to follow the Augustan tradition.<sup>91</sup> As all emperors from the time of Augustus were members of the *quindecimviri*, these games were still linked to these priests.<sup>92</sup> In the sixth century A.D., Zosimus documented a Sibylline oracle that recorded many of the same rituals from the Augustan games.<sup>93</sup> As many of these rituals had been introduced into Rome during the Republic by the *decemviri* in response to disastrous events, they provided a link between to the Republican past. The restaging of the *lectisternium*, for example, a ritual originally concerned with the maintenance of the *pax deum* and *concordia*,

---

<sup>86</sup> Censorinus 1.17; Plut. *Public.* 21.1.

<sup>87</sup> Taylor argues that the difference between *lectisternia* and *sellisternia* is that the later were banquets in which matrons took part. CIL 6.32323; Bilynskj Dunning 2016: 52; Taylor 1935: 124.

<sup>88</sup> Bilynskj Dunning 2016: 52; Feeney 2003: 107.

<sup>89</sup> CIL 6.32323; Bilynskj Dunning 2016: 57-58.

<sup>90</sup> Tac. *Ann.* 11.11; Bilynskj Dunning 2016: 75, 89-90, 101, 123.

<sup>91</sup> See Bilynskj Dunning for an analysis of the games up to third century A.D. Bilynskj Dunning 2016: 119-41.

<sup>92</sup> Rüpke suggests that Philip, like his predecessors, was co-opted into all the priestly colleges. Rüpke 2005: 743.

<sup>93</sup> Zos. 2.6.

firmly connected these concepts with the religious reforms of Augustus and the coming of the new age.<sup>94</sup>

### 5.4.3 Movement and repetition: memory making practices

One of the rituals adopted by Augustus, the performance of a hymn sung by twenty-seven youths of both sexes, had been, according to Livy, introduced by the *decemviri* in 207 B.C.: several alarming prodigies, including the discovery of a hermaphrodite, had called for consultation of the Sibylline books.<sup>95</sup> Although this expiation was not in response to a disaster, Livy's retelling of this event illustrates how sacred spaces were created throughout the city and how the Romans experienced them. Religious processions were dynamic ritual processes and as they moved through the streets of Rome, they were viewed by large audiences.<sup>96</sup> This viewing process emphasised the links between the Romans and the physical landscape in which they lived: it created relationships between religious, political and social practices and marked out a network of urban space as belonging to the sacred.<sup>97</sup> Cicero argued that the link to the physical, had the ability to arouse stronger emotions than hearing and reading about deeds from the past: "such great powers of suggestion do places have; the discipline of training the memory is based on locality."<sup>98</sup> Thus, these types of moving ritual behaviours were in themselves, memory making practices.

This procession was dedicated to Juno Regina and its purpose was to escort the cult figures and sacrificial victims to her temple. It was led by two white cows and behind them, two wooden statues of the goddess were carried, most likely high above the crowds. Twenty-seven young women followed, dressed in long robes and singing a hymn in honour of Juno as they walked. Finally came the *decemviri*, wearing laurel garlands and dressed in the *toga praetexta* (Image V). Beginning in the temple of Apollo, on the Campus Martius, the procession entered the city through the Porta Carmentalis where it proceeded along the Vicus Iugarius to the Forum.

---

<sup>94</sup> Estienne 1998: 21.

<sup>95</sup> Liv. 27.37.1-5.

<sup>96</sup> Suetonius noted that the crowds attending Julius Caesar's triumphal parade in 47 B.C. were so great that people were forced to lodge in tents and several people were squashed to death. Suet. *Iul.* 39.

<sup>97</sup> Favro 2008: 10; Russell 2016: 99-100.

<sup>98</sup> Cic. *Fin.* 5.2.



Here it stopped and the young girls performed their song. It continued down the Vicus Tuscus and the Velabrum, through the Forum Boarium to the Clivus Publicus and finally, to the temple of Juno Regina on the Aventine (Image VI). Here the cows were sacrificed by the *decemviri*, and the statues were taken into the temple.<sup>99</sup>

Progress would no doubt have been slow: the route was long and traversed some of the busiest parts of the city; many streets and passageways in Rome were narrow; and the two cows, at the front of the procession, would possibly have shied at the crowd and the noise, further hindering movement.<sup>100</sup> Thus, there was ample opportunity at some level, to view and experience the procession, whether from the street, various podia, windows, balconies or even the roofs of buildings along the path.<sup>101</sup> For many, however, the view would have been impeded by the crowds and the physical manifestations of the city and given the length of the route, few people would have experienced the whole event.<sup>102</sup> The great noise accompanying the procession, the push of people, the odours along the path, and the smoke and blood at the place of sacrifice, were perhaps overwhelming, but would have contributed to memorialising the event.<sup>103</sup> However, as memories of this procession gradually faded, the most enduring were perhaps the voices of the young girls resonating through the streets, the cult figures of Juno, held high and visible to all, and the figures of *decemviri*, at the rear of the procession, standing out in the brilliance of their white togas.<sup>104</sup> They were certainly the elements that Livy emphasised, and as this procession was an infrequent celebration, most likely the ones that were imprinted onto the collective consciousness of the city.<sup>105</sup>

Other ceremonies were repeated at more regular intervals and as they became a regular part of the ritual calendar, they became increasingly tied to Roman collective identity. In many cases these ceremonies remained part of the ritual

---

<sup>99</sup> Liv. 27.37.11-15.

<sup>100</sup> Cicero spoke of the slow gait of the those who carried the offerings in public processions and of the narrow alleys and the substandard streets of Rome. Cic. *Leg. Agr.* 2.96, *Off.* 1.13.

<sup>101</sup> Vitruvius indicated that balconies of the buildings surrounding public *fora* could be sold to allow easy viewing at public spectacles. Vitruv. *De arch.* 5.1.1-2.

<sup>102</sup> Favro 2008: 14-18.

<sup>103</sup> Russell 2016: 101.

<sup>104</sup> White was the chosen colour for celebrations of this sort. It had possible social implications as only the wealthy could afford to maintain the whiteness of these garments. Suet. *Aug.* 40.

<sup>105</sup> Livy recorded the same ceremony on one other occasion, seven years later and Obsequens twice, in 119 and 118 B.C. Although Livy said that this second ceremony was also ordered by the *decemviri*, Obsequens was silent regarding their involvement. Liv. 31.12.9; Obseq. 34, 36.

calendar centuries after they were instituted. The *Fasti Praenestini*, an inscription found near Praeneste that preserves part of a calendar compiled by Verrius Flaccus (c. 50 B.C.- c. A.D. 20), indicates that on 28<sup>th</sup> April each year, a festival was held to celebrate the founding of the temple of Flora in response to a drought (Inscription V).<sup>106</sup> Assumedly this is the same *Floralia* that Pliny said was instituted following consultation of the Sibylline books after a bad harvest in 238 B.C.<sup>107</sup> It seems likely that the temple of Flora was constructed at the same time as this celebration.<sup>108</sup>

Ovid claimed that in 173 B.C., the *Floralia* became an annual event after a series of bad weather events.<sup>109</sup> This festival may very well be the same one that Livy said was vowed in 173 B.C.: the *decemviri* had ordered a festival in response to several prodigies. Unfortunately, Livy provided no clue to its nature.<sup>110</sup> However, he and Obsequens did detail several extreme weather events in the preceding years, including severe flooding and excessive falls of rain and snow.<sup>111</sup> Added to these calamities, the years 181, 180 and 174 B.C. were blighted by pestilence and in 173 B.C., a plague of locusts devastated the Pomptine territory.<sup>112</sup> The Sibylline books were frequently consulted to alleviate these events. It is therefore possible that it was at the behest of the *decemviri* that the festival to Flora became an annual event. Certainly, Palmer thinks so and argues that it was vowed through “the legacy of the Sibyl” as it was not unusual for an annual festival to be instituted long after its temple and cult were vowed.<sup>113</sup>

Once they became part of the Roman ritual calendar, memories associated with festivals like the *Floralia* provided a continuous link between past and present events. The *Fasti Praenestini* states that Flora was the goddess “who oversees the making of things begin to bloom”; she was the goddess of fertility whose produce

---

<sup>106</sup> InscrIt 13.2.17

<sup>107</sup> In contrast, Velleius Paterculus said that the festival was first celebrated in 241 B.C. The date of vowing the temple of Flora is difficult to pinpoint as neither Pliny nor Velleius mention the temple. Plin. *HN* 18.69 (286); Vell. *Pat.* 1.14.8.

<sup>108</sup> Ziolkowski 1992: 31.

<sup>109</sup> Ov. *Fast.* 5.330.

<sup>110</sup> Liv. 42.2.6.

<sup>111</sup> Liv. 30.38.10, 35.9.2, 40.2.1-3; 40.45.5; Obseq. 6.

<sup>112</sup> Liv. 40.19.3-8; 40.37.1; 41.21.5-11; 42.2.5-7.

<sup>113</sup> Palmer uses the games to Apollo as an example. Although the temple was vowed in the late fifth century B.C. by order of the *decemviri*, games to this god were not decreed until 212 B.C., also at the behest of these priests. A year later, it became an annual event, although Livy did not mention that the *decemviri* were involved. Liv. 4.24.3, 25.12.9-15, 26.23.3; Palmer 2006: 67-69.

gave the Romans life.<sup>114</sup> This explains, said Ovid, the multicoloured clothes worn by the women at her festival, they represented “flowers of every colour and shape”.<sup>115</sup> However, Ovid also claimed that the *Floralia* was marked by “great licentiousness and unrestrained jests”.<sup>116</sup> These public performances were frequented by prostitutes and instead of wild animals such as lions, fertile goats and hares were hunted.<sup>117</sup> The salacious aspects of the festival and the fecundity of hunted victims strongly suggests that the games were performed in a Greek manner. Yet Flora was an Italian goddess who could be traced back to the Sabines. The droughts and severe weather events that saw the *Floralia* become an annual affair seem far removed from the lewd performances and behaviours that marked this festival.<sup>118</sup>

Although it is uncertain when the *Floralia* became associated with these rites, Valerius Maximus referred to mime girls stripping naked at the festival in 55 B.C. as an “ancient practice of merriment”. This statement suggests that, in collective memory of the Romans, these practices had been part of the festival from its very beginning.<sup>119</sup> Hobsbawm refers to this process as “inventing traditions”. Continuity with the past is often artificially created through ritualization.<sup>120</sup> Once a festival became incorporated into the ritual calendar of Rome, its repetition ensured that the associated memories were reinterpreted and re-understood over time. They therefore became imbued with new meanings and new images. In this process, past and present often became blurred.<sup>121</sup> This may indeed be true of the *Floralia*. Introduced by the *decemviri* to appease the goddess of fertility in the face of potential famine, its celebration over time may have adopted, and was therefore identified by, these lewd aspects. However, as the day of the festival marked the anniversary of the foundation of the temple of Flora, the *Floralia* still recalled meanings from the past.<sup>122</sup>

---

<sup>114</sup> InscrIt. 13.2.17: *quae rebus florescendis praeest*, Palmer 2006: 59.

<sup>115</sup> Ov. *Fast.* 5.355-59: *color et species floribus omnis*.

<sup>116</sup> Ov. *Fast.* 5.331: *lascivia maior ... liberiorque iocus*.

<sup>117</sup> Ov. *Fast.* 5.349-50.

<sup>118</sup> Varro *Ling.* 5.74.

<sup>119</sup> Val. Max. 2.10.8: *priscum morem iocorum*.

<sup>120</sup> Hobsbawm 2012: 4.

<sup>121</sup> Beard 1987: 7.

<sup>122</sup> Beard 1987: 9.

## 5.5 Conclusion

By the end of the first century B.C., the *decemviri* had left their mark on the sacred landscape of Rome. They built temples, introduced new rituals and designed innovative ways of worshipping the gods. These new sacred spaces in turn, created “sites of memory”. Although these memories became part of the religious traditions of the city, they were in a constant state of flux, as new meanings were generated from new events. These events elicited different responses and formed different associations over time: they acquired new layers as they evolved and developed to suit changing circumstances.<sup>123</sup> Although some of these circumstances looked back to the past, they shaped new traditions which became part of the collective consciousness of the city.<sup>124</sup> The experience of the sacred, therefore, was created in both place and time in the form of permanent monuments, repeated rituals and spaces occupied by fleeting moments of religious observance. Thus, they were at the same time, long-lasting, abstract and ephemeral. In their responses to disasters, the *decemviri* created and recreated experiences of the sacred that shaped how the Romans viewed themselves: Roman identity was tied to a broad spectrum of these collective memories.

---

<sup>123</sup> Galinsky 2014: 2-3.

<sup>124</sup> Hobsbawm 2012: 1-2.

## Chapter 6. Conclusion

The *decemviri*, in their role as priests, were responsible for consulting and interpreting the Sibylline books when Rome was overrun by events which threatened the balance of peace that would normally exist between the gods and men – the *pax deorum*. Their role was to maintain and seek this balance by appeasing the gods. In my thesis I have shown that these ten men, consisting in equal measure of patricians and plebeians, were themselves a symbol of this balance. Men who for years had struggled and fought for the right to rule the state, were now reconciled, at least within this college, with a common purpose, to appeal to the gods on behalf of the people of Rome. The *decemviri* were selected from the most powerful families in Rome and membership was a way of advancing their careers. As part of the ruling elite my thesis has shown that these men were capable of using religion for their own political agenda. However, I argued that the religious duties of these priests were of equal importance: peace in Republican Rome rested heavily on the adherence of these men to the rules of religion.

Although disasters were commonplace events in Roman society, they came at great expense: ancient authors frequently reported large death tolls, severe damage to buildings and devastation to agricultural lands. However, I highlighted that narratives related to disasters were usually devoid of descriptions that told how the Romans experienced these events: ancient historians were seemingly disinterested in the mental and emotional anguish these calamities generated. I provided a solution to this conundrum in the form of Livy's wartime disasters. I argued that although these narratives frequently demonstrated Livy's lack of military experience and were usually presented to fit his own historical needs, they presented an excellent account of the psychological responses to disastrous events of all kinds. Livy imparted vivid details not only of suffering and distress but stories of courage, honour and altruism. Importantly, I established that these stories emphasised the religious awe that disasters inspired. Disasters were an urgent sign of the need to appeal to the gods for peace. I have shown that, in those times, the Romans turned most often to the *decemviri* and that consultation of the Sibylline books was the last resort of an overwhelmed and crippled city.

The need to appease the gods in these devastating times led to the introduction of many innovative rituals which were viewed ostensibly as foreign: by the first century B.C., the *decemviri* were frequently perceived in the historical sources as the priests in charge of *Graecus ritus*. This particular point indicates a gap in the understanding of the role played by the *decemviri* in the Hellenisation of Roman culture, especially religion, during the third and second centuries B.C. Although I have touched on this theme, further research is required to investigate the relationships between these priests, their role in the maintenance of the *pax deorum* and the inculturation of Greek cults. For example, in the need to find religious solutions to extreme events, how much did the anxieties generated by the Hannibalic wars contribute to this gradual process of Hellenisation? The topic of Roman Hellenisation in the third and second century B.C. has been the subject of much scholarship but has consistently failed to turn its attention toward the *decemviri*.

My thesis has shown that Livy provided the most records for Sibylline consultations during the Republican period. Although his reporting of the circumstances surrounding this process was often frustratingly condensed or marred by inconsistencies, I argued that he and other ancient authors had a quasi-reliable set of records from which to access the details of the religious responses to disasters. Thus, Livy provides a dependable lens through which to view the religious, social and political aspects of these responses. However, I indicated that Livy frequently adjusted the details within these sources to suit his own purposes. As Livy was writing at the end of years of civil war and the beginning of Augustus' principate, his history appeared to follow the same desires as the new *princeps*, restoring the greatness of Rome through a revival of her moral and religious ideals. This argument strongly suggests the need for further research regarding Livy's narrative intentions towards the *decemviri*: how might Livy's account of the *decemviri* be analysed in the context of Augustus' religious reforms. Did Livy's retelling of their story play into notions of Augustus as a religious innovator?

Rome was defined by its relationship to the sacred: religious monuments of all kinds were spread across the city and religious rituals, festivals and processions were frequent events which spilled into public *fora*, streets and private homes. Almost every space was pervaded with a sense of the sacred. My thesis has shown that by the end of the first century B.C., the *decemviri* had significantly contributed to

this sacred landscape. For over five hundred years, in their responses to disasters, they had built temples, introduced innovative rituals, and established regular festivals and games. These rites were permeated with a common purpose, to appease the gods in times of extreme uncertainty. In their creation and recreation of religious rituals, the *decemviri* had directed the fears associated with disasters towards a common purpose of hope and renewal: it is no coincidence that expiatory practices involved the whole population and infiltrated the major parts of the city. I illustrated that these newly created sacred spaces became “sites of memory” which preserved memories of the past while continuing to shape those for the present observer: as new experiences unfolded, these memories were in a constant state of change and renewal. My thesis has demonstrated that through processes of formalisation and repetition, the *decemviri* shaped religious traditions that not only became part of the collective consciousness of the city, but part of what it meant to be Roman.

## Appendix I. Tables

	<b>DECIMVIRI (218 B.C.) LIV. 21.62.1, 11.</b>	<b>HARUSPICES (214 B.C.) LIV. 24.10.6, 11.1.</b>
<b>PRODIGIES</b>	Six-month infant cries triumph	Infant in womb cries triumph
	Ox climbs stairs	Ox speaks
	Phantom ships in sky	Phantom altar in sky
	Temple struck by lightning	Temples, street, wall and gate struck by lightning
	Raven flew into temple	Ravens made nests in temple
	Apparition of men in the sky	Apparitions of armed legions
	Shower of pebbles	Shower of chalk and blood
	Wolf snatched sword and scabbard	Spear of Mars moved
	Dead animal stirred	
	Wooden tablets shrunk	
		Palm tree caught fire
		A lake fills with blood
		Underground spring overflows
		A woman changes into a man
<b>LIVY'S OPENING REMARKS</b>	In Rome, or around the city, many prodigies occurred that winter, or as usually happens when people's thoughts are turned towards religion, many were reported and rashly believed.	That year many prodigies were reported, and, the more they were believed by simple and religious men, the more of them were reported.
<b>LIVY'S CLOSING REMARKS</b>	The making of these expiations and vows relieved a great deal the minds of men concerning religious matters.	The rites which concerned the peace of the gods were now completed.

Table I: Livy's prodigy reports, 218 and 214 B.C.



YEAR	DISASTER	ACTIONS	SOURCES	EXPIATION SUCCESSFUL	PAX DEUM/IRA DEUM
1. 504 B.C.	Pestilence	Sacrifices to Pluto, Ludi Tarentini	Plut. <i>Public.</i> 21.1	✓	X
2. 496 B.C.	Famine	Temple to Ceres and Proserpina with a yearly sacrifice	Dion. Hal. <i>Rom. Ant.</i> 6.17.2-4; (Plin. <i>HN</i> 25.45)	✓	X
3. 461 B.C.	Earthquake	Not stated – warning to be wary of strangers and prediction to avoid factions	Dion. Hal. <i>Rom. Ant.</i> 10.2.2-6; Liv. 3.10.69; (Pliny <i>HN</i> 2.57, Val. Max. 1.6.5)	Not stated	X
4. 436-35 B.C.	Pestilence and earthquake	Supplication	Liv. 4.21.2-5 (Oros. 2.13.8)	Pestilence X Earthquake – not stated	X
5. 433-32 B.C.	Pestilence	Temple of Apollo vowed	Liv. 4.25.3	✓	<i>ira deum</i>
6. 399 B.C.	Pestilence	First lectisterneum	August. <i>De civ. D.</i> 3.17; Dion. Hal. <i>Rom. Ant.</i> 12.9.1-2; Liv. 5.13.4-8, 14.4	Not stated	<i>ira deum</i>
7. 390 B.C.	Sack of Rome	Rites of purification, restoration of all shrines	Liv. 5.50.1-2.	Not stated	X
8. 362 B.C.	Earthquake	Substitutory sacrifices	Dion. Hal. <i>Rom. Ant.</i> 14.11.1; (Liv. 7.6.1-3, Varro <i>Ling.</i> 5.148)	✓	X
9. 347-46 B.C.	Pestilence	Fourth lectisterneum	Liv. 7.27.1	Not stated	X
10. 295 B.C.	Pestilence	Not stated	Liv. 10.31.8	Not stated	X
11. 292 B.C.	Pestilence	Supplication to Aesculapius; his cult ordered to be brought to Rome	Liv. 10.47.6; Oros. 3.22.5; Val. Max. 1.8.2; (Ov. <i>Met.</i> 15.6.22)	X	X

12. c. 267 B.C.	Pestilence	Not stated	August. <i>De civ. D.</i> 3.17; Oros. 4.5.7	Not stated	<i>ira deum</i>
13. c. 238- 241 B.C.	Drought, famine	Floralia/Ludi Florae	Festus 246, L.3; InscrIt 13.2.17; Ov. <i>Fast.</i> 5.277-94; Plin. <i>HN</i> 18; Vell. Pat. 1.14.8	Not stated	X
14. 217 B.C.	Defeat in battle	Public games to Jupiter, temples to Venus Erycina and Mens; lectisterneum; supplication; sacred spring vowed	August. <i>De civ. D.</i> 3.18; Livy 22.9.9; 22.10.9-10; Livy Per.22.12; Macrobian. <i>Sat.</i> 1.6.13-14	Not stated	<i>ira deum</i>
15. 216 B.C.	(Defeat in Battle)	Human sacrifice	Dio Cass.15 (Zonaras 9.1); Liv. 22.56-57; Plut. <i>Marc.</i> 3.4; Plut. <i>Quaes. Rom.</i> 83; (Plin. <i>HN</i> 28.3)	✓	X
16. 193 B.C.	Earthquake	Supplication	Liv. 34.55.1-4	Not stated	X
17. 193 B.C.	Floods	Supplication	Liv. 35.9.2-5	Not Stated	X
18. 187 B.C.	Pestilence	Supplication	Liv. 38.44.7	Not stated	X
19. 181 B.C.	Pestilence and drought	Supplication and festivals for three days	Livy 40.19.3-8; Obsequens 6	Pestilence X Drought – not stated	X
20. 180 B.C.	Pestilence	Supplication	Liv. 40.36.13-14 – 40.37.2-3	X	<i>ira deum</i>
21. 179 B.C.	Prolonged and severe winter violent storm	Supplication	Liv. 40.45.5 (Obsequens 7)	Not stated	X
22. 174 B.C.	Pestilence	Supplication and festival of thanksgiving vowed	Liv. 41.21.5-11 (Obsequens 10)	X	X
23. 173 B.C.	Plague of locusts	Supplication, festival	Liv. 42.2.5-7; (Plin. <i>HN</i> 11.35)	Not stated	<i>pax deum</i>

24. 165 B.C.	Pestilence and famine	Shrines for the performance of rites	Obsequens 13	✓	X
25. 143 B.C.	Defeat in battle	Sacrifices	Obsequens 21; Dio Cass. 22.74.1; (Orosius 5.4.7)	✓	X
26. 142 B.C.	Pestilence and famine	Supplication	Obsequens 22; (Orosius 5.4.8-14)	Not stated	X
27. 54 B.C.	Flood	Gabinus exiled although this was not the recommendation of the books	Dio 39.59-61	Not stated	<i>ira deum</i>
28. 49-48 B.C.	Earthquake and fire	No expiatory sacrifices because of civil war	Dio 41.14.4	No expiation	X

Table II: Sibylline consultations due to disasters 504 - 48 B.C. Sources in brackets contain no mention of Sibylline books or *decemviri*.

YEAR	DISASTER	MONUMENT	LOCATION	AUGUSTAN REGION	SOURCE
496 B.C.	Famine	Temple of Ceres, Liber and Libera	On the Aventine slope facing the end of the Circus Maximus	XI. Circus Maximus	Dion. Hal. <i>Ant. Rom.</i> 6.17.2-4, 94.3.
433 B.C.	Pestilence	Temple of Apollo	Between the Circus Flaminius and the Forum Holitorium	IX. Circus Flaminius	Liv. 4.25.3, 4.29.7
291 B.C.	Pestilence	Temple of Aesculapius	The island of the Tiber	XIV. Trastiberum	Liv. 10.47.6; Liv. <i>Per.</i> 11; Ov. <i>Fast.</i> 1.289; Ov. <i>Met.</i> 15.622; Val. Max. 1.8.2
241/240 B.C.	Drought/famine	Temple of Flora	At the western end of the Circus Maximus, near the Clivus Publicus	XI. Circus Maximus	Festus 246, L.3; InscrIt 13.2.17; Ov. <i>Fast.</i> 5.277-94; Plin. <i>HN</i> 18; Vell. Pat. 1.14.8
217 B.C.	Lake Trasumennus	Temple of Venus Erycina	Capitoline Hill	VIII. Forum Romanum Magnum	Liv. 22.9.8, 23.30.13-14, 31.9.
217 B.C.	Lake Trasumennus	Temple of Mens	Capitoline Hill	VIII. Forum Romanum Magnum	Liv. 22.9.8, 23.30.13-14, 31.9.

Table III: Temples dedicated in Rome by order of the Sibylline books in response to disasters.

## Appendix II. Inscriptions

*[Is]dem co(n)s(ulibus) nonis Aprilib(us) [L(ucius) Calpurnius L(uci) f(ilius)] Piso magister collegii fratrum Arvalium nomine immolavit [in Capitolio ex] s(enatus) c(onsulto) ob supplicationes indictas pro salute Neronis Claudii Caesar(is) [Aug(usti) Germ(anici) I]ovi bovem marem, Iunoni vaccam, Minervae vaccam, Saluti Publicae vaccam], Providentiae vaccam, Genio ipsius taurum, Divó Aug(usto) bovem marem. [In co]llegio adfuerunt C(aius) Vipstan{i}us Apronianus co(n)s(ul), P(ublius) Memmiu(s) [Regulus L(ucius) Sal]vius Otho Titianus, Sulpicius Camerinus.*

Under the same consuls, on the Nones of April, Lucius Calpurnius Piso, the son of Lucius, the *magister* of the college sacrificed in the name of the Arval brethren on the Capitol on the basis of a *senatus consultum* because of the supplications indicated on behalf of the health of Nero Claudius Caesar Augustus named Germanicus: a male bovine to Jupiter, a cow to Juno, a cow to Minerva, a cow to Public Health, a cow to Providence, a bull to his Genius, a male bovine for the divine Augustus. Present in the college were the consul C. Vipstanius Apronianus, P. Memmius Regulus, L. Salvius Otho Titianus, Sulpicius Camerinus

Inscription I: Inscription from *acta fratrum arvalium* - CIL 6.2042.<sup>1</sup>

*Aesculapio dono[m]*

*L(ucius) Albanus K(aesonis) f(ilius) dedit*

To Aesclepius, a gift given by Lucius Albanus son of Kaeso.

Inscription II: Dedicatory inscription to Aesculapius - CIL 6.30842.

---

<sup>1</sup> Translation from Rüpke: 2004: 35.

*C(aius) Bruttius*

*Aesculapio*

*Dono dedit*

*merito.*

Gaius Bruttius gives this gift deservedly to Aesculapius

Inscription III: Dedicatory inscription to Aesculapius - CIL 6.30843.

*Aesculapio*

*donom dat*

*lubens merito*

*M(arcos) Populicio(s) M(arci) f(ilios)*

To Aesculapius, a gift given willingly and deservedly by Marcus Poplicius, son of Marcus

Inscription IV: Dedicatory inscription to Aesculapius - CIL 6.30845.

*eodem*

*die aedis Florae quae rebus florescendis praeest*

*dedicata est propter sterilitatem fru[g]um*

On this day, a temple was dedicated to Flora, who oversees making things begin to bloom, on account of the barrenness of the crops.

Inscription V: Fasti Praenestini InscrIt 13.2.17

## Appendix III. Images

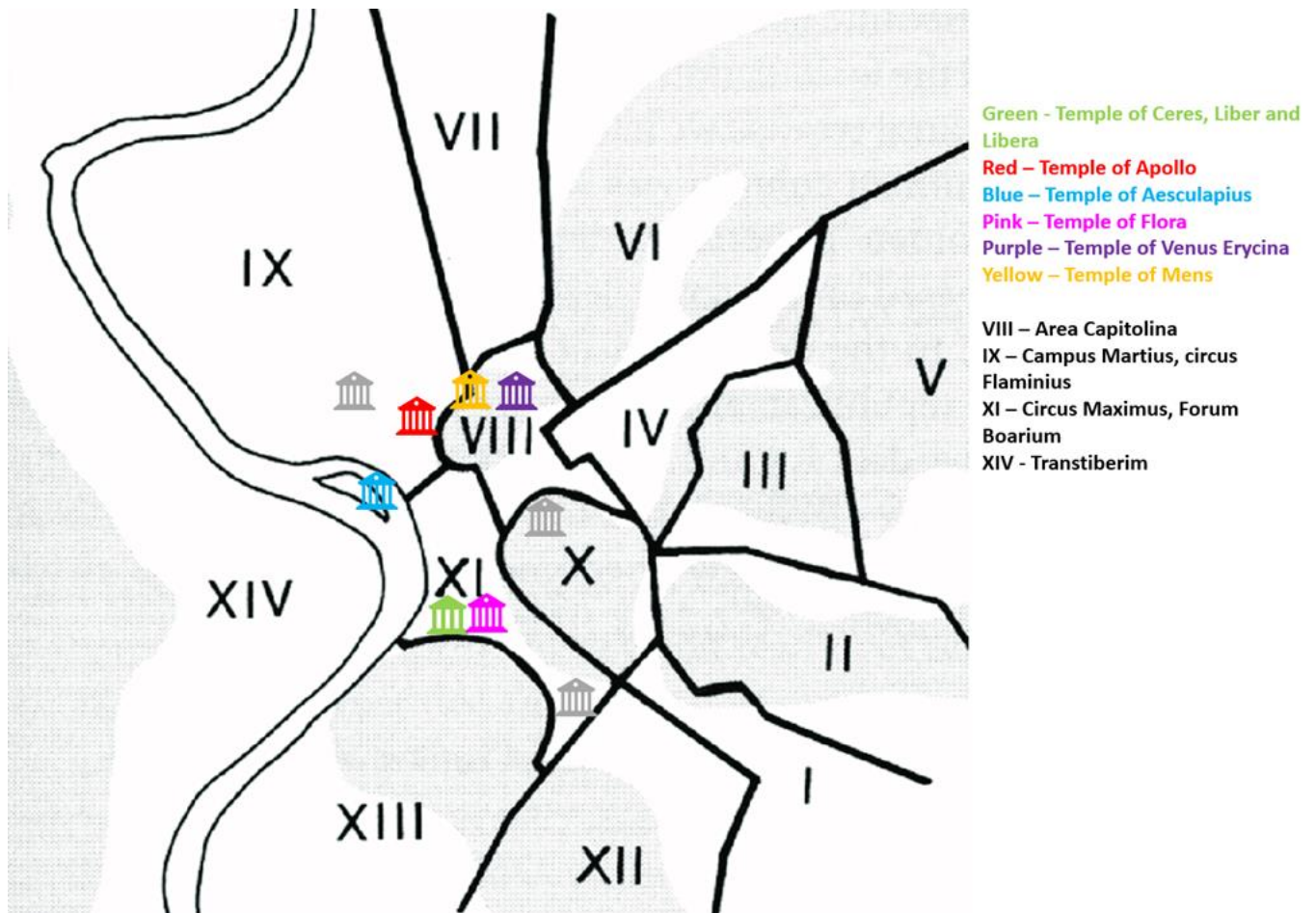


Image I: Temples introduced into Rome between 496 and 217 B.C. due to consultation of the Sibylline books in response to disasters. Temples in grey are those introduced by this same consultation process but not in response to disastrous events.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Map from Claridge: 1998: 13. Temples added by the author.



Image II: Silver denarius issued by moneyer L. Manlius Torquatus 65 B.C.<sup>2</sup>



Image III: Aesculapius' healing staff with snake entwined carved onto the travertine embankment that was built to resemble a trireme.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> RRC 411/1b. Photo from British Museum: 2002,0102.4072.

<sup>3</sup> Photo courtesy of L. Borghi 2009.



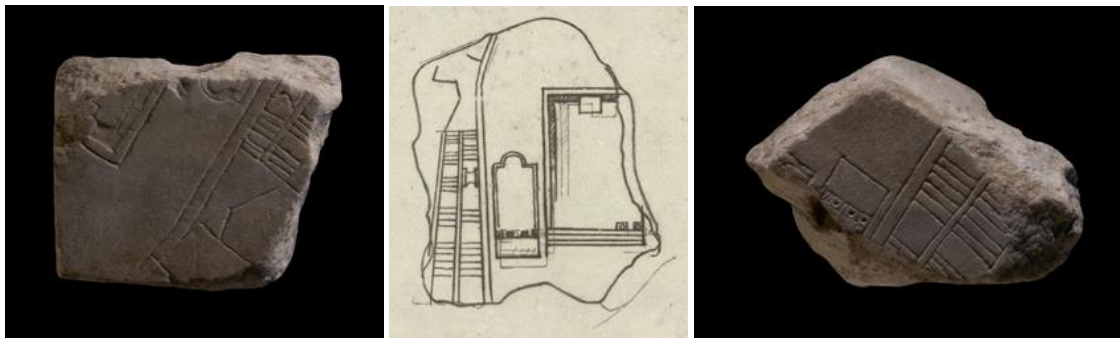
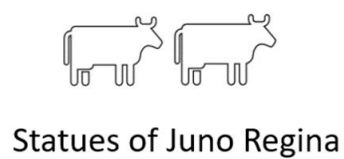


Image IV: Forma Urbis Fragments.<sup>4</sup>



Statues of Juno Regina

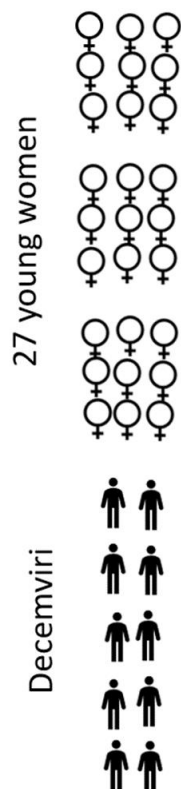


Image V: Procession in honour of Juno Regina<sup>5</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Fragments 31a, 31b, 31c. Photos from Stanford Digital Forma Urbis Project.

<sup>5</sup> Diagram adapted from Hölkeskamp 2014a: 378 *Abb.* 1.

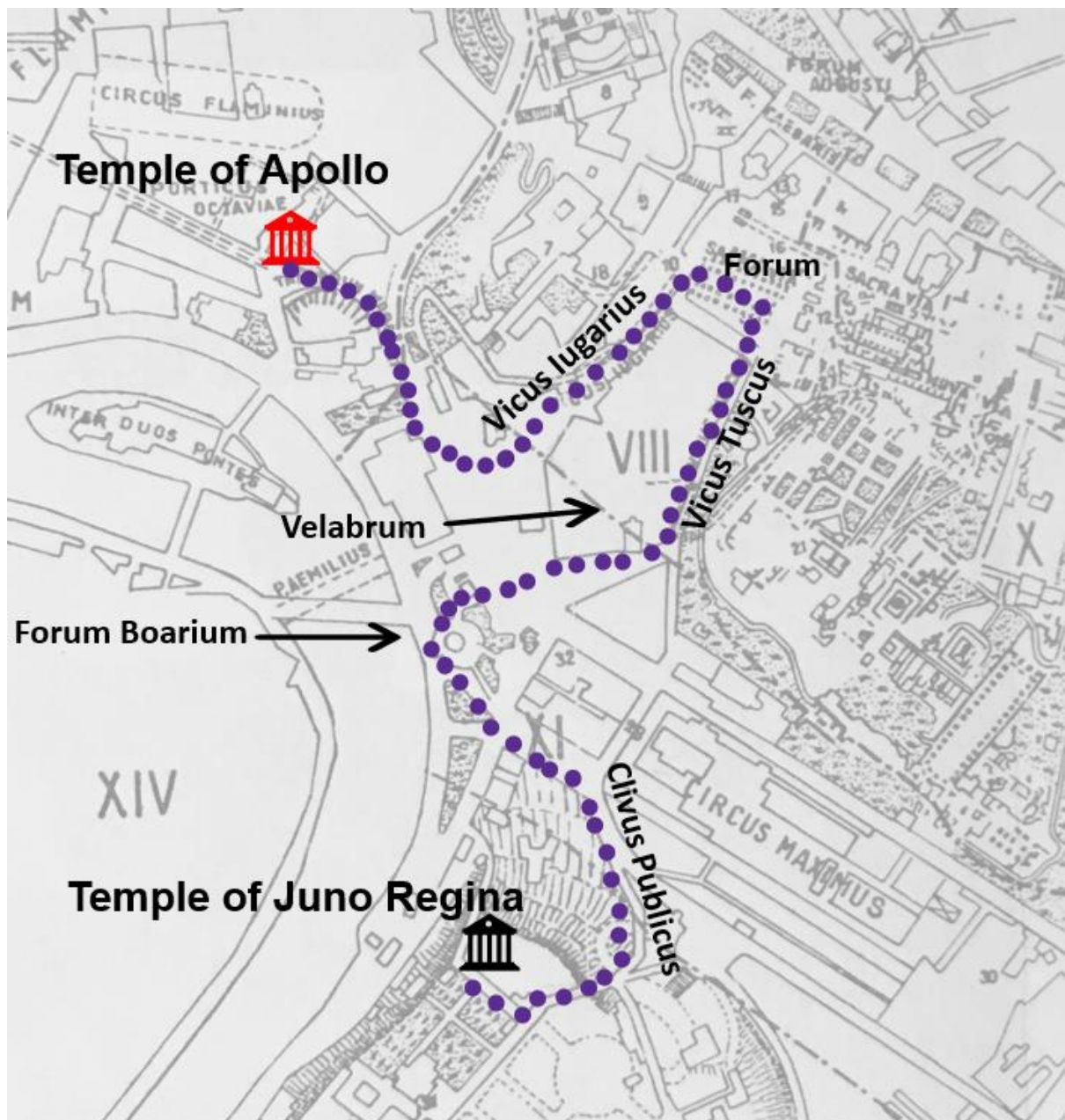


Image VI: Route of Procession from Temple of Apollo to Temple of Juno Regina.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Map from Pighi 1965: Mappa I.

# Bibliography

## Ancient Sources

- APPIAN. WHITE, H. (trans) 1913. *Roman History, Volume IV: The Civil Wars, Books 3.27-5*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.
- AUGUSTINE. MCCracken, G.E. (trans) 1957. *City of God, Volume I: Books 1-3*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.
- AUGUSTINE. GREEN, W.M. (trans) 1963. *City of God, Volume II: Books 4-7*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.
- CATO. HOOPER, W.D. (trans) 1934. *On Agriculture*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.
- CENSORINUS. MAUDE, W. (trans) 1900. *De Die Natali*, New York: The Cambridge Encyclopedia Co.
- CICERO. MILLER, W. (trans) 1913. *On Duties*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.
- CICERO. FALCONER, W.A. (trans) 1923. *On Old Age. On Friendship. On Divination*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.
- CICERO. WATTS, N.H. (trans) 1923. *Pro Archia. Post Reditum in Senatu. Post Reditum ad Quirites. De Domo Sua. De Haruspicum Responsis. Pro Plancio*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.
- CICERO. KEYES, C.W. (trans) 1928. *On the Republic. On the Laws*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.
- CICERO. FREESE, J.H. (trans) 1930. *Pro Quinctio. Pro Roscio Amerino. Pro Roscio Comoedo. On the Agrarian Law*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.
- CICERO. WATTS, N.H. (trans) 1931. *Pro Milone. In Pisonem. Pro Scauro. Pro Fonteio. Pro Rabirio Postumo. Pro Marcello. Pro Ligario. Pro Rege Deiotaro*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.
- CICERO. RACKHAM, H. (trans) 1933. *On the Nature of the Gods. Academics*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.
- CICERO. HENDRICKSON, G.L. (trans) 1939. *Brutus. Orator*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.
- CICERO. SUTTON, H. (trans) 1942. *On the Orator: Books 1-2*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.
- CICERO. SHACKLETON BAILEY, D.R. (trans) 1999. *Letters to Atticus, Volume IV*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.
- CICERO. SHACKLETON BAILEY, D.R. (trans) 2001. *Letters to Friends, Volume I*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.
- CICERO. SHACKLETON BAILEY, D.R. (trans) 2001. *Letters to Friends, Volume III*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.
- CICERO. SHACKLETON BAILEY, D.R. (trans) 2009. *Philippics 1-6*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.
- DIO CASSIUS. CARY, E. (trans) 1914. *Roman History, Volume II: Books 12-35*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.
- DIO CASSIUS. CARY, E. (trans) 1914. *Roman History, Volume III: Books 36-40*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.
- DIO CASSIUS. CARY, E. (trans) 1916. *Roman History, Volume IV: Books 41-45*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.

- DIO CASSIUS. CARY, E. (trans) 1916. *Roman History, Volume V: Books 46-50*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.
- DIO CASSIUS. CARY, E. (trans) 1917. *Roman History, Volume VI: Books 51-55*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.
- DIODORUS SICULUS. OLDFATHER, C.H. (trans) 1939. *Library of History, Volume III: Books 4.59-8*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.
- DIODORUS SICULUS. WALTON, F.R. (trans) 1957. *Library of History, Volume XI: Fragments of Books 21-32*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.
- DIONYSIUS OF HALICARNASSUS. CARY, E. (trans) 1939. *Roman Antiquities, Volume II: Books 3-4*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.
- DIONYSIUS OF HALICARNASSUS. CARY, E. (trans) 1940. *Roman Antiquities, Volume III: Books 5-6.48*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.
- DIONYSIUS OF HALICARNASSUS. CARY, E. (trans) 1947. *Roman Antiquities, Volume VI: Books 9.25-10*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.
- DIONYSIUS OF HALICARNASSUS. CARY, E. (trans) 1950. *Roman Antiquities, Volume VII: Books 11-20*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.
- FESTUS. LINDSAY, W.M. (ed) 1913. *De Verborum Significatu quae supersunt cum Pauli Epitome*, Leipzig: B.G. Teubneri.
- FRONTINUS. BENNETT, C.E. (trans) 1925. *Stratagems; Aqueducts of Rome*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.
- GELLIUS. ROLFE, J.C. (trans) 1927. *Attic Nights, Volume I: Books 1-5*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.
- GELLIUS. ROLFE, J.C. (trans) 1927. *Attic Nights, Volume III: Books 14-20*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.
- LIVY. FOSTER, B.O. (trans) 1919. *History of Rome, Volume I: Books 1-2*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.
- LIVY. FOSTER, B.O. (trans) 1922. *History of Rome, Volume II: Books 3-4*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.
- LIVY. FOSTER, B.O. (trans) 1924. *History of Rome, Volume III: Books 5-7*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.
- LIVY. FOSTER, B.O. (trans) 1926. *History of Rome, Volume IV: Books 8-10*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.
- LIVY. FOSTER, B.O. (trans) 1929. *History of Rome, Volume V: Books 21-22*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.
- LIVY. MOORE, F.G. (trans) 1943. *History of Rome, Volume VI: Books 23-25*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.
- LIVY. MOORE, F.G. (trans) 1940. *History of Rome, Volume VII: Books 26-27*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.
- LIVY. MOORE, F.G. (trans) 1949. *History of Rome, Volume VIII: Books 29-30*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.
- LIVY. SAGE, E.T. (trans) 1935. *History of Rome, Volume IX: Books 31-34*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.
- LIVY. YARDLEY, J.C. (trans) 2018. *History of Rome, Volume X: Books 35-37*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.
- LIVY. YARDLEY, J.C. (trans) 2018. *History of Rome, Volume XI: Books 38-40*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.

- LIVY. SAGE, E.T. (trans) 1938. *History of Rome, Volume XII: Books 40-42*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.
- LIVY. SCHLESINGER, A.C. (trans) 1951. *History of Rome, Volume XIII: Books 43-45*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.
- LIVY. SCHLESINGER, A.C. (trans) 1959. *Summaries, Fragments and Obsequens, Volume XIV*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.
- MACROBIUS. KASTER, R.A. (trans) 2011. *Saturnalia, Volume I: Books 1-2*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.
- NONIUS MARCELLUS. In: LINDSAY, W.M. (ed) 1903. *De Compendiosa Doctrina, Libros XX: Onionsianis Copiis Usus Edidit*, Leipzig: B.G. Teubneri.
- OROSIUS. DEFERRARI, R.J. (trans) 1964. *The Seven Books of History against the Pagans*, Washington D.C.: Catholic University of America Press.
- OVID. FRAZER, J.G. (trans) 1916. *Metamorphoses, Volume II: Books 9-15*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.
- OVID. FRAZER, J.G. (trans) 1931. *Fasti*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.
- PHLEGON OF TRALLES. HANSON, W. (trans) 1996. *Book of Marvels*, Exeter: University of Exeter Press.
- PINDAR. RACE, W.H. (trans) 1997. *Olympian Odes. Pythian Odes*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.
- PLINY. RACKHAM, H. (trans) 1938. *Natural History, Volume I: Books 1-2*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.
- PLINY. RACKHAM, H. (trans) 1940. *Natural History, Volume III: Books 8-11*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.
- PLINY. RACKHAM, H. (trans) 1945. *Natural History, Volume IV: Books 12-16*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.
- PLINY. RACKHAM, H. (trans) 1950. *Natural History, Volume V: Books 17-19*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.
- PLINY. JONES, W.H.S. (trans) 1956. *Natural History, Volume VII: Books 24-27*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.
- PLINY. JONES, W.H.S. (trans) 1963. *Natural History, Volume VIII: Books 28-32*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.
- PLINY. RACKHAM, H. (trans) 1952. *Natural History, Volume IX: Books 33-35*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.
- PLINY THE YOUNGER. RADICE, B. (trans) 1969. *Letters, Volume II: Books 8-10. Panegyricus*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.
- PLUTARCH. PERRIN, B. (trans) 1914. *Lives Volume I: Theseus and Romulus. Lycurgus and Numa. Solon and Publicola*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.
- PLUTARCH. PERRIN, B. (trans) 1917. *Lives Volume V: Agesilaus and Pompey. Pelopidas and Marcellus*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.
- PLUTARCH. PERRIN, B. (trans) 1919. *Lives Volume VII: Demosthenes and Cicero. Alexander and Caesar*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.
- PLUTARCH. BABBITT, F.C. (trans) 1936. *Moralia, Volume IV: Roman Questions. Greek Questions. Greek and Roman Parallel Stories. On the Fortune of the Romans. On the Fortune of the Virtue of Alexander. Were the Athenians More Famous in War or in Wisdom?* Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.

- POLYBIUS. PATON, W.R. (trans) 2010. *The Histories, Volume I: Books 1-2*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.
- POLYBIUS. PATON, W.R. (trans) 2010. *The Histories, Volume II: Books 3-4*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.
- POLYBIUS. PATON, W.R. (trans) 2011. *The Histories, Volume III: Books 5-8*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.
- POLYBIUS. PATON, W.R. (trans) 2012. *The Histories, Volume V: Books 16-27*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.
- POLYBIUS. PATON, W.R. (trans) 2012. *The Histories, Volume VI: Books 28-39*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.
- SENECA. BASORE, J.W. (trans) 1935. *Moral Essays, Volume III: De Beneficiis*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.
- SIDONIUS APOLLINARIS. DALTON, O.M. (trans) 1915. *The Letters of Sidonius*, Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- SUETONIUS. ROLFE, J.C. (trans) 1914. *Life of the Caesars, Volume I: Julius. Augustus. Tiberius. Gaius. Claudius*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.
- VALERIUS MAXIMUS. SHACKLETON BAILEY, D.R. (trans) 2000. *Memorable Doings and Sayings, Volume I: Books 1-5*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.
- VARRO. KENT, R.G. (trans) 1938. *On the Latin Language, Volume: Books 5-7*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.
- VELLEIUS PATERCULUS. SHIPLEY, F.W. (trans) 1924. *Compendium of Roman History; Res Gestae Divi Augusti*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.
- VIRGIL. FAIRCLOUGH, H.R. (trans) 1999. *Eclogues. Georgics. Aeneid: Books 1-6*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.
- VIRGIL. FAIRCLOUGH, H.R. (trans) 2001. *Aeneid: Books 7-12. Appendix Vergiliana*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.
- VITRUVIUS. GRANGER, F. (trans) 1931. *On Architecture, Volume I: Books 1-5*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.
- ZOSIMUS. VOSSIUS, G.J. (trans) 1814. *The History of Count Zosimus*, London: W. Green and T. Chaplin.

## Modern Sources

- ALBRECHT, J., DEGELMANN, C., GASPARINI, V., GORDON, R., PATZELT, M., PETRIDOU, G., RAJA, R., RIEGER, A.-K., RÜPKE, J., SIPPEL, B., URCIUOLI, E. R. & WEISS, L. 2018. 'Religion in the making: the Lived Ancient Religion approach', *Religion*, 48, 568-593.
- ALDRETE, G. S. 2007. *Floods of the Tiber in Ancient Rome*, Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press.
- ALEXANDER, D. 2005. An Interpretation Of Disaster In Terms Of Changes In Culture, Society And International Relations. In: PERRY, R. W. & QUARANTELLI, E.L. (eds) 2005. *What is a Disaster? New Answers to Old Questions*, Bloomington: Xlibris Corp.
- ALTHEIM, F. 1938. MATTINGLY, H. (trans) 1938. *A History of Roman Religion*, London: Methuen & Co.
- BARTON, C. A. 2008. The Price of Peace in Ancient Rome. In: RAAFLAUB, K. A. (ed) 2008. *War and Peace in the Ancient World*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd.
- BEARD, M. 1987. 'A complex of times: no more sheep on Romulus' birthday'. *Proceedings of the Cambridge Philological Society*, 33, 1-15.
- BEARD, M. 1989. Priesthood in the Roman Republic. In: BEARD, M. & NORTH, J. (eds) 1989. *Pagan Priests: Religion and Power in the Ancient World*, Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press.
- BEARD, M. 2015. fratres arvaes. *Oxford University Press [Online]*. Available from: <https://oxfordre.com/classics/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780199381135.001.0001/acrefore-9780199381135-e-2721>
- BEARD, M. & CRAWFORD, M. 1985. *Rome in the late Republic: problems and interpretations*, London: Duckworth.
- BEARD, M., NORTH, J. & PRICE, S. 1998. *Religions of Rome Volume I: A History*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- BENDLIN, A. 2013. The Urban Sacred Landscape. In: ERDKAMP, P. (ed) 2013. *The Cambridge Companion to Ancient Rome*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- BILYNSKYJ DUNNING, S. C. 2016. *Roman Ludi Saeculares from the Republic to Empire*. PhD dissertation: University of Toronto.
- BORGI, L. 2009. Asclepius Caduceus and Snake. *The History of Medicine Topographical Database [Online]*. Available from: <http://himetop.wikidot.com/asclepius-caduceus-and-snake>
- BOYCE, A. A. 1938. 'The Development of the *Decemviri Sacris Faciundis*'. *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association*, 69, 161-187.
- BRISCOE, J. 1973. *A Commentary on Livy, Books XXXI-XXXIII*, Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- BRITISH MUSEUM COLLECTION ONLINE 2019. Available from: [https://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection\\_online/search.aspx](https://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/search.aspx)
- BROUGHTON, T. 1951. *The Magistrates of the Roman Republic: Volume 1*, New York: American Philological Association.
- CANCIK, H. & SCHNEIDER, H. (eds) 2006. SALAZAR, C. (trans) 2006. *Brill's New Pauly [Online]*. Available from: <https://referenceworks-brillonline-com.simsrad.net.ocs.mq.edu.au/browse/brill-s-new-pauly>



- CANTER, H. V. 1932. 'Conflagrations in Ancient Rome'. *The Classical Journal*, 27, 270-288.
- CARAFÀ, P. & PACCHIAROTTI, P. 2012. Region XIV. *Transtiberim*. In: CARANDINI, 2012, 549-82.
- CARANDINI, A. (ed) 2012. HALAVAIS, A.C. (trans) 2017. *The Atlas of Ancient Rome, Biography and Portraits of the City: 1. Texts and Images*, Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press.
- CHAMPION, C. B. 2015. Livy and the Greek Historians from Herodotus to Dionysius. In: MINEO, 2015, 190-204.
- CHAPLIN, J. D. 2000. *Livy's Exemplary History*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- CLARIDGE, A. 1998. *Rome: An Oxford Archaeological Guide*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- CLAUSS, M. (ed) 2019. *Epigraphik-Datenbank Clauss-Slaby* [Online]. Available from: <http://www.manfredclauss.de/>
- COARELLI, F. 2014. CLAUSS, J. J. & HARMON, D. P. (trans) 2014. *Rome and Environs*, Berkeley: University of California Press.
- CORNELL, T. J. 1995. *The Beginnings of Rome: Italy and Rome from the Bronze Age to the Punic Wars (c. 1000-264 B.C.)*, London: Routledge.
- CRAWFORD, M. H. 2001. *Roman Republican Coinage, Volume 1*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- D'ALESSIO, M. T. 2012. Region IX: *Circus Flaminius*. In: CARANDINI, 2012, 493-541.
- DIELS, H. 1890. *Sibyllinische Blätter*, Berlin: Druck und Verlag von Georg Reimer.
- DISTELRATH, G. 2006. Prodigium. In: CANCIK & SCHNEIDER 2006. Available from: <http://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/brill-s-new-pauly/prodigium-e1009420>
- DOWDEN, K. 2007. Olympian Gods, Olympian Pantheon. In: OGDEN, D. (ed) 2007. *A Companion to Greek Religion*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.
- DROOGAN, J. 2013. *Religion, Material Culture and Archaeology*, London and New York: Bloomsbury.
- ESTIENNE, S. 1998. 'Vie et Mort d'un Rituel Romain: Le Lectisterne'. *Hypotheses*, 15-21.
- FAVRO, D. 2008. The festive experience: Roman processions in the urban context. In: BONNEMAISON, S. & MACEY, C. (eds) 2008. *Festival Architecture*, London and New York: Routledge.
- FEENEY, D. 2003. The Ludi Saeculares and the Carmen Saeculare. In: ANDO, C. (ed) 2003. *Roman Religion*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- FÉVRIER, C. 2002. 'De l'usage des Livres: le décemvir, prêtre ou uates?'. *Latomus*, 61, 821-841.
- FILIPPI, D. 2012. Region VIII: *Forum Romanum Magnum*. In: CARANDINI, 2012, 143-206.
- FOSTER, B. O. 1922. *Livy History of Rome, Volume II: Books 3-4: Preface and Notes*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.
- FOSTER, B. O. 1929. *Livy History of Rome, Volume V: Books 21-22: Preface and Notes*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.
- FRIER, B. W. 1999. *Libri annales pontificum maximorum: the origins of the annalistic tradition*, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- GABBA, E. 1991. *Dionysius and The History of Archaic Rome*, Berkeley, Los Angeles & London: University of California Press.



- GALINSKY, K. (ed) 2014. *MEMORIA ROMANA: Memory in Rome and Rome in Memory*, Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press.
- GALINSKY, K. 2014a. Introduction. In: GALINSKY, 2014, 1-12.
- GILLMEISTER, A. 2007. The Role of the *Viri Sacris Faciundis* College in Roman Public Religion. In: MUSIAL, D. (ed) *Society and Religion. Studies in Greek and Roman History*, Torun.
- GOOLD, G. P. 1961. 'A Greek Professorial Circle at Rome'. *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association*, 92, 168-192.
- HAHM, D. E. 1963. 'Roman Nobility and the Three Major Priesthoods, 218-167 B.C.', *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association*, 94, 73-85.
- HALBWACHS, M. 1950. *The Collective Memory*, New York: Harper & Row.
- HANSON, W. 1996. *Phlegon of Tralles' Book of Marvels: Introduction and Commentary*, Exeter: University of Exeter Press.
- HOBBSBAWM, E. 2012. Introduction: Inventing Traditions. In: HOBBSBAWM, E. & RANGER, T. (eds) 2012. *The Invention of Tradition*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- HÖLKESKAMP, K.-J. 2006. History and Collective Memory in the Middle Republic. In: ROSENSTEIN, N. & MORSTEIN-MARX, R. (eds) 2006. *A Companion to the Roman Republic*, Malden: Blackwell Publishing Ltd.
- HÖLKESKAMP, K.-J. 2014. In Defense of Concepts, Categories, and Other Abstractions: Remarks on a Theory of Memory (in the Making). In: GALINSKY, 2014, 63-70.
- HÖLKESKAMP, K.-J. 2014a. Raum – Präsenz – Performanz. Prozessionen in politischen Kulturen der Vormoderne – Forschungen und Fortschritte. In: DALLY, O., HÖLSCHER, T., MUTH, S. & SCHNEIDER, R. M. (eds) 2014. *Medien der Geschichte – Antikes Griechenland und Rom*, Berlin: de Gruyter.
- JAEGER, M. 1997. *Livy's Written Rome*, Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press.
- JENKYNS, R. 2014. The Memory of Rome in Rome. In: GALINSKY, 2014, 15-26.
- KEARNS, E. 2016. Portents. *Oxford Classical Dictionary [Online]*. Available from: <https://oxfordre.com/classics/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780199381135.001.0001/acrefore-9780199381135-e-5261>
- KIERDORF, W. 2006. Annales maximi. *Brills New Pauly [Online]*. Available from: [https://referenceworks-brillonline-com.simsrad.net.ocs.mq.edu.au/entries/brill-s-new-pauly/annales-maximi-e122400?s.num=0&s.f.s2\\_parent=s.f.book.brill-s-new-pauly&s.q=annales+maximi](https://referenceworks-brillonline-com.simsrad.net.ocs.mq.edu.au/entries/brill-s-new-pauly/annales-maximi-e122400?s.num=0&s.f.s2_parent=s.f.book.brill-s-new-pauly&s.q=annales+maximi)
- LEFEBVRE, H. 1974. NICHOLSON-SMITH, D. (trans) 1991. *The Production of Space*, Oxford, & Cambridge, Massachusetts: Blackwell.
- LIEBESCHUETZ, J. 1979. *Continuity and Change in Roman Religion*, Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- LINDERSKI, J. 1993. Roman Religion in Livy. In: SCHULLER, W. (ed.) 1993. *Livius: Aspekte seines Werkes*, Konstanz: Univesitätverlag Konstanz.
- LINDERSKI, J. 2006. Pax deorum (deum). In: CANCIK & SCHNEIDER, 2006. Available from: [http://dx.doi.org.simsrad.net.ocs.mq.edu.au/10.1163/1574-9347\\_bnp\\_e911100](http://dx.doi.org.simsrad.net.ocs.mq.edu.au/10.1163/1574-9347_bnp_e911100)
- LITTLE, L. K. 2007. Life and Afterlife of the First Plague Pandemic. In: LITTLE, L. K. (ed) 2007. *Plague and the End of Antiquity: The Pandemic of 541-750*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- MACBAIN, B. 1982. *Prodigy and expiation: a study in religion and politics in Republican Rome*, Bruxelles: Latomus.
- MATTINGLY, H. 1936. *Coins of the Roman Empire in the British Museum, Volume III: Nerva to Hadrian*, London: Oxford University Press.
- MAZUREK, T. 2004. The *Decemviri Sacris Faciundis*: Supplication and Prediction. In: KONRAD, C. F. (ed) *Augusto augurio: Rerum humanarum et divinarum commentationes in honorem Jerzy Linderski*, Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag.
- MINEO, B. (ed) 2015. *A Companion to Livy*, Chichester: John Wiley & Sons.
- MINEO, B. 2015a. Introduction: Livy. In: MINEO, 2015, xxxi-xxxix.
- MINEO, B. 2015b. Livy's Historical Philosophy. In: MINEO, 2015, 139-52.
- MOMMSEN, T. 1888. *Römische Geschichte I*, Berlin: Weidmannsche Buchhandlung.
- NAJBJERG, T. & TRIMBLE, J. 2016. Fragments 31a, 31b, and 31c. *Stanford Digital Forma Urbis Romae Project* [Online]. Available from: <http://formaurbis.stanford.edu./index.html>
- NEWBOLD, R. F. 1982. 'The Reporting of Earthquakes, Fires and Floods by Ancient Historians', *The Proceedings of the African Classical Association*, XVI, 28-36.
- NORA, P. 1989. 'Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire', *Representations*, 26, 7-24.
- NORTH, J. A. 1976. 'Conservatism and Change in Roman Religion', *Papers of the British School at Rome*, 44, 1-12.
- NORTH, J. 1986. 'Religion and Politics, from Republic to Principate', *The Journal of Roman Studies*, 76, 251-258.
- NORTH, J. 1990. 'Family Strategy and Priesthood in the late Republic', *Publications de l'École Française de Rome*, 129, 527-543.
- OAKLEY, S. 1997. *A Commentary on Livy, Books VI-X, Volume I: Introduction and Book VI*, Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press.
- OAKLEY, S. P. 1998. *A Commentary on Livy Books VI-X, Volume II: Books VII-VIII*, Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- OAKLEY, S. P. 2015. Reading Livy's Book 5. In: MINEO, 2015, 230-42.
- OGILVIE, R. M. 1965. *A Commentary on Livy: Books 1-5*, Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- ORLIN, E. 1997. *Temples, Religion and Politics in the Roman Republic*, Leiden: E.J. Brill.
- ORLIN, E. 2015. Augustan Reconstruction and Roman Memory. In: GALINSKY, K. (ed) 2015. *Memory in Ancient Rome and Early Christianity*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- PALMER, R. 2006. Flora and the Sibyl. In: FARIS, S. LUNDEEN, L. (eds) 2006. *Ten Years of the Agnes Kirsopp Lake Michels Lectures at Bryn Mawr College*, Bryn Mawr: Thomas Library, Bryn Mawr College.
- PARKE, W. H. & PRICE, S. 2016. Roman Festivals. *Oxford Classical Dictionary* [Online]. Available from: <https://oxfordre-com.simsrad.net.ocs.mq.edu.au/classics/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780199381135.001.0001/acrefore-9780199381135-e-7210?rskey=eHUsS0&result=1>
- PENSABENE, P. & GALLOCCCHIO, E. 2012. Appendix II: The orders of architecture. In: CARANDINI, 2012, 134-39.
- PIGHI, J. B. 1965. *De Ludis Saecularibus Populi Romani Quiritium*, Amsterdam: P. Schippers.
- PINA POLO, F. 2011. *The Consul at Rome: The Civil functions of the Consuls in the Roman Republic*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- PLATNER, S. B. & ASHBY, T. 1929. *A Topographical Atlas of Ancient Rome*, London, Oxford University Press.
- RASMUSSEN, S. W. 2003. *Public portents in republican Rome*, Roma: L'Erma di Bretschneider.
- RAWSON, E. 1971. 'Prodigy Lists and the Use of the Annales Maximi'. *The Classical Quarterly*, 21, 158-169.
- RÜPKE, J. 2004. Acta aut agenda: Relations of Script and Performance. In: BARCHIESI, A., RÜPKE, J. & STEPHENS, S. (eds) 2004. *Rituals in Ink*, Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag.
- RÜPKE, J. 2005. RICHARDSON, D. (trans) 2008. *Fasti Sacerdotum: A Prosopography of Pagan, Jewish, and Christian Religious Officials in the City of Rome, 300 BC to AD 499*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- RUSSELL, A. 2016. *The Politics of Public Space in Republican Rome*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- SANTANGELO, F. 2011. *Pax Deorum* and Pontiffs. In: RICHARDSON, J. H. & SANTANGELO, F. 2011 (eds). *Priests and State in the Roman World*, Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag.
- SANTI, C. 1985. *I Libri Sibyllini e I Decemviri Sacris Faciundis*, Roma: Il Bagatto.
- SANTI, C. 2006. *I Viri Sacris Faciundis tra Concordia Ordinum e Pax Deorum*. In: ROCCHI, M., XELLA, P. & ZAMORA J-A. (eds) 2006. *Gli Operatori Culturali*, Roma: Essedue Edizione.
- SATTERFIELD, S. 2013. 'The Viri Sacris Faciundis and the Consulship', *Classical World*, 107, 217-235.
- SATTERFIELD, S. 2015. 'Prodigies, the Pax Deum and the Ira Deum', *The Classical Journal*, 110, 431-445.
- SATTERFIELD, S. 2016. 'The Prodigies of 17 b.c.e. and the Ludi Saeculares', *Transactions of the American Philological Society*, 146, 325-348.
- SCHEID, J. 1985. *Religion et Piete a Rome*, Paris: Editions La Decouverte.
- SCHEID, J. 1995. 'Graeco Ritu: A Typically Roman Way of Honoring the Gods', *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology*, 97, 15-31.
- SCHEID, J. 1998. *La Memoire Perdue: Recherches sur L'Administration Romaine*, Rome: Ecole Francisaise de Rome.
- SCHEID, J. 2015. Livy and Religion. In: MINEO, 2015, 78-89.
- SCULLARD, H. H. 1981. *Festivals and Ceremonies of the Roman Republic*, London: Thames and Hudson.
- SIANI-DAVIS, M. 1997. 'Ptolemy XII Auletes and the Romans', *Historia: Zeitschrift fur Alte Geschichte*, 46, 306-340.
- SPAETH, B. S. 1996. *The Roman Goddess Ceres*, Austin: University of Texas Press.
- SPENCER, D. 2011. Movement and the Linguistic Turn. In: LAURENCE, R. & NEWSOME, D. J. (eds) 2011. *Rome, Ostia, Pompeii: Movement and Space*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- SZEMLER, G. J. 1972. *The priests of the Roman Republic: A Study of Interactions Between Priesthoods and Magistracies*, Bruxelles: Latomus.
- TAYLOR, L. R. 1935. 'The Sellisternium and the Theatrical Pompa'. *Classical Philology*, 30, 122-30.
- TONER, J. 2013. *Roman Disasters*. Cambridge and Malden: Polity Press.
- VÁRHELYI, Z. 2007. 'The Spectres of Roman Imperialism: The Live Burials of Gauls and Greeks at Rome', *Classical Antiquity*, 26, 277-304.

- WALLACE-HADRILL, A. 2008. *Rome's Cultural Revolution*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- WALSH, P. G. 1967. *Livy: His Historical Aims and Methods*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- WARDMAN, A. 1982. *Religion and Statecraft among the Romans*, London: Granada.
- WARRIOR, V. 2006. *Roman Religion*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- WISEMAN, T. P. 1981. 'Practice and Theory in Roman Historiography'. *History*, 66, 375-393.
- WISSOWA, G. 1912. *Religion und Kultus der Römer*, München: C. H. Beck.
- WOLFENSTEIN, M. 1957. *Disaster: a Psychological Essay*, London: Routledge.
- ZIOLKOWSKI, A. 1992. *The temples of mid-republican Rome and their historical and topographical context*, Roma: L'Erma di Bretschneider.