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SACRA PRIVATA: KEY ASPECTS OF PRIVATE RELIGIOUS LIFE OF ANCIENT ROME

Ancient Rome is complicated, interesting and not fully explored phenomenon even nowadays. It had a great impact on the developments in Ancient times and on the face of modern Europe. Religion plays a special role in this regard, as it acted as a social regulator and one of the mechanisms of identification, fulfilled a number of important functions that facilitated the formation of social and cultural norms, traditions, customs, and social narratives. This article offers a general description and analysis of key aspects of the private religious life of the Romans. The relevance of the study, first of all, is that the Roman society serves as a prototype of the modern European community, which Ukraine has chosen to integrate into. Particularly now, when the European issue is becoming one of the central topics of global politics and the outcome of its resolution can fundamentally change the geopolitical and socio-cultural picture of the world, it would make great sense to study the origins of European civilization. The key to overcoming modern crises can be found in history, as far as all of the situations humanity is currently facing have ever happened. Moreover, the relevance is reinforced by the fact that in recent years there has been a popularization of pagan beliefs, rituals, and traditions among the population, as well as an increasing interest in studying the phenomenon of paganism. Facing the realities of modern times, it can have either a positive or neutral effect, as well as lead to extremely destructive results.

Keywords: Roman religion, religious identification, Roman deities, lived religion, popular religion.

Over 2000 years have passed since the rise of the Roman Empire, but there is still a lot of interest in it. Works are written about the ancient Romans, films are made, legends are composed, and scientific studies are devoted to them. In historical retrospect, a significant contribution to the study of Roman religion was made by the Romans themselves: Ennius, Marcus Porcius Cato (Cato the Elder), Quintus Mucius Scevola, Marcus Terentius Varron, Marcus Tullius Cicero, Titus Lucretius Carus. The investigations of the past centuries, conducted by Gaston Boissier, Georges Dumézil, Georg Wissowa, Tadeusz Zielinski, and Elena Scheirman are also still relevant. Modern world studies of the Roman religion are represented in a number of thorough works, in particular by European and American researchers (especially in the field of religious studies and history). Among others, it is important to single out such scientists, as their scientific developments are extremely important in the study of Roman religion: Jorg Rüpke, John Scheid, Gary Forsythe, Mary Beard, Craige Champion, Ramsay MacMullen, Alexandre Grandazzi, Dario Sabbatucci, Lionel Casson, Robert Turcan, Janet Huskinson. Currently, there is no comprehensive investigation of Roman religion in the field of religious studies among Ukrainian researchers. However, some interesting works about Roman paganism are written by historians – Oleh Petrechko, Stanislav Khilchevskiy, Maria Markovych, theologian – Liubomyr Khomin, philosopher – Anton Drobovych. The purpose of this article is to provide a religious studies analysis of the most revealing features of private religious life in Ancient Rome, verifying concept of "lived religion". The realization of this goal can be achieved primarily through the accomplishment of key tasks: the analysis of numerous examples that prove the concept of lived religion; the introduction of religious cults and rituals regulating Roman's household; the definition of specific elements of the private religious life of Romans; the comparative and the explication of the close relationship between the collective and individual components of Roman society.

Religion, regardless of cultural, temporal, and geographical boundaries, is always complex and multidimensional phenomenon. In society, religion is actualized at two levels: at the official level – as a high religion (doctrine, axiological paradigm, religious standards and institutions); and at the popular level – as a folk religion

(ideas, beliefs, customs). Roman religion served many spheres, including state, household and personal. At the state level, among other things, it played the role of a socio-political regulator, determined auspicious days for holding meetings, compiled a calendar of public holidays, formed institutions of priesthood, established norms for performing rituals and chose which gods should be worshiped (all religious practices that had a state character can be classified as *sacra publica*). At the household level religion regulated the norms of leading a private life, suggested how to appease household lars, which deity to invoke for easy childbirth, how to persuade the gods to give a good harvest. At the personal level, religion has always served as a connecting link between the human and the divine – the world of personal experiences and the world of supernatural forces (although the sources say little about this sphere due to the clear priority of the collective over the individual).

An interesting conception of religion is created by Jorg Rüpke in "On Roman religion: lived religion and the individual in Ancient Rome". Rüpke contrasts "cold" religion, established by centuries-old traditions and written sources, with "live" religion. He tries to show Roman paganism not as a set of rules and prescriptions that form a system of religious beliefs, regulate ways of thinking and activity, but as a field of variable individual actions. "Roman religion not as a set of cults, one of many localized "religions," but as a regional and temporal segment of religion lived in antiquity, serving individuals who employed religion as a resource for many a purpose, who tried to find their places in and beyond traditions, or who tried to define those very traditions for successful communication with the divine as well as with their unquestionably relevant human contemporaries" [3, c. 7].

The division of religion into "live" (effective) and "cold" (doctrinal) demonstrates the multiplicity of manifestations of the Roman religion. On the one hand, an endless list of gods appears before us, and even longer sets of rules for their veneration; the formalism of the Romans in the performance of religious worship; an extensive priestly stratification that is completely dependent on political power; an official cult; and a calendar regulated by legal prescriptions, which are strictly forbidden to violate. On the other hand, hundreds of thousands of ordinary people, preoccupied with everyday affairs, who seek the support of

the deity in solving the problems of their era, asking for simple things – a good harvest or easy childbirth, who, appealing to the higher powers, try not to miss a single trifle to finally persuade them to their side, sometimes resorting to strange superstitions for this purpose – all this is the religion of the Romans.

Exploring a religious tradition, it is important to recreate a holistic picture: religion is not limited to official holidays and ideologically colored doctrine. Especially in archaic societies, it manifests everywhere – in the belief that under the sacred stone on the Palatine Hill live Manes; in the notion that the eyes of the deceased are closed by Caeculus, the soul is separated from the body by Viduus, but in general the issues of death are taken care of by Libitina; in the sacrifice of children's toys, which the bride puts on the altar to the deity before getting married.

Among Roman intellectuals, the terms "religion" and "superstition" were radically different, but in the context of modern research, we have to agree that these are poles of a single whole – a bottomless world of religious beliefs, feelings, ideas, and practices that are actualized at different levels – at the official (high, exemplary) and household (folk, simple). "The construct of "popular religion" should be recognized as an identifier of the everyday level of religious life, with its beliefs, ideas, attitudes, narratives, practices, and even customs, adapted to reality" [5, c. 289]. It is quite difficult to find religion in its "pure" form. The impeccable observance of religious guidelines by the priests can be taken as a standard, but in everyday life, religion can undergo a variety of distortions caused by the socio-cultural features of the adepts, their own interpretation of religious provisions, and the endless desire of a person to improve his existential situation at any cost. In Roman religious life, the term "sacra", which was used to denote a religious cult, was one of the key ones. Religious cult was divided into private (*sacra privata*) and public (*sacra publica*). *Sacra publica* had a collective, nationwide character. It included official holidays and rituals, the main actors of which were priests, while all those that were not included in the list of official ones, but were practiced by people, belonged to the category of private cult, which was performed individually or within the family.

The structure of *sacra privata* was also differentiated. There are *pro singulis hominibus* – individual cults aimed at the benefit of the collective. They were performed by one person, who, under certain circumstances, was separated from the family, army, and state of which he was a part. An important point should be noted: in the Roman worldview, individual welfare was not thought of independently, it was an integral part of national welfare. In this vein, the concept of "individuality" is generally erased, as a person always feels belonging to some group (this is typical not only for ancient Rome, but also for archaic societies in general). An illustrative example of this type of cult is the Roman *vota* – a vow that a person makes to a deity, hoping for his support. Such vows were frequently military in nature, and were given before or during battle, anticipating victory. The extreme form was the rite of devotion (*devotio*), when a warrior in a tense moment of battle could sacrifice himself to the chthonic deities, thereby dooming the enemies to death. *Pro families* – are family cults, which were carried out by the father in the family circle and for the family welfare. As usual, family cults related to household spirits – Lares and Penates, which were in close connection with the souls of deceased ancestors and often identified with them. *Pro gentibus* – ancestral cults of patrician families (limited information about them). Some families, in an effort to gain special favor, took

care of sacrifices to individual gods; Nautia – to Minevra, Pinaria – to Hercules, Julii – to Appolo. However, in this regard, the cult is rather civil than private.

The dependence of the civic cult on the state is obvious, but in Roman society, even private cults were under the supervision of the pontiffs, who were considered experts in the fields of family (*jus familiar*) and patrimonial law (*jus gentilicium*). The Roman family was patriarchal, led by a husband and father – *pater familias* – who was not only the head of the family, but also the personification of the priest, because his functions included the execution of rituals intended to please or honor the deity.

Particular importance was given to Lares, Penates, and Genii. *Penates* (from Latin *penus* – food supplies; *penetralia* – the inner side of the temple, the secret part of the dwelling) – deities-guardians of the home, food supplies; later – the hearth and home; were divided into family and state *penates* (the connection of the individual and the collective, the symbolic merger of the home – a stronghold of well-being – with the state hearth). Unlike other spirits that were imagined as inhabitants of forests, meadows, and mountains, the worship of family *penates* was confined to the home. They were involved in the family meal. A bowl or clay plate with food for them was put on the table; if the food suddenly fell on the floor, it was picked up and, after reciting the spells, put in place, or thrown into the fire. *Penates*, like other household deities of different nations, were associated with fire. The hearth was the place of cooking. Members of the clan and then families gathered around the fire. It is not surprising that this connection between the fire and the inhabitants of the house has been preserved in the worship of the *penates*. The state *penates* were regarded as Rome's pledge of invincibility. Their images, brought by Aeneas from Troy, according to legend, stood in the inner part of the temple of Vesta, and only priests and vestals were allowed to approach them.

Along with *Penates*, *Lares* – family deities, patrons of the collectives and their lands – also played an important role. They had a connection with food, trees, and the earth, and were withdrawn from the cult of the dead. The sphere of competence of *Lares* was wide and varied: they were asked for help in childbirth, marriage, and funeral rites. *Lares* had the following varieties: *lares familiares* (family guardian spirits), *lares viales* (patron spirits of roads), *lares compitales* (patron spirits of crossroads), *lares rurales* (patron spirits of fields), *lares permarini* (patron spirits of sailing), *lares militares* (patron spirits of military affairs). Moreover, it is possible to distinguish a single *Lar* – the patron of a house or a separate family – *lar familiaris*, who was honored by slaves, because they did not make sacrifices to *penates*. *Lares* were also perceived as keepers of traditions and guardians of order – they punished violators, including masters who mistreated their slaves. Among the widespread folk rituals in honor of the *Lares* was the following: the bride, leaving her parents' house, took three coins with her, one of which she threw to the *Laraes* at the crossroads (as a place of the *Lares'* existence), the second one she put on the altar of the home *Lares*, and the third one she gave to her husband. Also, the cult of *Lares* is associated with the holiday *Compitalia* (other names – *Laralia*, *Larentalia*) in honor of the completion of field work. Neighbors, whose houses were tangent to the hearth of *Lares* at the crossroads, made a collective sacrifice. The celebration was accompanied by dancing, singing, orgies, and feasts, in which both slaves and their masters participated.

The category of household deities included *Genii* (from Latin *gens* – genus, *gigno* – give birth) – personal guardian spirits, which were originally considered the ancestor deity of the genus. Later, *Genii* were transformed into good and evil spirits. *Genius* was considered to be a spirit that "is given as a companion to everyone at the moment of his birth and constantly follows him, witnessing both his good and evil actions" [8, c. 341]; and after death, they wander the earth or unite with other deities. The Romans believed that not only people, but also houses, cities (*genii locorum*) have their *Genius*. Their omnipresence gave rise to the Latin proverb: "*Nulla enim locus sine genio est*" (Every place has its *Genius*). *Genii* were the personifications of male power; each man had his own patron *genius* (female goddesses were called *Juno*, they promoted happy marriage and childbirth); the *Genii* of *Pater Familias* were especially honored.

Interesting in the context of local religious cults is the idea of death and related problems. Each nation has a unique symbolic system that encodes the most important features of its community. This system also includes the funeral rite, which reflects the worldview of a person belonging to a certain environment, epoch, and interprets the idea of the indigenous categories of being – life and death. The Romans did not create a developed cosmology or eschatological ideas, they concentrated on earthly things, but they had some indirect ideas about the afterlife. The goddess of death and funerals was *Libitina*, who later merged with *Lubentia* – the goddess of passion and lust, and on this basis – with *Venus* (hence the mythologeme – passion can destroy). The burial rites were expensive. Initially, the funeral somewhat resembled a carnival, accompanied by singers, flutists, mourners, and mimes, whose masks personified the deceased and his ancestors. People were buried in festive clothes. In Rome, there were several attempts to reduce funeral costs, but eventually it was possible only during the Empire. It was forbidden to put jewellery in the grave of the deceased, to extinguish the flame with wine or gold jewellery, and the number of funeral wreaths and mourning dresses for women was reduced (an illustrative example of Roman practicality and rationality). According to legend, King *Servius Tullius* ordered to put a coin for each deceased at the entrance to the temple, which simplified the counting of the number of dead and increased the budget for the maintenance of the temple of its priests. A full range of funeral services could be ordered from the priests for a certain fee. Funeral traditions had a cultural background and could vary – archaeological excavations prove that in some areas, corpses were buried in the ground (Latin cult), in other bodies were burned (Sabine cult). When close relatives saw the deceased on his last journey, they closed his mouth and eyes (in archaic consciousness, this could be a container of the soul) and shouted his name three times (this tradition is still maintained by the Roman Pontiffs).

The veneration of the dead was closely intertwined with the Roman cult of the family name. The family played a key role. The spirits of ancestors could be the protectors and guardians of their living descendants. Salt, wine, bread, flowers – everything they might need during their lifetime was brought to the graves of the dead. The cult of the dead is associated with a series of parental holidays in February, before the beginning of spring field work, and the May *Lemuralia* (which are described in more detail in the next subsection), during which the father of the family symbolically bathes his household from evil spirits – *Lavae*

and *Lemures* – harmful spirits of the dead who were not buried properly or treacherously killed thieves.

In ancient Rome, burial was considered obligatory, to stay without burial was shameful, the most severe punishment, although the poor often did not have money for funeral ceremonies, and their bodies were thrown into a pit or burned at the stake with others who suffered such a fate. To prevent the shadow of the unburied from disturbing the living, the law provided for the burial rite for everyone; even if the person who found the body was not a relative of the deceased. In this case, the person who buried had to recoup his expenses. If a stranger buried bones or a body without notifying the owner of the land plot, it was considered a crime to deprive the body of its last resting place without permission. This can be seen in the typical pragmatism of the Romans, because under the mask of caring for the souls of the dead can hide a mechanism for regulating order – a smoldering body, in addition to having a pungent smell, is a source of infection, so it was necessary to give it to the ground or burn it. Since it was practically impossible for the state to control the burial of all corpses (and the mortality rate was very high), the law that shifted this obligation to ordinary citizens was convenient and greatly simplified this task. Besides the evil *lemures* and *laurels*, there were good spirits of the dead – *Manes*, who were considered patrons of the family and the clan (at a later stage, they could be identified with *Penates*). *Manes* personified the guardian spirits of tombs. The attitude towards them was respectful, as evidenced by the tombstones of the end of the Republic, which contained requests to the *manes* to give the deceased peace. *Sacra privata* can be considered a center of family traditions and values. If at the state level, sacrifices to the gods provided for political, economic, and social benefits, the local cults sought to ensure the individual well-being of the Roman family (which consisted of father, wife, sons, their wives and children, unmarried daughters, and slaves) – prosperity, health of its members, fertility of the land and the family, good luck.

Generally, all these features give us a partial view of what the private religious life of Ancient Rome was like, since there is no way of fully reconstructing the lifestyle of that time. Roman religion was eclectic, since Rome itself was born of a mixture of different Italian nationalities, whose beliefs were adapted to each other. Conquering new tribes, the Romans adopted their gods and rituals, trying to adapt and harmonize them with their own. Religion was subject to many influences, the only thing that has remained unchanged throughout time is the relationship between people and gods. In the worship of familial spirits, rituals, and cults we can see a process of identification through religion. Thus the Romans identified themselves with the family to which they belonged, the locality from which they came, and, of course, with the community they were part of. The distinction between the official and private levels of religion, as well as the diversity of the last one, proves the importance of religion in the minds and livelihoods of the Romans, as well as refuting the common idea that religion was a simple formality in Ancient Rome.

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SACRA PRIVATA: КЛЮЧОВІ АСПЕКТИ ПРИВАТНОГО РЕЛІГІЙНОГО ЖИТТЯ ДАВНІХ РИМЛЯН

Давній Рим є складним, цікавим і досі не до кінця дослідженим феноменом, який має свій вплив як на розвиток подій доби Античності, так і на обличчя Європи сучасності. Особливе значення щодо цього належить саме релігії, оскільки вона виступала соціальним регулятором та одним із механізмів ідентифікації, виконувала ряд важливих функцій, що сприяло формуванню соціальних та культурних норм, традицій, звичаїв, суспільного наративу. Запропоновано загальний опис та аналіз ключових аспектів приватного релігійного життя римлян. Актуальність дослідження насамперед полягає в тому, що римське суспільство слугує прототипом сучасної європейської спільноти, шлях інтеграції до якої обрала Україна. Зокрема зараз, коли європейське питання постає однією з центральних тем глобальної політики, а результат його вирішення може докорінно змінити геополітичну та соціокультурну картину світу, дослідження витоків європейської цивілізації має неабиякий сенс. Ключ для подолання криз сьогодення доволі часто можна віднайти в історії, адже майже всі події, з якими стикається людство, коли-небудь відбувались. Актуальність підкріплено ще й тим, що останнім часом спостерігається популяризація язичницьких вірувань, ритуалів і традицій серед населення, а також стрімке зростання зацікавленості у вивченні феномена язичництва, яке, зіштовхнувшись з реаліями сьогодення, може мати як позитивний або нейтральний ефект, так і призвести до крайніх деструктивних наслідків.

Ключові слова: римська релігія, релігійна ідентифікація, римські божества, жива релігія, популярна релігія.