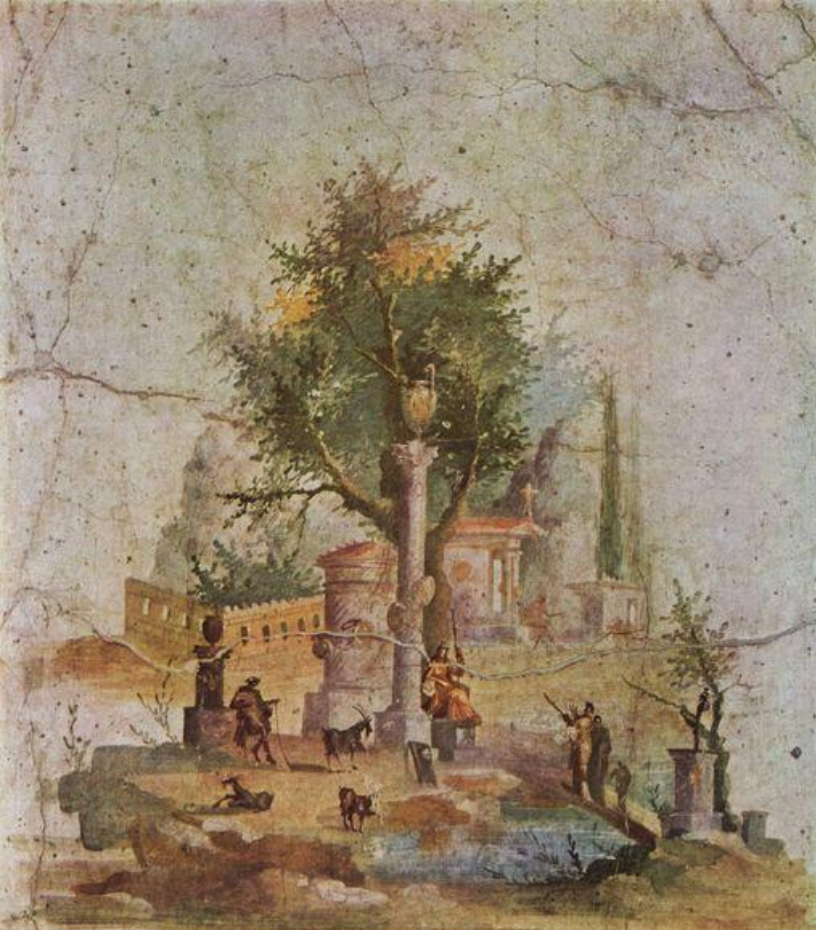




Athens vs. Rome.
Lecture 10:
Roman Religion
and Cults

Reflective report

- **What?** Report of your experience with the presentation. Remember: only 500 words: **synthetic**.
- **How did you prepare it?** Methodology used. Relationship between speech, power point, rhetoric, structure and time etc.
- **What did you learn?** About your topic and presentation and also listening and looking at others. Is this experience bringing something to you? What?
- **How did the presentation contribute to learn more about the topic and its problems? How could you improve it?**
- If necessary, you can provide bibliography, ancient sources and evidence etc.

Announcement. Conference in Lampeter

Ruin or Renewal? Places and the
Transformation of Memory in the City
of Rome. 9-10 March, 2012.

Founders Library

www.city-of-rome.org

Roman religion

- Roman religion was not based on any central belief, but on a mixture of fragmented rituals, taboos, superstitions, and traditions that evolved and changed across time.
- More than a spiritual believe, Roman religion was conceived as a relationship between mankind and the forces which were believed to control people's existence and well-being.

Roman religion

- Important presence of Roman religion in state affairs (through state cult) and in political and military events.
- Importance of public ceremonies as part of the collective identity of the Romans
- Private religion attached to the context of the family through domestic rituals and prayers.

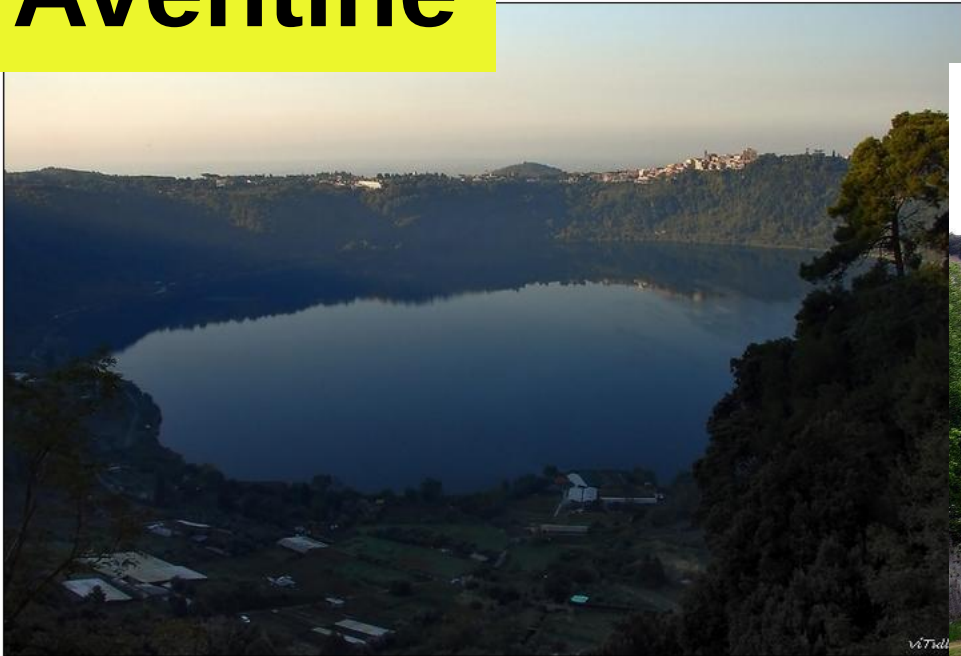
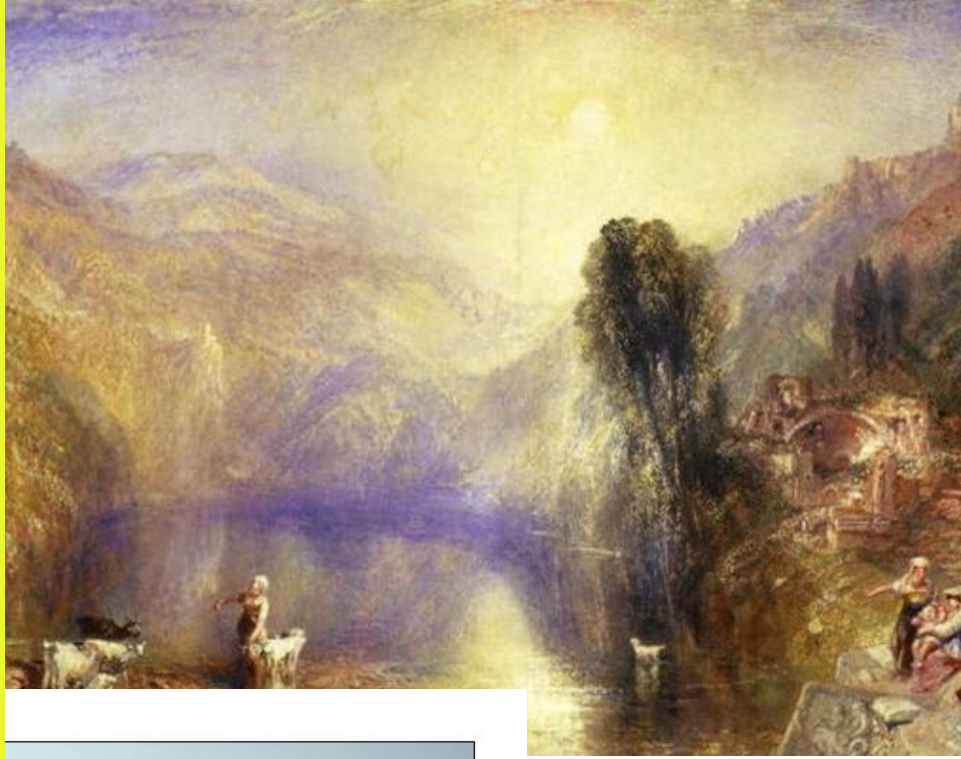
Roman religion: Some topics for today

- Archaic Cults and Cult Places in ancient Central Italy. Geography and Religion
- Country festivals
- Public festivals
- Religious offices
- Divination
- Imperial cult
- Foreign cults
- Private cults

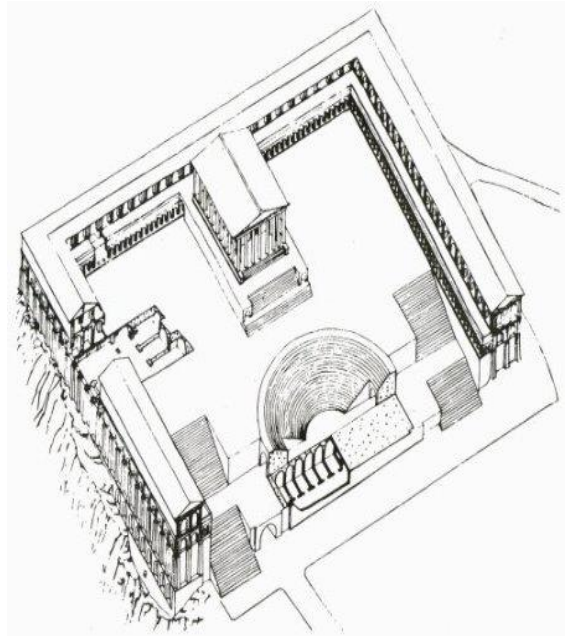
Ancient Sanctuaries and Cults. Latium



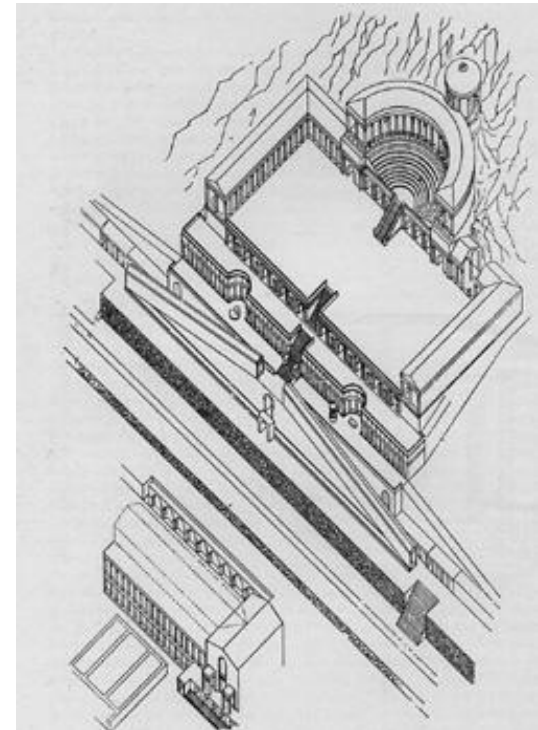
Diana Nemorensis and Diana on the Aventine



Tibur (Tivoli): Sanctuary of Hercules Victor



Praeneste (Palestrina): Sanctuary of Fortuna Primigenia



Juno Sospita from Lanuvium



Country Festivals in Rome



Some Country festivals

- **Liberalia**: 17 March. It was held to honour **Liber**,
- Liber: god of fertile crops and vineyards.
- *liberalia* and the *toga virilis*.



Some Country festivals

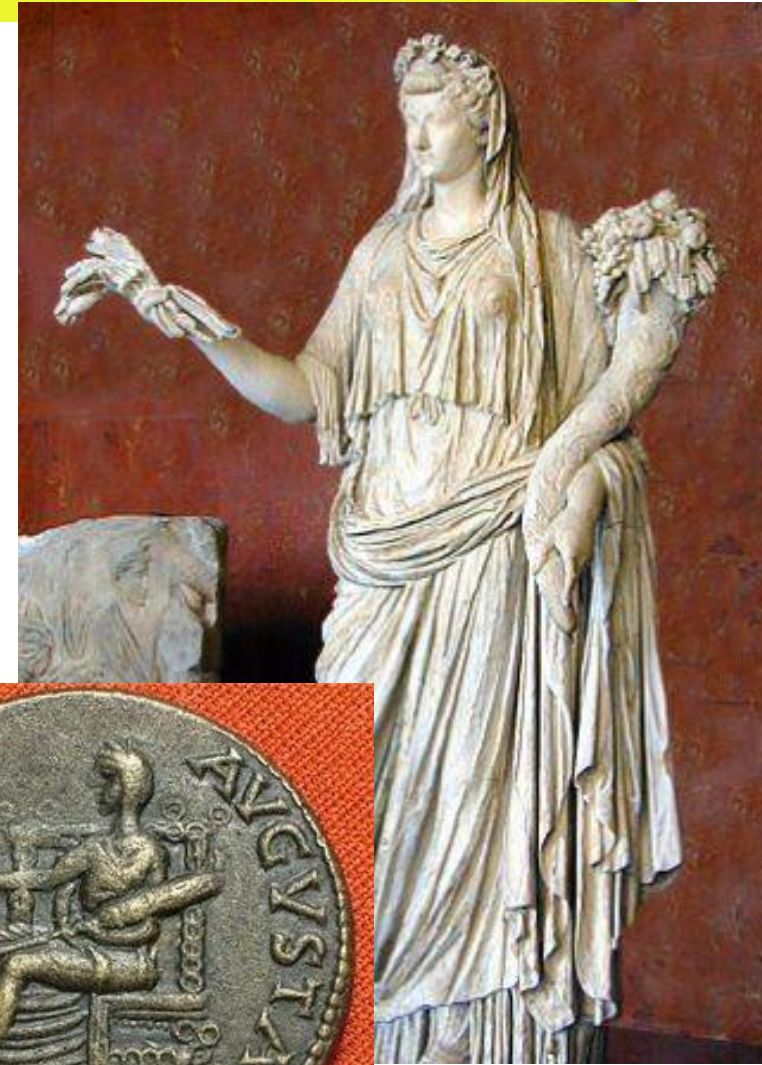
- **Fordicia:** On 15 April.
- In honour of the earth goddess Tellus.

Tellus, with the four seasons as her children.
Detail from mosaic in a Roman villa in Sentinum, AD 200--50. (VRoma: Barbara McManus)



Some Country festivals

- **Ceralia:** It took place on 19 April. Ceres was especially connected with agriculture, the harvest and, especially, grain.
- Ritual march around the boundaries of the land, the so called lustration, to purify it and to honour the goddess



Public festivals and games

- **Vinalia:** After the festival of Ceres followed the *vinalia rustica* which was a wine feast to celebrate the end of winter most likely with generous helpings of wine.



Some Country festivals

- **Floralia**: the festival of blossom. The **floralia** which lasted from 28 April to 3 May was perhaps the greatest party among the country festivals.



Some Country festivals

- **Ambarvalia:** As the year then past on and the crops gradually ripened in the fields, the *ambarvalia* took place. It didn't have a fixed date.
- Processions and sacrifices



Some Country festivals

- ***Saturnalia***: Festival in honour of Saturn. From December the 17th.
- Sacrifice at the temple of Saturn and public banquet

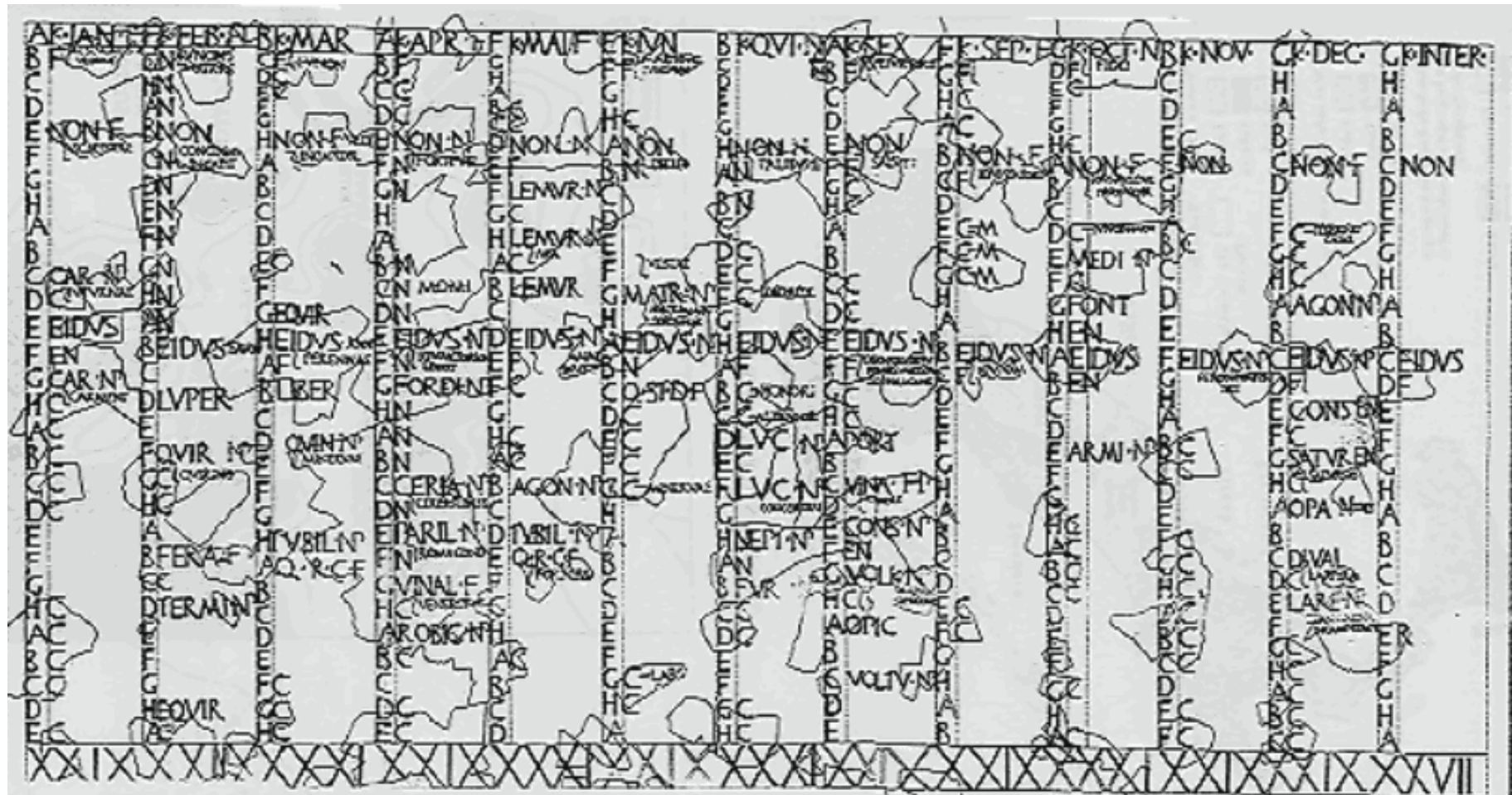


Some Country festivals

- **Sigillaria:** this celebration took place during the Saturnalia involved the exchange of miniatures, figurines, books and other objects.



Fasti Antiates Maiores. Roman calendar containing public holidays and religious celebrations



Public festivals and games

- The *consualia*.
- The sixth month of the old calendar also had festivals in honour of the gods **Hercules, Portunus, Vulcan, Voltumnus and Diana**.
- The *parentilia* in February was a period of nine days in which the families would worship their dead ancestors. During this time, no official business was conducted, all temples were closed and marriages were outlawed.

Public festivals and games

- The **lupercalia** took place also in February.
- festival of fertility,
- Ceremony in a cave in which the legendary twins Romulus and Remus were believed to have been suckled by the wolf.
- In that cave a number of goats and a dog were sacrificed and their blood was daubed onto the faces of two young boys of patrician families. Dressed in goatskins and carrying strips of leather in their hands, the boys would then run a traditional course. Anyone along the way would be whipped with the leather strips.
- Connection with fertility.

Altar from Ostia with scenes on the Lupercalia festival



State Religion: Main Offices

- **Pontifex maximus**: was the head of Roman state religion, then much of its organization rested with four religious colleges, whose members were appointed for life.
- The highest of these bodies was the **Pontifical College**, which consisted of the *rex sacrorum*, *pontifices*, *flamines* and the *vestal virgins*.

State Religion: Main Offices

- ***Rex sacrorum***: office created in the early republic as a substitute for royal authority over religious matters. Even if he was considered highest dignitary at any ritual, it progressively became a purely honorary post.
- Sixteen ***pontifices*** (priests) oversaw the organization of religious events. They kept records of proper religious procedures and the dates of festivals and days of special religious significance.
- The ***flamines*** acted as priests to individual gods: three for the major gods **Jupiter, Mars and Quirinus**, and twelve for the lesser ones. These individual experts specialized in the knowledge of prayers and rituals specific to their particular deity. The ***flamen dialis***, the priest of Jupiter, was the most senior of the *flamines*.

Flamines from the Ara Pacis



Vestal Virgins



- 6 vestal virgins. Chosen from old patrician families at a young age.
- 10 years as novices, then 10 performing the actual duties, followed by a final 10 years of teaching the novices.
- They lived in a palatial building next to the small temple of Vesta at the Roman forum.
- Duty: to guard the sacred fire in the temple. Also: performing rituals and baking the sacred salt cake to be used at numerous ceremonies in the year.



CIL X 998. tomb of Mamia



Mamiae P(ublii) f(iliae) sacerdoti publicae
locus sepultar(ae) datus decurionum decreto

Imperial Cult



Altar from the Temple of Vespasian (Pompeii)



Apotheosis of Antoninus Pius and Faustina.
Pedestal of the column of Antoninus (Rome)



Temple of Augustus
(Vienne, France)

Cybele or Magna Mater

- Link between Rome and the Trojan homeland
- Its Phrygian worship was considered too barbarian for the Romans



Foreign Cults: Isis temple Pompeii



On the cult of Isis

If the white Io [Isis] orders it, she will go to the depths of Egypt and bring back water drawn from near torrid Meroe to sprinkle the Temple of Isis...She is convinced that the goddess in person has intimated this command to her. See with what kinds of souls and imaginations the gods would converse during the night.

- Juvenal *Satires* 6 522.

Osiris



Oriental cults in Rome: Mithra



Oriental Cults: Astarte

- PHOENICIA, Tripolis. Elagabalus 218-222 A.D. 24mm Facade Temple of Astarte



Foreign Cults. The Carthaginian Tanit as Dea Caelestis

- **Ref Septimius Severus Denarius, RIC 266, RSC 222, BMC 335. SEVERVS PIVS AVG, laureate head right / INDVLGENTIA AVGG, IN CARTH in ex, Dea Caelestis in elaborate headdress riding right on lion, holding thunderbolt & scepter; below, water gushing from rocks left.**



- The **Sibylline Books**, were consulted on the order of the Senate at times of crisis and calamity. Its origin goes back to the time of the monarchy.
- **The Sibylline Books** were accidentally burned in 83 BC,
- Augustus had the new collection put in the temple of Apollo on the Palatine Hill, where it remained until it was finally destroyed in the fifth century.



The Sibylline Books

Divinatio

- **Divinatio**: the capacity of foreseen the future and interpret divine signs.
- **Auspicia**: divine signs interpreted by the augur
- **Augur**: priest who interprets the will and signs of the gods
- **Haruspex**: priest who practiced the divination

Cicero, On divination I. On the origin of divination

- 2 Nor is it only one single mode of **divination** that has been employed in public and in private. For, to say nothing of other nations, how many our own people have embraced! In the first place, according to tradition, Romulus, the father of this City, not only founded it in obedience to the **auspices**, but was himself a most skilful **augur**. Next, the other Roman kings employed augurs; and, again, after the expulsion of the kings, **no public business was ever transacted at home or abroad without first taking the auspices**. Furthermore, since our forefathers believed that the soothsayers' art had great efficacy in seeking for omens and advice, as well as in cases where prodigies were to be interpreted and their effects averted, they gradually introduced that art in its entirety from Etruria, lest it should appear that any kind of divination had been disregarded by them.

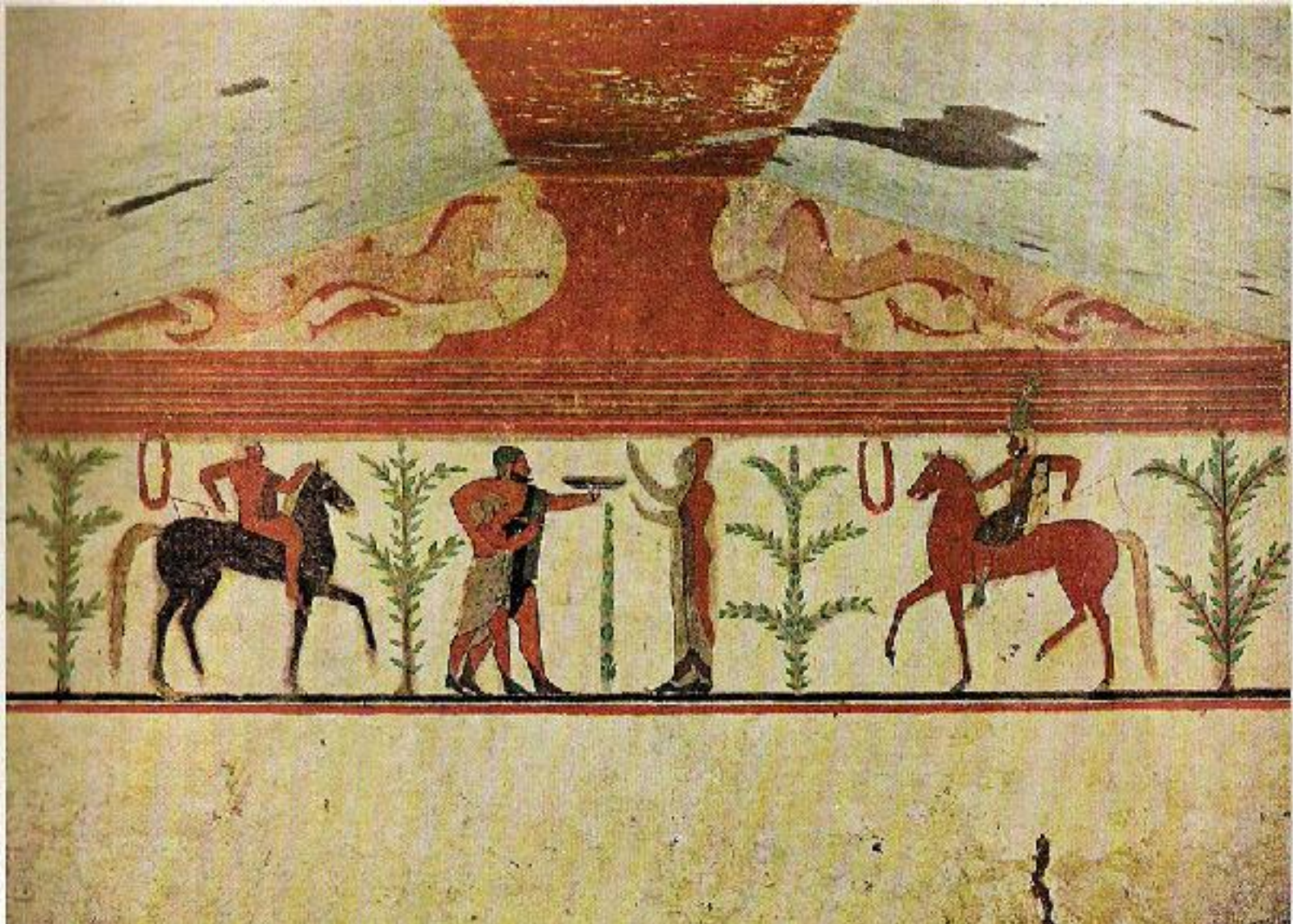
Cicero's logic on fate and the use of divination, On Divination 2, 8

- **21** Again, if it was **the will of Fate** that the Roman army should perish at Lake Trasimenus in the Second Punic War, **could that result have been avoided if the consul Flaminius had obeyed the signs and the auspices which forbade his joining battle?** Assuredly not. Therefore, either the army did not perish by the will of Fate, or, if it did (and you are certainly bound as a Stoic to say that it did), **the same result would have happened even if the auspices had been obeyed; for the decrees of Fate are unchangeable.** Then what becomes of that vaunted divination of you Stoics? For if all things happen by Fate, it does us no good to be warned to be on our guard, since that which is to happen, will happen regardless of what we do. **But if that which is to be can be turned aside, there is no such thing as Fate;** so, too, there is no such thing as divination — since divination deals with things that are going to happen. But nothing is 'certain to happen' which there is some means of dealing with so as to prevent its happening.

Omens

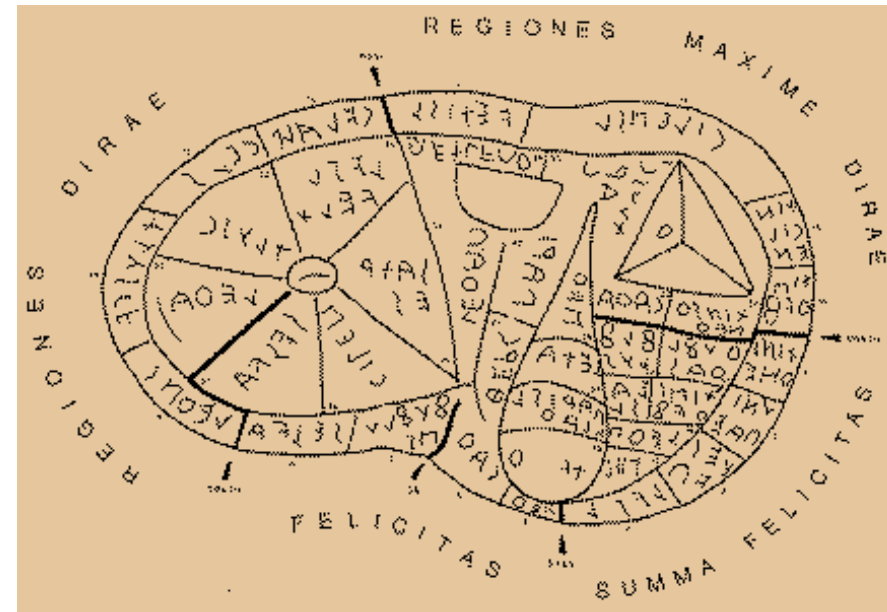
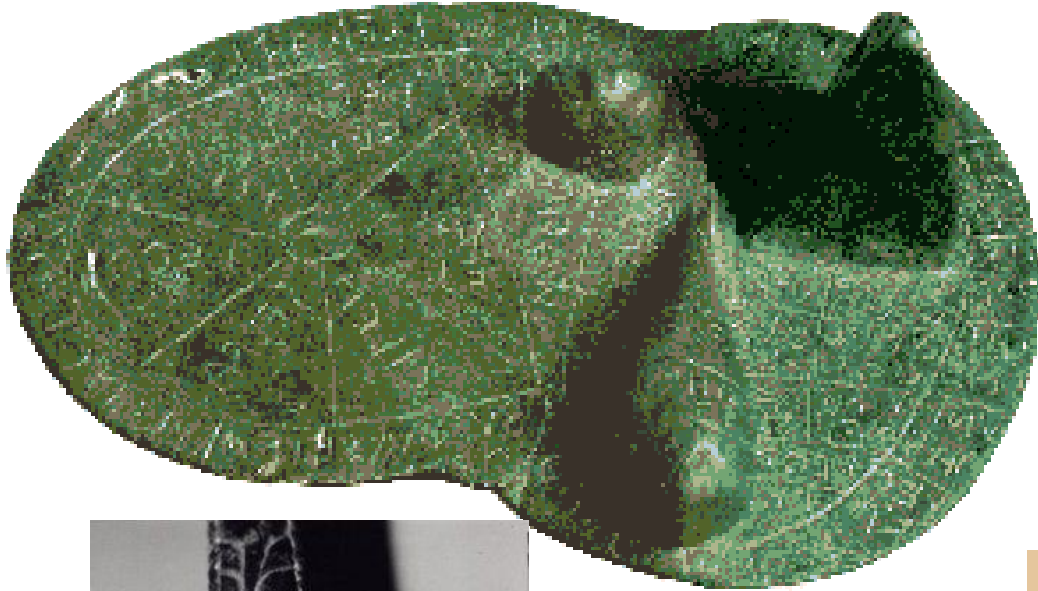
- The Roman habit of interpreting natural phenomena as signs from the beyond.
- The Etruscans developed reading omens and auspices into a form of science. They knew different means of divination. In their beliefs the signs they read were sent to them by a mythical boy called Tages, who in their mythology was to have been ploughed up from the earth.
- They would seek to read the future by examining the entrails of sacrificial animals, the liver being of special importance for that purpose. They would observe lighting and interpret its meanings. And they would try and put meaning to any unusual phenomena which occurred.

Etruscan fresco



Divination

Model of animal
liver used for
divination
practices



The spirit of things

- Stones, trees, springs, caves, lakes, swamps, mountains - even animals and furniture - were all deemed to be hosts to spirits (*numina*).



Nemi

Roman amulets



Religion in the house



Janus and Vesta: Official gods in the house



Household Spirits

- **Lares**: the spirits of the families ancestors. The *lar familiaris* was the family spirit
- **Penates**: the spirits of the larder. Thanks were given to them for keeping the family fed. Represented by little figurines.
- **Genius**: Represented like a snake. It was the 'manhood' of the family, which empowered the husband to father children.
- **Larvae and lemures**: spirits of the dead which might haunt a house.



Lar or Household spirit holding a drinking horn and a *patera*, a dish used for offerings.

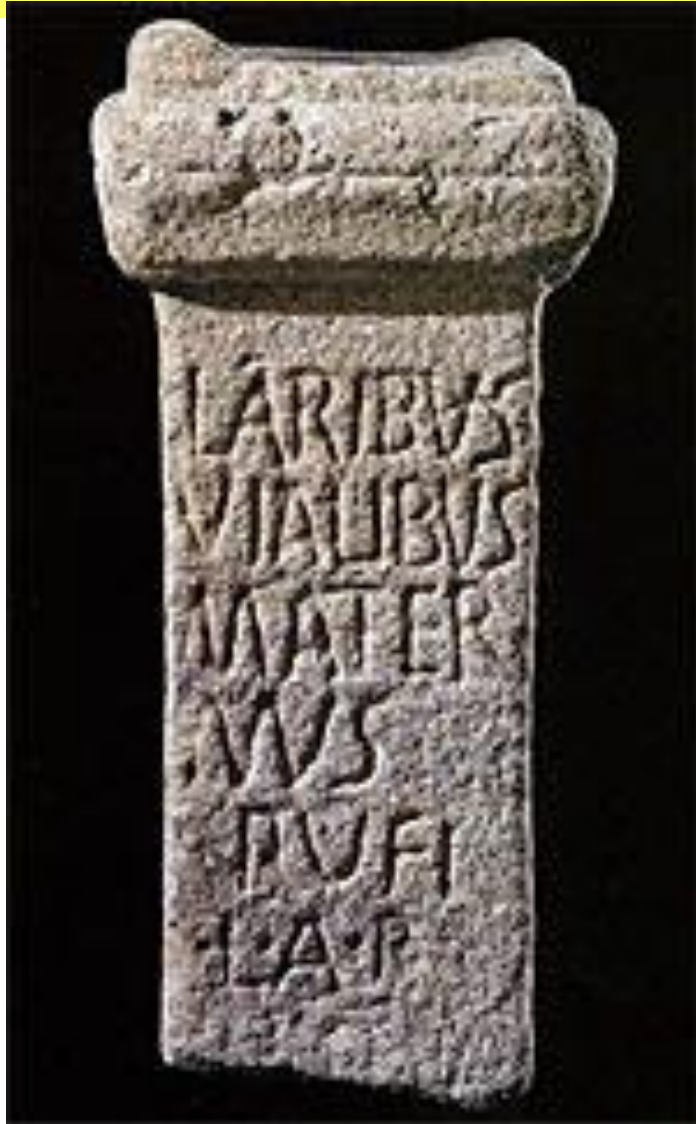
Types of Lares

- Lares Compitales — crossroads
- Lares Domestici — the house
- Lares Familiares — family
- Lares Patrii
- Lares Permarini — the sea
- Lares Praestitis — the state
- Lares Privati
- Lares Rurales — land
- Lares Viales — travellers

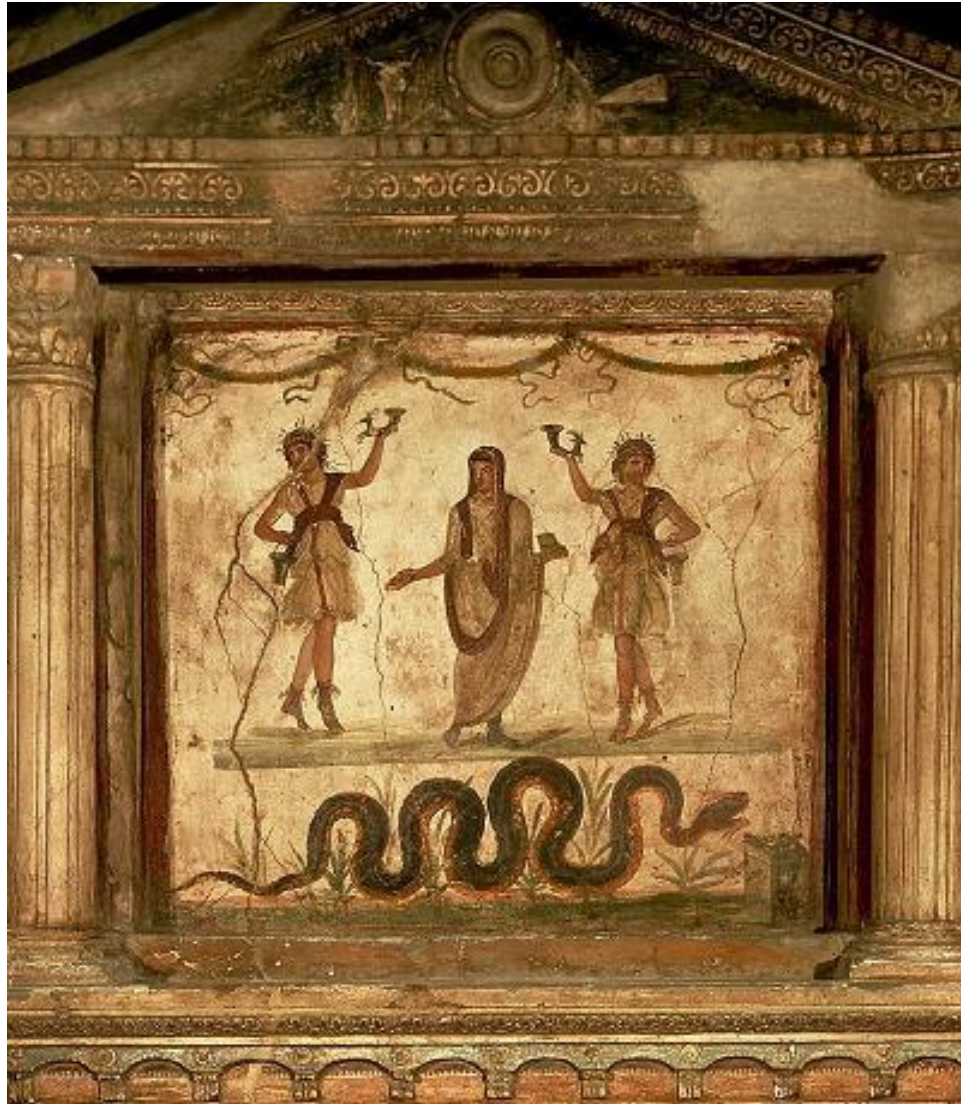
Lares Compitales



Lares Viales



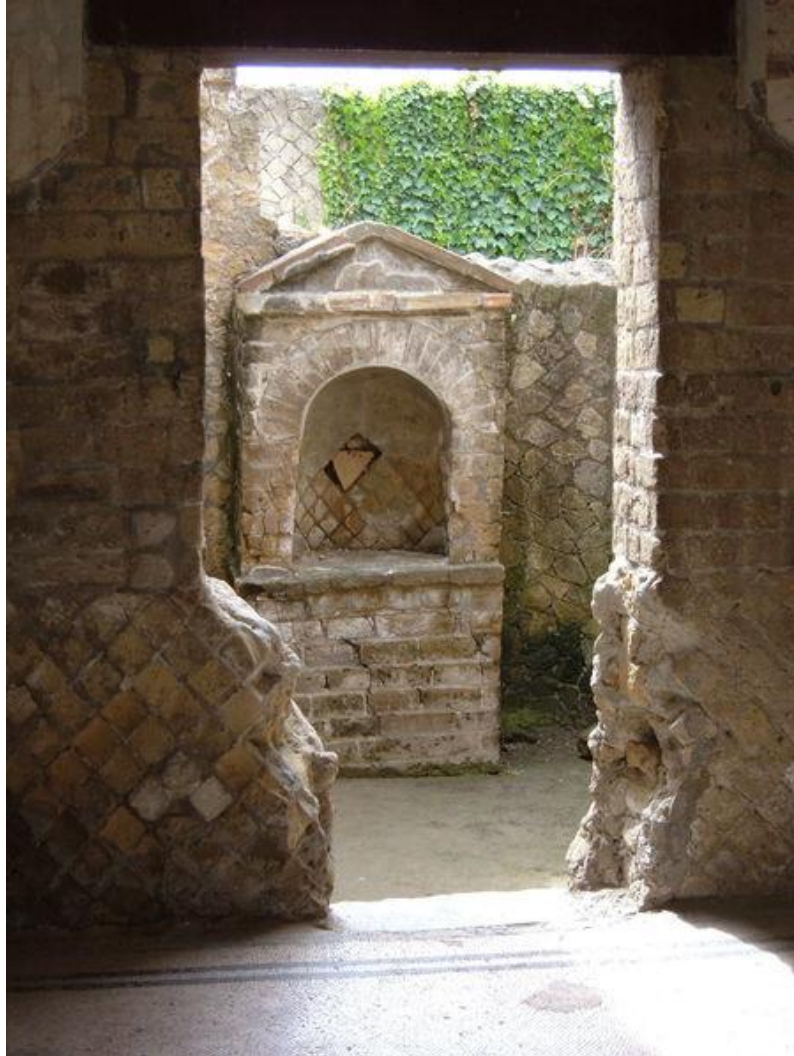
Lares domestici. Altar in a House. Lararium, Casa dei Vettii, Pompeii



Lararium. Pompeii



Vows on household shrines



AE 1985, 285. House of Gaius Iulius Polybius

“For the well-being, return, and victory of Gaius Iulius Philippus. Publius Cornelius Felix and Vitalis, slave of Cuspius, made a vow here to the household gods.”

CIL IV 9887

“Felix [made] a vow to the household gods (lares)”

House of the Diadumeni. Worship of the genius of the household's masters



- Marble plaque from the house shrine (Pompeii):
- “To the genius of Marcus and to the Lares, The two Diadumeni, freedmen (set this up).”

Pompeii, House of L. Caecilius Iucundus

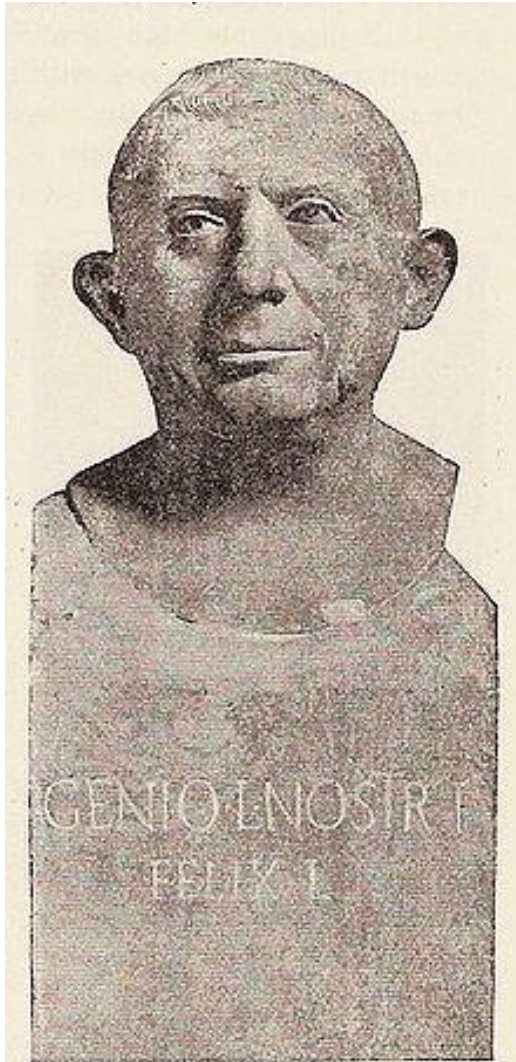


Fig. 246. — Portrait herm of Caecilius Iucundus.



CIL X 860: "To the genius of our Lucius. Felix, freedman (set this up)"

Lares of the Quartio House: Pompeii



Lararia. Pompeii and Puteoli



Pompeii, Lararium



Lararium of the Taberna (Thermopolium) of Vetutius Placidus in Pompeii



Ostia. Lararium

