


KAROLINA WYRWIŃSKA
 <http://orcid.org/0000-0001-8937-6271>
Jagiellonian University in Kraków

The Vestal Virgins' Socio-political Role and the Narrative of Roma Aeterna

Abstract

Roman women – priestesses, patrician women, mysterious guardians of the sacred flame of goddess Vesta, admired and respected, sometimes blamed for misfortune of the Eternal City. Vestals identified with the eternity of Rome, the priestesses having a specific, unavailable to other women power. That power gained at the moment of a ritual capture (*captio*) and responsibilities and privileges resulted from it are the subject matter of this paper. The special attention is paid to the importance of Vestals for Rome and Romans in various historic moments, and to the purifying rituals performed by Vestals on behalf of the Roman state's fortune. The study presents probable dating and possible causes of the end of the College of the Vestals in Rome.

Keywords: Vesta, vestals, priesthood, priestesses, rituals

Słowa kluczowe: Westa, westalki, kapłaństwo, kapłanki, rytuały

Vesta and her priestesses

Plutarch was not certain to which of the Roman kings attribute the implementation of the cult of Vesta in Rome, for he indicated that it had been done either by the legendary king-priest Numa Pompilius or even Romulus, who himself being a son of a Vestal Virgin, according to the legend, transferred the cult of the goddess from Alba Longa,¹ which was contradicted by Livy's work that categorically attributes the establishment of the Vestal Virgins to Numa by removing the priesthood structure from Alba Longa and providing it with support from the state treasury as well as by granting the priestesses numerous privileges². Vesta, the daughter of Saturn and Ops became one of the most important

¹ Plut. *Rom.* 22.1.

² Liv. 1.20.

and most willingly worshiped Roman goddesses.³ It is known from Cicero's message that her name was invoked at the end of every prayer and offering.⁴ In Rome, unlike in the Greek religious beliefs referring to Hestia, being above all the guardian of hearth, the public cult of Vesta was more significant. The goddess was referred to as '*Vesta publica populi Romani Quiritum*'⁵ "Vesta did not play such an important role in the family cult [in Rome – K.W.] as Greek Hestia did, however her worship and temple⁶ were crucial in the state life. It can be explained by the fact that when the worship of Vesta became the official state cult, her domestic 'duties' were transferred to other deities and more specifically to household lares, Lares Familiares".⁷ The worship of Vesta was the element connecting a private and a public sphere of life. The goddess as a guardian of hearth and home was at the same time a symbol of stability and perenniality of the state."⁸

Ovid. *Fasti* 6.289–300:

[...] quid mirum, virgo si virgine laeta ministra
admittit castas ad sua sacra manus?
nec tu aliud Vestam quam vivam intellege flammam,
nataque de flamma corpora nulla vides.
iure igitur virgo est, quae semina nulla remittit
nec capit et comites virginitatis amat.
esse diu stultus Vestae simulacra putavi,
mox didici curvo nulla subesse tholo:
ignis inextinctus templo celatur in illo,
effigiem nullam Vesta nec ignis habet,
stat vi terra sua: vi stando Vesta vocatur,
causaque par Grai nominis esse potest.

In the poetic portrayals by Ovidius, Vesta appears as a virgin goddess, avoiding disagreements between Olympian gods, ranked as one of the twelve most important gods, who were right after the Capitoline Triad in the deities hierarchy. Vesta, 'being the presence, as opposed to vision',⁹ was identified with the pure but at the same time infertile flame.¹⁰ A superficial reading of Ovidius seems to suggest that since Numa's time the goddess had not been depicted in human form, and her cult involved worshipping the flame which symbolised her. It does not seem that there was a prohibition of presenting the goddess' image. Although rare, depictions of Vesta existed. Besides images of the goddess presented on coins, monuments are worth mentioning. One of them, a monument portray-

³ Grimal, *Słownik*, 360.

⁴ Cic. *De nat. deor.* 2.27.

⁵ Koch, "Vesta", 1766; Makiewicz, "Formy kultu", 120.

⁶ An important thing worth paying attention to was the shape of the temple, round, thus completely different from the majority of Roman temples, the one that according to Dionysius of Halicarnassus was supposed to be like the Earth with which the goddess was identified. Dion. Hal. *Rom. Ant.* 3.66.3. As for the symbolic importance of the shape of Vesta's temple see Prowse, "The Vestal Circle", 178 et seq.

⁷ Makiewicz, "Formy kultu", 118. See also: Krawczyk, "Pozycja prawna", 75 et seq.

⁸ Dumézil, "Archaic Roman Religion", 15; Winniczuk, "Kalendarz", 23 writes: "Romans' view which drew a parallel between the state and hearth was reflected in the cult of Vesta in which priestesses had a role of a housewife protecting the sacred flame, the state symbol".

⁹ Goux, "Vesta", 93.

¹⁰ For information about the change of perception of the symbolism of Vesta's fire see Wildfang, *Rome's Vestal Virgins*, 8 et seq.

ing what seems to be the goddess, was found during excavation conducted in the area of *Atrium Vestae* in 1883–1884.¹¹ The other monument of the goddess was mentioned bitterly by Cicero as in front of it a *pontifex maximus* Quintus Scaevola was murdered.¹²

The cult of Vesta, so vital for Rome on several counts, grew together with its beginnings. Priestesses of the most pristine and purest goddess needed to be, just like her, virgins.¹³ According to the message of Plutarch, Numa Pompilius believed that protecting the sacred flame with great reverence could be entrusted only to pure and untainted virgins.¹⁴ The king recognized it in that way as he saw the nature of fire as untainted or as he considered fire to be fruitless and associated it with virginity.¹⁵ For that reasons keeping *castitas* was the most significant duty of Vestals,¹⁶ while breaking the vow of chastity by a priestess was punished in the most severe way – death by being buried alive¹⁷.

Taking a closer look at Vestal Virgin's participation both in politics as well as in a social life of the state, it is noticeable that the leading role is taken by them: Roman priestesses, patricians, mysterious guardians of the sacred flame of the goddess Vesta, admired and respected on the whole, however, sometimes under the threat of condemnation and contempt. „[...] this flame of spirited beauty which permeates priesthood and because of them the whole Roman religion: the Virgins of Vesta, *Virgines Vestales*”.¹⁸

The subject matter of this paper is to elaborate on the position held by the Vestal Virgins within the society and their participation in the life of the Eternal City. It is impossible to include the latter only in one dimension because the Vestal Virgins cannot be characterised and approached only from an angle of performed by them in contemplative isolation rituals, since a Vestal ‘as a symbol of the Roman state she was expected to appear in public and was meant to be seen’.¹⁹ Thus, it is worth focusing and elaborating

¹¹ As for detailed information on Vesta's iconography see Linder, *Portraits of the Vestal Virgins*, 79 et seq. About criticism of various portrayals of the goddess being shown as kind of a violation act of ‘the perpetual virgin being the manifestation and the essence of sanctity’ see Kroppenberg, “Law, Religion”, 419.

¹² Cic. *De nat. deor.* 3.80.

¹³ Saquete, “Las vírgenes”, 47 states that, “[...] virginity placed the priestess surely on another plane [...] situated in a privileged way for communication with the divinities”, elsewhere (p. 66) indicates that „virginity has made them particularly effective in fulfilling their duties”. See also: Mekacher, *Die vestalischen*, 21.

¹⁴ Plut. *Num.* 9.5.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ So far a lot of attention has been devoted to the issue concerning a duty of keeping *castitas* by the Vestal Virgins. Scholars are still searching for motives and justification for imposing it on the priestesses of Vesta. For information about it see: Beard, “The Sexual Status”, 12–27; Kroppenberg, “Law, Religion”, 418 et seq.; Misztal-Konecka, *Incestum*, 255 et seq.; Parker, “Why Were the Vestals Virgins?”, 563 et seq. and about a ritual and cruel act of a Vestal, who failed to keep *castitas*, being buried alive see: Staples, *From Good Goddess*, 131 et seq.

¹⁷ Plin. *Ep.* 4.11 See Mossakowski, “Sakralne zbrodnie”, 124. The author analysing sacred crimes committed by the Vestal Virgins came to the conclusion that ‘the type of punishment imposed on a Vestal for [...] breaking the vow of chastity resulted from magical-sacred images of the necessity of devoting to gods (especially to Ceres) an impure violator. In principle, although it led to death, the punishment itself was not death penalty but a sacrifice of a Vestal to a god. Similarly: Jaczynowska, *Religie świata rzymskiego*, 42, who stated that ‘in this way a condemned Vestal was removed from the living without laying violent hands on her sacred person’. Described by Pilinius case of sentenced Cornelia to death was not the only one at the times of Domitian reign. See Suet. *Dom.* 8. For the political background of the mentioned previously accusations see Sihvonen, *The Vestal Virgins*, 202 et. seq.

¹⁸ Zieliński, *Religie świata antycznego*, 271.

¹⁹ Kroppenberg, “Law, Religion”, 420.

on this image, especially to portray it in the sociological and social context of functioning of the Roman state, and showing that the Vestal Virgins was not only an remarkably significant symbol, and even synonymous with the continuity of the Roman state, but, except for the fulfilment of their dignified duties they were able to have a real impact on the state itself.

The significance of the Vesta's cult and the Order of the Vestals on the threshold of principate and at the decline of the old *religio*

As the flame of Vesta was the heart of Rome and the cult of the goddess was one of the pillars of Romans' identity and the symbol of perennality of the state, one cannot be surprised that at the groundbreaking moments of Rome, the fate of the state was entrusted to a special guardianship of Vesta or that fate was concatenated with her cult. Two such moments are worth mentioning. The first one, from the beginning of principate, was of significant meaning in a process of a new system formation, the second one took place at the decline of old beliefs when Roman *religio*, being in retreat, was organizing its protectors.

The cult of Vesta assumed considerable significance during the reign of Augustus in connection with the transformation of Roman religion undertaken by him²⁰. One of its key elements was establishing a relation between the position of *pontifex maximus*, which had been occupied by Augustus since 12 BC, and the goddess anew.²¹ Great respect for tradition required *pontifex maximus* to inhabit a building on the *Forum Romanum* located nearby *Atrium Vestae*.²² Princeps wanting to maintain the tradition but at the same time being unwilling to leave his house on the Palatine, made it a public property having rebuilt it after fire.²³ Only two months after appointing Augustus as the chief high priest of the College of Pontiffs, the statue of Vesta [and her temple²⁴] was consecrated in his house on the Palatine. It is pointed out that the relationship between Augustus and the Vestals had a twofold result: the emperor, as the guardian of the priestesses being the symbol of Rome, thus appeared as a guardian of the state, while the Vestals were given new dignities and distinctions.²⁵ The above mentioned actions of Augustus fits into the overall of his policy leading to consolidate gained power. He connected the cult of Vesta

²⁰ Garofalo, "Augusto e le Vestali", 167 et seq; Mekacher, *Die vestalischen*, 196 et seq.

²¹ Beard, North, Price, *Religions of Rome*, 189.

²² As for the results of the excavations of this site see: Linder, *Portraits of the Vestal*, 40 et seq. The view of the reconstruction of the temple available at: http://wayback.archiveit.org/7877/20160919160821/http://dlib.etc.ucla.edu/projects/Forum/reconstructions/VestaAedes_1/introduction (access: 23.06.2020).

²³ Beard, North, and Price, *Religions of Rome*, 189.

²⁴ For information about scholars' doubts concerning the consecration of Vesta's temple in Augustus' house on the Palatine and resulting from adding this word to the inscriptions see Beard, North, and Price, *Religions of Rome*, 189 fn. 76; Cobb, *The Cult*, 194 et seq.; and Garofalo, "Augusto e le Vestali", 171, together with the literature included there.

²⁵ Saquete, "Las vírgenes", 87.

with the life of Imperial Family consciously and skillfully, legitimizing in that way a new form of system. *Princeps*, considering himself as a defender of morality and a guardian of observing the old beliefs,²⁶ was able to put the ancient cult of goddess Vesta and symbolism of the eternal flame burning for the fortune of Rome together with his own vision of the state's fate and its future. However, it did not happen without changing current position of Vestals. Peta Greenfield, when illustrating changes within a Vestal's status on the treshold of principate, stated "the Republican Vestal was a different entity from the imperial version"²⁷. She noticed that Vestals were less often involved into activities of different kind than ritual actions and in particular they less frequently performed a role of guardians of politically important documents. One can easily notice that Augustus was fully aware of his policy, he skillfully rebuilt relations with Vestals, and simultaneously weakened their social and political importance.²⁸

Whereas, at the time when ancient Roman beliefs began to disappear, the process which escalated in the 4th century A.D., 'the sacred order of the Vestal Virgins',²⁹ as described by Tadeusz Margul, constituted together with ancient Italic festivals, the Sibylline Books and the the College of Pontiffs 'above that and perhaps most of all an immemorial pillar of old Roman *religio*'.³⁰ Nevertheless, even when the religion of ancient Rome was being abandoned, some attempts to protect it were made: 'Fading of the guarded light indicated gradual disappearance of religious tradition',³¹ wrote T. Margul describing various cases of protection of ancient Roman beliefs by conservative patricians of Quintus Aurelius Symmachus' circle, the one who was involved in a dispute with emperor Valentinian and the bishop of Milan Ambrose over the reinstatement of the goddess Victoria's altar to the council chamber of the Roman Senate.³² Symmachus presented interesting cases relating to the Vestal virgins' activities. The first involved endowing the statue of *Virgo Vestalis Maxima* in 380 A.D. by the wife of Vettius Agorius Praetextatus, a Roman senator and an eager defender of former *religio*. Probably, it would not be surprising if not a fact that a Praetextatus' widow wanted to honour in that way *Virgo Vestalis Maxima Coelia Concordia*, who led, contrary to the position of Symmachus, to erect a posthumous statue of Praetextatus to commemorate his contributions on the basis of traditional Roman beliefs.³³ The consequence of Coelia's actions that led to reach her goals undoubtedly draws the attention. She also had to realise her power if she was able to effectively oppose the contrary opinions expressed by well-connected men.³⁴ The second case concerning a certain Alban Vestal named Primigenia

²⁶ Suet. *Aug.* 31.

²⁷ Greenfield, *Virgin Territory*, 282 et seq.

²⁸ See however on *ius liberorum for Vestals*: Cass. Dio 56.10. See also: Staples, *From Good Goddess*, 145.

²⁹ Margul, "Ostatnie koleje", 4.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ Margul, "Ostatnie koleje", 17.

³² See Nowak, *Biblioteka*, 29 et seq.

³³ Symm. *Ep.* 2.36.

³⁴ I agree with the evaluation expressed by Mitchell, *Symmachus and the Vestal Virgins*, 6: "This is a very interesting example of where a powerful woman, with a status and independence almost unparalleled in Late Antique Rome, prevailed over the views and wishes of some of the male establishment".

who was accused of *castitas* violation.³⁵ The letter indicates that at the decline of the old beliefs, Symmachus holding the position of *pontifex maximus*, firmly demanded exercising a traditional, cruel punishment to a Vestal Virgin. Probable Symmachus' motivation is significantly important for the discussed case. At the times when Christianity had been growing in power and the old Roman beliefs had been losing their confessors and for that reason they had been losing their meaning as well, presumably only exceptionally conscientious religious practices and respecting the tradition, could save them.³⁶ The cult of Vesta fulfilled that role excellently, it had lasted since forever, it had concerned a guardian of hearth and home and the state which had been supposed to protect by virgins obliged to keep their purity. It had included everything crucial to Roman tradition and close to their conservative believers.

It was also the time when, despite resistance from some part of Roman aristocracy and peasantry, the majority of former cults, including the one of Vesta suffered a sharp decline. The exact date of this event is disputable. The time that is taken into consideration concerns the twelve-year period, as of Gratian's Edict (*the Decretum Gratiani*) from 382 A.D., which deprived priests and Vestals of all privileges, subventions as well as a possibility to inherit land in will³⁷. In the prewar paper devoted to the cult of Vesta and its priestesses, analysing the meaning and feasible reasons for removing the name of the Vestal Virgin from the statue of *Virgo Vestalis Maxima*, Wincenty Śmiałek acknowledged the end of the Vestal Virgins' existence in 394 A.D.,³⁸ whereas in the further, written after the war paper Leokadia Małunowicz recognised that the official cult of Vesta was terminated by Theodosius the Great in 392 A.D.:³⁹ 'The final blow for paganism was dealt by Theodosius the Great by the official prohibition of the pagan cult; in 392 he strongly forbade, under threat of severe punishments, any religious rituals regardless of who would perform them or where'.⁴⁰ One should be mindful of the fact that the prohibition of worshipping did not mark its decline. It seems to be particularly relevant in relation to over a thousand-year cult of Vesta in Rome. Undoubtedly, issuing Gratian's Edict (*the Decretum Gratiani*) which deprived priests as well as the Vestal Virgins of all the privileges inhibited the fulfilment of their duties. As it has already been mentioned, pagan beliefs were held for a long time among the Roman aristocracy's circles, their decline happened gradually, by slowly relegating them to being on the periphery of history. The part of them concerning the cult of Vesta was supposed to suffer the same fate just because the retiring Vestal Virgins failed to have any successors. 'However, the day must have come when there were no hands to put more wood on the fire and the sacred flame

³⁵ Symm. *Ep.* 9.147; 9.148.

³⁶ Mitchell, *The Religious World*, 137.

³⁷ Libanios, *Wybór mów*, XVII: 'Here comes the year 382, the seventh during the reign of Gratian. That was the year of issuing the emperor's edicts which shoot entire pagan Rome: Gratian deprived priests and Vestals of their privileges, removed the altar of the goddess of victory from the Senate's council chamber, refused to provide state money to cover expenses connected with the cult, confiscated lands which had belonged to temples, prohibited land acquisition in will by priests and vestals. Due to these edicts Gratian separated the state from pagan religion one and for all'. Zieliński, *Religie świata antycznego*, 276. Gratian's greed was acknowledged as the reason for the Vestal Virgins' decline.

³⁸ Śmiałek, "De prisici Vestae", 40, 48.

³⁹ C. Th. 16.10.12.

⁴⁰ Małunowicz, "Koniec kolegium", 111. See also: Saquete, "Las vírgenes", 134.

once ignited ages before started fading gradually. Perhaps someone sighed grievously at that time, perhaps someone's eyes were filled with tears, maybe someone's mouth whispered some curses [...] or maybe there were no witnesses at all when the flame shot up for the last time and faded [...].⁴¹"

The most peculiar phenomena of pagan Rome

Małunowicz wrote about the Vestal Virgins as one of 'the most peculiar phenomena of pagan Rome'.⁴² It comes as no surprise since, as stated by Horace,⁴³ they were acknowledged, together with *pontifex maximus*, as a symbol of timelessness and safety of Rome. It was believed that as long as they performed their duties, by tending to the maintenance of the sacred flame, the most powerful and greatest Rome would last.⁴⁴ It is not possible to state for sure why women were entrusted with this dignifying position. Perhaps it was a simple consequence of a promise Jupiter had made to Vesta to remain *virgo incorrupta et intacta*,⁴⁵ which meant that no men was permitted to see or approach the goddess. It is also possible that entrusting virgins with the priesthood of Vesta resulted, as indicated by Dionysius of Halicarnassus, from the necessity of combining the most pristine, the purest divine flame with what was the purest among mortals.⁴⁶ A belief, according to which justification of entrusting women protection of the sacred flame (and another duties afterwards) one should seek for in prehistory, is extremely interesting and convincing. At the times when getting fire was not easy and men were entrusted to do that, keeping it required great responsibility and constant presence of a guard.⁴⁷ Due to the burden of responsibility of watching over a source of fire, nor slaves neither a mother of a family who had other, numerous and important obligations, were allowed to watch it. Therefore, originally the duty of keeping the flame belonged to women, as it seems to daughters of leaders whose task was to watch over the source of fire for the whole community.⁴⁸ Clearly, the pattern stayed the same, when the sacred flame of Vesta became the hearth of Rome, its guardian could not fulfil any typical duties: of a mother, a wife or a daughter.⁴⁹

Priesthood in Rome was without doubt viewed as a men's domain which can be reflected in the number and the size of priestly collegia. For this reason, an assumption made by Andrzej Gillmeister concerning male and female sacral equality during the Republican period of Rome⁵⁰ is hard to accept, as a matter of fact the author himself emphasised that what he had in mind was 'quality value not quantity'.⁵¹ It seems that

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 115.

⁴² Małunowicz, "Z problematyki", 57.

⁴³ Hor. *Carm.* 3.30.8–9.

⁴⁴ Wildfang, *Rome's Vestal Virgins*, 1.

⁴⁵ Goux, "Vesta", 93; Kroppenber, "Law, Religion", 418.

⁴⁶ Dion. Hal. *Rom. Ant.* 3.66.2.

⁴⁷ Worsfold, *The History*, 13.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.* Pyne, *Vestal Fire*, 77 added that analogical procedures occurred in Iroquois and Incas.

⁴⁹ Beard, "The Sexual Status", 21.

⁵⁰ Gillmeister, "Cum tacita", 22.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

one can argue with this thesis if prosopographical researches show that Vestals' names are known due to accusation of *crimen incestum* and not due to obtaining priesthood as it took place in a case of priests' positions filled by men.⁵² An argument in support of A. Gillmeister's reasoning is to some extent the fact that the Vestal Virgins were not after all the only group of priestesses in Rome. It is worth citing Iza Biezuńska-Małowist: 'Still, it wasn't the only cult of the state rank where the priestly duties were performed by women, although they did not gain such respect in any other worship than Vesta's. However, the bygone cult of Ceres, the goddess of harvest, identified during the Greek influences with the cult of Demeter, was also very important worship in the city of Rome. While under the later Republic, although it might have been different before, the priestly duties were performed by women and certainly it was only them who had access to offices connected with this cult. The importance of women in cults of goddess Fortuna or at last in the one coming from the east that is the cult of Isis should not be forgotten either'.⁵³ But the priesthood of vestals is certainly a cultural phenomenon which is worth analysing from various perspectives, for instance historical, anthropological, religious and sociological one.

It seems that originally Vestal's service was to be held for life and thus so was a duty of chastity. On the basis of Livy's account relating to a crime committed by Amulius, the brother of Numitor and uncle of Rhea Sylvia, it is a well-known message that she had been condemned to perpetual virginity (*perpetua virginitate*) by making her a Vestal Virgin.⁵⁴ Amulius deprived a woman of hope for having any offspring under the pretext of honouring her with dignity of a Vestal Virgin. Parenthetically, it is worth noticing that Livy's message raises a reader's numerous doubts. They concern Amulius' misdeed and the question arises, why he did not decide to eliminate the girl instead of elevating her to Vestal's dignity? Perhaps plagued by the crime tyrant wanted to appease the purest goddess by sacrificing his niece to be her priestess. Rhea Sylvia is presented as a legendary character, however, even accepting that in Livy's narrative she was a literary archetype of a Vestal Virgin, it should not affect perceiving the complexity of characters: forced by her uncle to priesthood, ruled by emotions, stated that the father of her children was the god Mars presumably to protect them.

Mentioned by Livy and by Cassius Dio requirement of perpetual virginity, for some reasons Vestal's service was shortened and lasted thirty years:⁵⁵ including three stages, whereas each one lasted ten years: a novitiate period, then an active service with full-time duties, and apprenticeship of novices for the service.⁵⁶ Out of the reasons which justified reduction of that period, Mary Beard indicates natural decline of fertility which started around the age of forty among Roman women.⁵⁷ Anyway, this time limit became later, under Christian Rome cause for mockery by a Christian poet Prudentius,⁵⁸ who opposed him perpetual religious vows with derision. The thirty-year period of priestly ser-

⁵² Rüpke, *Fasti sacerdotum*, 36.

⁵³ Biezuńska-Małowist, *Kobiety antyku*, 25. For information about the cult of the goddesses also see Gillmeister, "Foucault i matrony", 3 [=] Gillmeister, "Le donne e la religione", 227 et seq.

⁵⁴ Liv. 1.3.

⁵⁵ See however Koch, "Vestales", 1733.

⁵⁶ Dion. Hal. *Rom. Ant.* 2.67.2.

⁵⁷ Beard, "The Sexual Status", 14, fn. 21.

⁵⁸ Prudent. *C. Symm.* 2.2.1078–1080.

vice described above was not a rule at all: it occurred that Vestals performed their duties definitely longer, like for example mentioned by Tacitus Occia⁵⁹ 'who with the greatest diligence had been managing the sacred ceremonies in the cult of Vesta for fifty-seven years'.⁶⁰ The example of Occia was not single: Junia Torquata was sixty-four years old when she became a *Virgo Vestalis Maxima* and Cloelia Torquata and Flavia Publicia led Vestals each one for over thirty years.⁶¹ Theoretically, having completed her service as a Vesta's priestess, the former Vestal could have got married and led an 'ordinary' life. Nevertheless, apparently only few of them decided to do it, as a matter of fact marriages to former Vestals were considered unlucky'.⁶²

It can be assumed that a woman who devoted thirty years of her life to serve the goddess, performing their duties and living her life totally different from other Roman matrons' life, was not prepared for changes. A resignation of the service was equal to depriving a Vestal Virgin of all previous privileges and influences, which as one can assume, did not come easy. A woman so financially independent as Vestal, free from the power of *pater familias*, surrounded by respect and having boundless trust of people, was supposed to become an ordinary Roman woman overnight? It is hard to imagine. Moreover, as J.M. Cobb noticed, as there were only six Vestals of different age (the youngest of them were only children), one can conclude that there were bonding with each other like a *quasi*-family.⁶³ Taking all of that into consideration, the fact that the Vestal Virgins did not change their current lifestyles willingly, should not be surprising.

Holding the dignified position of a Vestal entailed numerous privileges for priestesses, nonetheless during the reign of Augustus it was not easy to find candidates to perform this service.⁶⁴ Offering a daughter to the service of Vesta was regarded as a great favour to the Roman state which was testified by Tacitus by describing the acknowledgement that Tiberius offered to Fonteius Agrippa and Domitius Pollio for offering their daughters as the candidates for the post of Vestals. The historian recounted more thoroughly that it was finally Pollio's daughter who had been chosen because her mother had remained in the same marriage, whereas Agrippa discredited his household by divorce.

Becoming a Vestal

The above fragment refers to one of the requirements that had to be met by girls given to the service of Vesta. As far as the reference relating to the mentioned requirements is concerned as well as the one addressing the procedure of selecting Vestals-to-be, an essential

⁵⁹ Tac. *Ann.* 2.86.

⁶⁰ Winniczuk, *Kobiety świata antycznego*, 284.

⁶¹ Worsfold, *The History*, 25.

⁶² Plut. *Num.* 10.1–2; Dion. Hal. *Rom. Ant.* 2.67.2. See Beard, "The Sexual Status", 14, fn. 21.

⁶³ Cobb, *The Cult*, 112.

⁶⁴ Mekacher, *Die vestalischen*, 196 et seq. 24 et seq. Possible, complex causes of this phenomena indicate Mekacher, Van Haerperen, "Le choix des Vestales", 72 et seq.; van Haerperen, "À propos de recherches récentes", 312 et seq.; Małunowicz, „Z problematyki”, 61; Misztal-Konecka, *Incestum*, 220.

source is *Attic Nights* by Aulus Gellius⁶⁵ who devoted the twelfth chapter of the first book exactly to the Vestal Virgins.⁶⁶ Girls between the age of six and nine were selected to perform the service of a Vestal.⁶⁷ It can be hypothesised why such an age limit was adopted for a candidate for a Vestal. According to Robin Lorsch Wildfang, it probably concerned the fact that only a six-year-old child was self-reliant enough to be separated from their mother as well as educated enough to speak properly, understand and follow orders which enabled the beginning of a Vestal-to-be training.⁶⁸ Moreover, it is the author's belief that by the time they reached this age all possible bodily defects, which excluded a girl from performing the service of a Vesta's priestesses,⁶⁹ should have manifested themselves.⁷⁰ Aulus Gellius mentioned some difficulties connected with articulation and weakened hearing because these possible defects could have violated *pax deorum* and constituted a major threat to Rome, if during the prayer for the state prosperity⁷¹ an affected by them Vestal Virgin had made a mistake when uttering the prayer. As far as the upper age limit for a candidate is concerned, scholars assume that the best period to include a girl in the circle of priestesses was before she entered adolescence.⁷² Both parents of the candidate had to be alive,⁷³ which considering high death rate among adults connected with illnesses or complications during childbirth, could have meant that gods were in favour of a candidate's entire family.⁷⁴ However, meeting the above-mentioned requirement was not enough if a girl or her father had been emancipated even if she herself remained *in potestate* of her grandfather⁷⁵ A decent and respectable family background of a candidate was significant: she had to be a daughter of a Roman citizen, according to Ateius Capito she should not come from outside of Italy.⁷⁶ Neither a girl whose one or both parents had formerly been slaves nor the one whose parents had degrading occupations (*negotia sordida*) could have become a Vestal.⁷⁷ What was meant by that probably included such tasks that discredited family honour, degraded its high status and led to deprivation of absolute purity which was demanded from Vestals-to-be.⁷⁸ Then, Gellius described cases

⁶⁵ About this work see: Zabłocki, *Kompetencje patres familias*, 5 et seq., Zabłocki, *Rozważania o procesie rzymskim*, 9 et seq.

⁶⁶ For the analysis see: Piechocka-Kłos, "Virgines Vestales", 279.

⁶⁷ Gell. 1.12.1.

⁶⁸ Wildfang, *Rome's Vestal Virgins*, 44.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰ Gell. 1.12.3. See: Morgan, "Priests and Physical Fitness", 137.

⁷¹ Morgan, "Priests and Physical Fitness", 138. However, he pointed out that the above-mentioned requirements concerning their health referred to the candidates for holding the priestly service and emphasised that there had been no sources stating the removal of a vestal who became ill during her service to Vesta from the priesthood. It is only well-known that she could have been dismissed from performing her duties for some time.

⁷² Małunowicz, "Z problematyki", 62; Misztal-Konecka, *Incestum*, 217; Wildfang, *Rome's Vestal Virgins*, 42.

⁷³ Gell. 1.12.2.

⁷⁴ Wildfang, *Rome's Vestal Virgins*, 44.

⁷⁵ Gell. 1.12.4.

⁷⁶ Gell. 1.12.8.

⁷⁷ Gell. 1.12.5.

⁷⁸ Wildfang, *Rome's Vestal Virgins*, 43. DiLuzio, *A Place at the Altar*, 127 put forward a thesis that a candidate was rejected due to her parents (her father) performing burial services in view of him being 'in touch' with death.

in which it was permitted to release a girl from the obligation to serve Vesta. It could have taken place when her sister was chosen a Vestal Virgin and when her father held the position of a flamen, an augur, one of epulones, was a member of the college responsible for making offerings or a member of the Salii.⁷⁹ Aulus Gellius devoted a lot of attention to a symbolic ritual of ‘capturing’ a Vestal Virgin (*captio*), which dated back to Numa’s time⁸⁰ He also passed on the words, stated previously by Fabius Pictor, which *pontifex maximus* used to refer to a girl: *Sacerdotem Vestalem, quae sacra faciat, quae ius siet sacerdotem Vestalem facere pro populo Romano Quiritibus, uti quae optima lege fuit, ita te, Amata, capio*⁸¹ and explained that the priest used the name *Amata*, as it was what the first Vestal Virgin had been called.⁸² By referring to the context of using the verb ‘to capture’, Aulus Gellius clarified that it stemmed from the fact of ‘seizing’ a girl by *pontifex maximus* from her father’s authority.⁸³ Originally, it had probably been the king who selected a Vestal Virgin but then that privilege was taken over by *rex sacrorum*, and finally by the chief priest of the College of Pontiffs.⁸⁴ *Pontifex maximus*, in accordance with *lex Papia* had the right to choose twenty girls, out of whom those who were then publicly selected by lot were ‘captured’ by him and became the Vestals⁸⁵. Considering a similarity between ‘capturing’ a Vestal and ‘capturing’ a flamen or an augur already noticed by Aulus Gellius,⁸⁶ it is hard not to agree with Joanna Misztal-Konecka who connects the rite of *captio* with vocation of a Vestal by *pontifex maximus*.⁸⁷ It is worth pausing here to analyse the status of a Vestal because among numerous compelling issues concerning legal status of Roman women this one is unique. The point is that the fact of a girl to become a Vestal leaving her father’s authority remains less significant here than her future status. According to Aulus Gellius the father lost his authority over a girl the moment she was selected a Vestal, entered *atrium Vestae* and was passed to the pontiffs.⁸⁸ The author of *Attic Nights* must have considered really important and worth giving the information on the fact that *patria potestas* over a girl expired without the need to conduct emancipation⁸⁹ and at that moment she gained the right to make a will.⁹⁰ Aulus Gellius emphasised these elements as they were uncommon not only in reference to women but for children this age in general. Without doubt such scope for independent activity of women pursuant to private law was uncommon. For this reason, a thesis once put forward by Theodor Mommsen has been questioned nowadays. According to it, a relationship between *pontifex maximus* and the Vestal Virgins, assuming his authority over the priestesses and empowering him to inflict punishment owed its origins rather to

⁷⁹ Gell. 1.12.6.

⁸⁰ Gell. 1.12.10.

⁸¹ Gell. 1.12.14.

⁸² Gell. 1.12.19.

⁸³ Gell. 1.12.13.

⁸⁴ Gillmeister, “Cum tacita”, 25.

⁸⁵ Gell. 1.12.11.

⁸⁶ Gell. 1.12.16–17.

⁸⁷ Misztal-Konecka, *Incestum*, 223.

⁸⁸ Gell. 1.12.9.

⁸⁹ Tac. *Ann.* 4.16. For more information on the discussion concerning this case see Greenfield, *Virgin Territory*, 207, fn. 13.

⁹⁰ Gell. 1.12.9; Tac. *Ann.* 2.34.

potestas than to *coercitio*.⁹¹ It seems, however, that if a Vestal leaving *patria potestas* had got under *potestas* of the chief pontiff,⁹² it would have been mentioned by Aulus Gellius or Gaius when he referred to cases of a father losing his parental authority.⁹³ Meanwhile, they both remain silent on that note, whilst Gaius seems to validate its peculiar independence of the priestesses by stating that ancestors had desired Vestals to have remained free for the sake of honour of priesthood (*in honorem sacerdotii liberar esse voluerunt*).⁹⁴ Currently it has been acknowledged that the rite of *captio* together with ceasing of parental authority (tutelage) over a Vestal ‘primarily aimed at ensuring that the Vestals remained full members of the Roman civic body (i.e. the female equivalent of citizens), while becoming non-members of any of the individual families that together made up Rome’s underlying family structure’.⁹⁵ However, when it comes to current views about the status of a Vestal after ceasing of parental authority (tutelage), two of them can be mentioned: the first one, in the light of which the authority of *pontifex maximus* over the Vestal Virgins owed its origins to *potestas*, though it was significantly limited as it failed to incorporate the private realm and only involved the public one,⁹⁶ and the second view according to which Vestals were neither allowed to remain under *patria potestas* nor could enter under any other man’s *potestas*.⁹⁷

The Vestal’s appearance and its symbolism

A specific status of the Vestal Virgins which they had acquired through the above-mentioned rite of *captio*, had to manifest itself in their appearance, their garment and hairstyle,⁹⁸ which aimed at emphasising physical perfection of Vesta’s handmaids and at the same time at symbolising a peculiar cultural combination of two opposing categories, that is: unmarried daughters and matrons.⁹⁹ Special attention was attracted by priestesses’ hairstyle braided into six separate braids (*seni crines*), also characteristic of a bride and supposedly being the oldest hairdo familiar to the Romans.¹⁰⁰ With reference to both group of women the hairdo was symbolic because it signified that a woman remained beyond the structure of *familia* except that as far as a future married woman was concerned this period lasted for a short time, that is until she entered her husband’s family, whereas

⁹¹ Mommsen, *Römisches Staatsrecht*, 53 et seq.

⁹² Some scholars expressing their view according to which the Vestal Virgins symbolically represented wives or daughters of the Roman kings believe that the rite of *captio* led to *pontifex maximus* acquiring respectively authority as if *manus* over a wife or *patria potestas*. For more information see Wildfang, *Rome’s Vestal Virgins*, 37 et seq.; Santinelli, “La condizione giuridica”, 63 et seq.

⁹³ Gai 1.130; Gai 1.145.

⁹⁴ Gai 1.145.

⁹⁵ Wildfang, *Rome’s Vestal Virgins*, 37.

⁹⁶ Lacey, *Patria potestas*, 127.

⁹⁷ Wildfang, *Rome’s Vestal Virgins*, 39; Greenfield, *Virgin Territory*, 209.

⁹⁸ Koch, “Vestales”, 1738.

⁹⁹ Beard, „The Sexual Status”, 22; Gallia, „The Vestal Habit”, 222.

¹⁰⁰ Wildfang, *Rome’s Vestal Virgins*, 12. DiLuzio, *A Place at the Altar*, 156 invokes views in the light of which the number of six braids itself had a symbolic meaning as it represented a community of six priestesses.

in case of a Vestal it lasted thirty years or even longer.¹⁰¹ Another element characteristic of a Vestal, a bride as well as a Roman matron were ribbons that held their hair together (*vittae*),¹⁰² and when worn by a Vestal Virgin together with a special woollen white and red band wound around the head (*infula*)¹⁰³, during the act of offerings and performing other religious duties indicated *castitas*.¹⁰⁴ The ribbon could also signify high social status of a woman, it could not have been worn by freedwomen¹⁰⁵ or prostitutes.¹⁰⁶ On the other hand, an element of a garment solely typical of matrons (*quibus stolas habendius erat*)¹⁰⁷ and Vestals was a long sleeveless robe, called *stola*,¹⁰⁸ worn over a tunic and belted under the breast with a cord, being a clear indication for others of modesty (*pudicitia*).¹⁰⁹

During ceremonies, prayers and offerings Vestals' heads were covered with a short veil bordered with purple¹¹⁰ fastened under the chin (*suffibulum*)¹¹¹.

Thus, the Vestal Virgins did not stand out significantly with their everyday garment which was similar to the one worn by Roman matrons. The hairdo and headwear constituted a determinant of Vestals' privileged status.¹¹² Considering the above mentioned elements of the garment shared by Vestals and other women: young brides or matrons, one can come to a conclusion that there had existed features, which were common to these women, among which worth indicating is the aforementioned *castitas*, not identical to *virginitas*, which not only implied keeping chastity characteristic of Vesta's priestesses but also modesty expected from mothers-to-be and respected for that *matronae*. Perhaps these common elements of the garment were aimed at, as pointed out by Andrew B. Gallia, manifesting and emphasising a specific shared aspect of women identity,¹¹³ bearing in mind Vestals' distinctiveness resulting from the position held by them and this in turn indicated by details of their appearance solely typical of them.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 13; Gallia, "The Vestal Habit", 225.

¹⁰² Wildfang, *Rome's Vestal Virgins*, 15; Gallia, "The Vestal Habit", 225; Kaczmarek, "Strój kapłana", 254.

¹⁰³ Dion. Hal. *Rom. Ant.* 2.68.5. See Gallia, "The Vestal Habit", 224; *Infula* was also put on sacrificial animals' heads, which leads to a conclusion that *infula* seen on Vestals' heads could have meant a priestesses sacrifice to the goddess. See: Kaczmarek, "Strój kapłana", 255. The conclusions drawn from the examination of the remaining statues of Vestals seem to be very interesting as they indicate that the number of scrolls of *infula* worn by them was different, the right to wear all six was vested, in the light of this view, only in *Virgo Vestalis Maxima*, due to a position of seniority. See: DiLuzio, *A Place at the Altar*, 167 together with the sources included there.

¹⁰⁴ Gallia, "The Vestal Habit", 234.

¹⁰⁵ Wildfang, *Rome's Vestal Virgins*, 15.

¹⁰⁶ Gallia, "The Vestal Habit", 233.

¹⁰⁷ Fest. 125M.

¹⁰⁸ Gallia, "The Vestal Habit", 229 et seq.; Wildfang, *Rome's Vestal Virgins*, 13 et seq.; DiLuzio, *A Place at the Altar*, 172.

¹⁰⁹ Val. Max. 6.1. *praef.*

¹¹⁰ DiLuzio, *A Place at the Altar*, 172.

¹¹¹ Fest. 348M.

¹¹² DiLuzio, *A Place at the Altar*, 173.

¹¹³ Gallia, "The Vestal Habit", 236.

Duties of Vestal Ministry

So far two forms of Vestals' priesthood have been elaborated on, that is: contemplative, seen in rituals performed by Vestals in isolation and the open one when associated with Roman *aeternitas* they had to perform in public. Particular rituals were assigned to each one, some performed in isolation, in the comfort of Vesta's temple where anyone could enter by day but no one except for the priestesses could stay by night,¹¹⁴ others also symbolic and of vital importance conducted in public, awaited and observed by the Romans.¹¹⁵

Nowadays it has been acknowledged that almost all rites performed by the Vestal Virgins in the temple were of purifying value. Among other significant rituals those are indicated which aim was to produce and maintain specific substances and those which were supposed to provide a good harvest and animals' offspring.¹¹⁶ Certainly, the most significant of the rites performed by the priestesses in the temple was keeping the flame burning,¹¹⁷ caring for it not to fade away. The eternal flame symbolized the safety and success of Rome and even its unexpected extinguishing constituted, as the Romans believed, a threat to the City and its inhabitants.¹¹⁸ One of an example of a great importance which confirms that, is Livy's account concerning the negligence in keeping the flame burning in the heart of the temple of Vesta which occurred in 207 BC. For that negligence a Vestal was sentenced to lashes on having jurisdiction over the Vestals *pontifex maximus*' order¹¹⁹ but in order to reverse bad signs it had been decided to sacrifice full-grown animals and organise a day of prayer nearby Vesta's temple.¹²⁰ The extinguished flame should have been re-ignited in a specific way, that is by rubbing a dry branch from a lucky tree (*arbor felix*).¹²¹

The priestesses used the fire in the temple of Vesta to perform other purifying rituals like baking three times a year¹²² *mola salsa*¹²³ – stiff dough made of salt and spelt flour, partially obtained from spikes of spelt roasted in the temple fire. This ritual was the most significant and *mola salsa* was baked by the three earliest Vestal Virgins (*tres maximae*).¹²⁴ In the same fire the ritual sacrifices of animals were burned during *Fordicidia* that took place in April¹²⁵ and during October Equus¹²⁶ and the ash from the sacrificial animals

¹¹⁴ Dion. Hal. *Rom. Ant.* 2.67.1.

¹¹⁵ Boatwright, "Women and Gender", 112.

¹¹⁶ Cobb, *The Cult*, 109.

¹¹⁷ For more information about the symbolism and possible interpretation of the ritual see: Greenfield, *Virgin Territory*, 17; Prowse, "The Vestal", 181 et seq; Wildfang, *Rome's Vestal Virgins*, 8 et seq.

¹¹⁸ Dion. Hal. *Rom. Ant.* 2.67.5.

¹¹⁹ Dion. Hal. *Rom. Ant.* 2.67.3.

¹²⁰ Liv. 28.11.

¹²¹ Fest. 92M.

¹²² *Mola salsa* were used for other purifying rituals at the times of different Roman festivals: Luperkalia, Vestalia. See: Greenfield, *Virgin Territory*, 293 et seq.; Roberts, *Rome's vestal Virgins*, 76.

¹²³ Fest. 152I.

¹²⁴ Misztal-Konecka, *Incestum*, 231.

¹²⁵ Wildfang, *Rome's Vestal Virgins*, 24 et seq.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 25 et seq.

was the main component of a purifying mixture prepared by the Vestal Virgins and used during *Parilia*¹²⁷ ritual.

As it was mentioned above, the eternal flame in *aedes Vestae* had been identified with the eternal Rome and its safety and the unique role of Vestal Virgins as guardians had another function. Available sources claim that in the temple of Vesta one could find a room (*penus*) where the Palladium (*palladium*) taken away by Aeneas of Troy was kept and other artefacts (*sacra*)¹²⁸ valuable for Romans as well. It was believed that the most treasurable items for Rome were safe in the temple of Vesta guarded by the priestesses of the goddess.¹²⁹ The Roman society trusted the Vestal Virgins and probably that was the reason why prime Roman politicians used to give them documents¹³⁰ of a great significance (e.g. a last will¹³¹) to keep.

The particular, presented above responsibilities of Vestal Virgins are strictly connected to their role of the guardians of the sacred flame, however, in the light of modern research, a believe is being accepted that water in purifying rituals performed by Vestal Virgins was considered to be as complementary to fire.¹³² Ariadne Staples recognised that the examples of ritual usage of fire and water by the Vestal Virgins were reflecting the Roman belief that those two elements occurring together are a symbol of life and the fact that the Vestals were using water proves that they were considered to be priestesses of fertility.¹³³ It must have been fresh and running and could not have any contact with the ground, therefore the priestesses used to carry it from a spring (*fons Camenae*, *fons Juturnae*)¹³⁴ in vessels designed in such a way that they could not be put on the ground without a risk of spilling their content.¹³⁵ A custom required to bring water for cleaning the temple from the Fountain of the Camenae near Porta Capena where *Via Appia* is located, hence quite far from the House of the Vestal Virgins. Even when Rome was equipped with great water pipes, it was not allowed to use them and as at the Numa times, a Vestal Virgin had to walk every day with a vessel to this sacrificed grotto.¹³⁶ It is necessary to mention that Rhea Silvia had been seduced by god Mars on her way to the Fountain of the Camenae to soon become a mother of the Rome founder and therefore

¹²⁷ Wildfang, *Rome's Vestal Virgins*, 10.

¹²⁸ *Penus*, see: Fest. 251M; *Palladium*, see: Ovid. *Fasti* 6. 427–8. The items kept by the Vestals were however the subject of research: Dion. Hal. *Rom. Ant.* 2.66.5–6; Liv. 5.52. Zob. Greenfield, *Virgin Territory*, 265; Wildfang, *Rome's Vestal Virgins*, 17, together with literature referred there.

¹²⁹ The items were not always safe in the temple. See: Ovid. *Fasti*, 6.465–489 and Cic. *Scour.* 48, where Cicero describes Lucius Metellus' courage, who as a *pontifex maximus* had saved *palladium* from the burning temple of Vesta.

¹³⁰ App. *Bell. civ.* 5.73.

¹³¹ Suet. *Iul.* 83; Suet. *Aug.* 101. In this context, a Plutarch's commentary is particularly significant relating to refusal of releasing to Caesar the Antonius' last will. The refusal of Vestals was not helpful, the Caesar took the last will and read it to senators gathered in curia. Plut. *Ant.* 58. See also: Greenfield, *Virgin Territory*, 167 et seq.

¹³² Staples, *From Good Goddess*, 149.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, 150. The author's opinion is brave, however it seems to be more convincing than the belief shared by Gillmeister, "Cum tacita", 28 about "locating Vestals between sexes", whereas the Vestals themselves "did not belong to any of them" being "mediating creatures".

¹³⁴ Greenfield, *Virgin Territory*, 56.

¹³⁵ Wildfang, *Rome's Vestal Virgins*, 11.

¹³⁶ Zieliński, *Religie świata antycznego*, 274.

to become a priestess guilty of breaking *castitas* and heavily punished by a wicked uncle Amulius.¹³⁷

The water was used for ritual purification¹³⁸ of the temple on the fifteenth of June after the Vestalia festival which was marked in calendars as Q.ST.D.F (*quando stercus delatum, fas*),¹³⁹ as a day that brought to an end a series of *dies nefasti*.¹⁴⁰ The water was a component of *muries*, the brine – prepared and preserved by the Vestal Virgins, just like *mola salsa* kept for purifying rituals performed at different Roman celebrations.¹⁴¹

The other aspect of Vestals' priesthood required them to be present in the public life. The purpose of this presence was not only about their attendance in ceremonial of particular celebrations and offering sacrifices although they officially were shaping their position and decided about Vestals' strength. The majority of responsibilities performed in public by the Vestal Virgins were made *pro populo Romano Quiritibus*.¹⁴² Not always their role was limited only to presence or accompanying the chief priests. It seems that, the statement that Vestals performed leading role in the April *Fordicidia* and *Parilia*¹⁴³ and *Argei*¹⁴⁴ in May would not be a misuse. The list of celebrations they took part in is long.¹⁴⁵ Amongst the most important, one should indicate the Vestalia festival in June lasting for a few days and the rest of them which could not be celebrated without them like first and foremost *Parentalia* and *Luperkalia* in February, the already mentioned *Fordicidia*, *Parilia* and *Argei* and in commemoration of *Bona Dea*¹⁴⁶ in December. In the calendar of festivals, the one celebrated on the first of March was special – it was the festival when the fire was renewed in the temple of Vesta, either celebrated as the festival of Rome's identity.¹⁴⁷ The fact that some of the previously mentioned celebrations had begun at the times before the urban Roman community came into being,¹⁴⁸ is worth mentioning. They were connected to celebrating those aspects of everyday life which directly effected their quality. Taking care of fire which provided heat, protected and purified, taking care of offspring and good harvest, and finally rituals of maintaining, all of them concerned primary, remarkably significant for human community necessities of life. Presumably, a daughter or daughters of a leader took part in those ceremonies at the times of Roman statehood and those duties remained with Vestals backed by a strong sense of tradition.

¹³⁷ Ovid. *Fasti* 3.12–52. The views by Małunowicz, “Z problematyki”, 69 et seq., considering punishing fallen Vestal Virgins who got pregnant are extremely interesting. As the sources are silent, the author has assumed that if Romans did not punish pregnant women with a death penalty, then the Vestals had not been killed before they gave birth.

¹³⁸ As for detailed information about using water and how to use it for religious purposes see: Edlund-Berry, “Hot, cold or smelly”, 169 et seq.

¹³⁹ Fest. 259M.

¹⁴⁰ Zieliński, *Religie świata antycznego*, 275.

¹⁴¹ Wildfang, *Rome's Vestal Virgins*, 17.

¹⁴² Gell. 1.12.14.

¹⁴³ Worsfold, *The History*, 52.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 44. See also: Cobb, *The Cult*, 99.

¹⁴⁵ Mekacher, *Die vestalischen*, 53 et seq.; Wildfang, *Rome's Vestal Virgins*, 22 et seq.

¹⁴⁶ For a detailed, chronological list of festivals see: Greenfield, *Virgin Territory*, 293 et seq.

¹⁴⁷ Roberts, *Rome's vestal Virgins*, 86.

¹⁴⁸ Cobb, *The Cult*, 109.

It has been calculated that Vestal Virgins' attendance in public ceremonies took them about a month per year.¹⁴⁹

Vestal Virgins' privileges. Prestige and independence

During festivals and parades, when accompanying officials, and afterwards ceasars and their families, their public-law status was being emphasized. It was expressed by privileged seats of honour, the loges (*proherdia*)¹⁵⁰ in which they used to sit when attending in theatrical shows, when observing chariot races in a circus or gladiators' fights. For the record, the appreciation of Vestal Virgins for the festivals and bloody games was strongly stigmatised by Prudentius at the times of Christian Rome.¹⁵¹ The Vestal Virgin leaving the temple on foot was preceded by a lictor.¹⁵² However, the priestesses could travel in a two-wheeled carriage (*carpentum*) which was an important privilege as the usage of carriages was strictly forbidden¹⁵³ and obviously they used a sedan chair. The meaningful indication of a high status of a Vestal Virgin in the Roman society was a fact that even the highest republican officials: consuls and praetors were obliged to make a room for Vestals in their passage altogether with lowering *fasces* by lictors which symbolised the power and authority of *imperium*.¹⁵⁴ Only the Vestals and *flamen Dialis* were exempted from a responsibility to swear an oath in a legal process and nobody, even a praetor, could force them to swear it.¹⁵⁵ On the other hand, according to Plutarch, a Vestal Virgin had the right to pardon a convict who accidentally met a *Virgo Vestalis*¹⁵⁶ on his way to a place of execution. Inge Kroppenbergh recognised that the case of pardon mentioned above, could not be considered in the category of jurisdictional act but rather as an act of other nature resulted from a linkage of religion, politics and law in a person of Vestal Virgin.¹⁵⁷ Vestals' participation in a public life of Rome was of a noticeable importance, in addition the location of the temple of Vesta was advantageous – in a direct neighbourhood of *forum* which was a political centre of Rome.¹⁵⁸ There are numerous sources presenting this participation and amongst them one can find those which celebrate priestesses' courage and those which present the dark side of their nature. Amongst the former ones a deed

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 83.

¹⁵⁰ Zieliński, *Religie świata antycznego*, 279.

¹⁵¹ Prudent. *C. Symm.* 2.1090–1113. For Vestals' entitlement to lictor's escort in a context of manifesting priestesses' *sanctitas* and providing them with safety see: Sihvonen, *The Vestal Virgins*, 57 et seq. See also: Mekacher, *Die vestalischen*, 29. On the other hand, Beard, „The Sexual Status”, 17 considers the lictor's presence in a context of giving Vestals elements of a male status.

¹⁵² Plut. *Num.* 10.3.

¹⁵³ Tac., *Ann.* 12.42. In Rome it was forbidden by Caesar. See. Carcopino, *Życie codzienne*, 57. and Robinson, *Ancient Rome*, 63; Sihvonen, *The Vestal Virgins*, 61 et seq.

¹⁵⁴ Sen. *Contr.* 6.8. Mekacher, *Die vestalischen*, 51 et seq. Emphasises the connection between the range of privileges gained by Vestals with those which Livia and Octavia were entitled to.

¹⁵⁵ Gell. 10.15.31.

¹⁵⁶ Plut. *Num.* 10.3. The condition was swearing an oath by a Vestal Virgin (herein: exceptionally) that the meeting occurred by accident.

¹⁵⁷ Kroppenbergh, “Law, Religion”, 426.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 420.

of Claudia should be indicated, a Vestal Virgin, a daughter of consul Appius Claudius Pulcher 143 BC; who used her immunity in order to allow her father holding a triumph when in her opinion, the Rome's Senate refused him this privilege. Valerius Maximus celebrated this deed made in the name of love and admired the priestess' courage, who stood on the way of a plebeian tribune who was forcing Appius to get out of the triumphal chariot and accompanied her father until they reached the Capitolium.¹⁵⁹ The other but not as transparent as the one referring to Claudia example of a courageous interference of a Vestal Virgin in defence of her family's member was intercession of a Vestal Fonteia done in 69 BC. At that time, a process of her brother was pending and he was accused of *crimen repetundis* which he was said to commit as a propraetor in Gaul.¹⁶⁰ Cicero justified this intervention pleading the Vestal Virgin's solitude, who, not having children or family's support, would lost everything if her brother was convicted.¹⁶¹

Vestals' political authorities did not become any less nor at the times of Sulla's fight for power neither afterwards when the principate came. Suetonius informed that Sulla's decision about granting a pardon to Ceasar was made at insistence of Vestal Virgins, Marcus Aemilius and Aurelius Cotta.¹⁶² Whereas Tiberius, revengeful by nature, complied with a Torkquata's request who was a Virgo Vestalis Maxima, the Gaius Silanus' sister having a good reputation. Gaius Silanus was accused of *crimen laesae maiestatis* when she asked Ceasar for changing his place of exile into more comfortable.¹⁶³

The previously mentioned sources prove Vestals' determination with which they involved in family or political matters.¹⁶⁴ In this context, evoking a belief of M. Beard regarding a triple aspect of Vestals' position (the virginal, the matronal, the male)¹⁶⁵ one can put a thesis that the elements of a Vestal's status which were entitled to men in Rome, provided them with independence, legal and social autonomy to an extent that made possible pursuing particular interests, not connected to the cult.

Missappropriation of the Vestal's dignity. Accusations of treason or *crimen incestum*

Nevertheless, human weaknesses did not omit the Vestal Virgins, there are some examples of ones who were blamed, existing in collective memory as traitoresses or prostitutes. Livy¹⁶⁶ wrote about one of them – Tarpeia, a daughter of Spurius Tarpeius who was

¹⁵⁹ Val. Max. 5.4.6; Suet. *Tib.* 2. See: Gallia., "Vestal Virgins", 78; Dziuba, *Klodia Metelli*, 86 et seq.

¹⁶⁰ Cic. *Font.* 46–49.

¹⁶¹ Cic. *Font.* 47. Gallia., "Vestal Virgins", 79 et seq.; Greenfield, *Virgin Territory*, 150 et seq.

¹⁶² Suet. *Iul.* 1.

¹⁶³ Tac. *Ann.* 3.69.

¹⁶⁴ Regarding to the Vestals of the Roman Empire, in particular to the 3rd century, an extremely insightful and detailed analysis of a legal and social financial condition and owned political influences was carried out recently by Sihvonen, *The Vestal Virgins*.

¹⁶⁵ Beard, "The Sexual Status", 17. See however the author's revised view. Beard, „Rereading (Vestal) virginity”, 169 et seq.

¹⁶⁶ Liv. 1.11.

a commander in the war of Rome against the Sabines – as a traitoress who in exchange for Sabine gold – the Sabine warriors' spaulders and rings promised her by the Sabine ruler Titus Tatius, had decided to let the enemies into the castle and died right afterwards crushed with their shields. Then, the Capitoline Hill cliff was named after the infamous name of this Vestal (*saxum Tarpeium*) and it became a place of execution for traitors. There were attempts to vindicate Tarpeia by quoting Lucius Calpurnius Piso's message whose opinion stated that this Vestal Virgin's demand did not mean that she desired for gold spaulders and rings worn by the Sabines on their left arms, but for shields, that is to lay down their arms. Thus, she was supposed to be a scammed Roman heroine, not a traitoress.¹⁶⁷

It is being indicated nowadays in literature that at the times of great fear in Rome, at the times of social crisis, riots or wars, seeking for justification of misfortunes consuming the state was leading to suspicion of crimes committed by the Vestal Virgins.¹⁶⁸ The most famous example is a dramatic message of Livy concerning the situation taking place in Rome after the defeat in the Battle of Cannae.¹⁶⁹ As two Vestal Virgins, Opimia and Flornia, were found guilty of *incestum*, the former was buried alive, as was the custom, at the Colline Gate and the latter one committed suicide. However, it was considered that the Vestal's atrocity must be additionally compensated for gods and therefore, after reaching an opinion of the oracle of Delphi, it was decided to offer "not least a Roman kind of sacrifice",¹⁷⁰ namely human sacrifices, two pairs of foreigners, Gaulish and Greek. The tragic circumstances of convicting the Vestal Virgins after the ignominious defeat at Cannae and making human sacrifices had caused that the previously mentioned events preserved in human consciousness for a long time. Nevertheless, it was not the first case of accusing a Vestal Virgin of *incestum*. The oldest one, according to Dionysius of Halicarnassus was convicting a Vestal Virgin Pinaria at the times of Tarquin the Elder.¹⁷¹ Whereas at the times of the early republic, The Vestal Virgin Opimia was punished for *incestum*, as she was making sacrifices as a profane and brought the wrath of gods,¹⁷² as it was believed and several years later the other Vestal–Orbinia shared the same fate as she was offering sacrifices being besmeared with sin, which as Romans believed, brought an illness on Roman pregnant women who had miscarriages.¹⁷³ In Dionysius opinion, after convicting this Vestal Virgin and burying her at *Campus Sceleratus*, the illness ceased immediately.¹⁷⁴ From Livy's messages one gathers information about another Vestals sentenced and punished for *incestum* at the times of the early republic. Speaking of Oppia punished in 483 BC,¹⁷⁵ Minucia buried alive in

¹⁶⁷ Seng, "Tarpeia Vestalis", 174 et seq.; Stevenson, „Women of Early Rome”, 178; van Driel, *What Vesta can do for Your Country*, 12 et seq.

¹⁶⁸ Wildfang, *Rome's Vestal Virgins*, 80. See also: Beltrão, Horvat, „The Name of a Vestal”, 180.

¹⁶⁹ Liv. 22.57.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.* Zieliński, *Religie świata antycznego*, 282, assumed that the human sacrifices made at those times were of Etruscan origin.

¹⁷¹ Dion. Hal. *Rom. Ant.* 3.67.3.

¹⁷² Dion. Hal. *Rom. Ant.* 8.89.3–4.

¹⁷³ Dion. Hal. *Rom. Ant.* 9.40.2–4.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁵ Liv. 2.42. See: Beltrão, Horvat, „The Name of a Vestal”, 180.

337 BC¹⁷⁶ and Sextilia who shared the same fate in 273 BC.¹⁷⁷ Livy mentions three more Vestals: Aemilia, Licinia and Marcia convicted for *incestum* in 114 BC.¹⁷⁸ The foundation of the last case was almost for certain political. The convicted Vestals were members of well-known families: the Aemilii, the Licinii Crassi and the Marcii. *Pontifex maximus* Metellus Delmaticus originally sentenced only one of them.¹⁷⁹ The previously mentioned settlement caused social agitation so as a consequence, the investigation was conducted again and all three Vestals were sentenced to death.

There are known other cases of convicting the Vestal Virgins for *incestum*, which were made at the times when *prodigia* used to appear which were the warnings, the signs that *pax deorum* had been violated and the Vestal Virgins were the ones to blame for it.¹⁸⁰

Nonetheless, one should bear in mind that there were not many examples of violating the responsibility of staying pure by the Vestals. L. Małunowicz counted several cases within eight hundred years and numerous ones when they were exculpated.¹⁸¹ C. Beltrão i P. Horvat indicate twenty-one of them.¹⁸² For the rest, it was easy for the Vestal Virgins to fall under suspicion. It will suffice to recall Postumia¹⁸³ and Claudia Quinta,¹⁸⁴ the Vestals whose special attention to their outfits and appearance triggered suspicions of violating *castitas*, however did not lead to punish the priestesses. Similarly as those two, the Vestal Licinia fell under suspicion and even accusation as she used to spend too much time with Marcus Crassus. He wanted to purchase her property at a bargain price, so he expressed special affection and put her in a risk of legal process.¹⁸⁵

Referring to examples of exculpation of Vesta's priestesses accused of *incestum*, it is worth to recall sources mentioning actions of the goddess Vesta herself who defended innocent priestesses. One of them was Tuccia accused of *incestum*, who proved to be innocent by carrying a sieve full of water from the Tiber to a forum,¹⁸⁶ and the other one was Aemilia, accused of committing the worst crime a Vestal could commit, who threw her robe into an extinct fireplace in the temple of Vesta and lit the flame with the goddess' help.¹⁸⁷

Another, having unclear motives accusations and convictions of Vestals for violating *castitas* took place at the reign of Domitian and then Caracalla. Domitian in 83 AD punished to death sisters Oculata and Varronilla and a few years later a *Virgo Vestalis Maxima* Cornelia. The conviction of Cornelia was reported by Pilinius, who, as it seems,

¹⁷⁶ Liv. 8.15.

¹⁷⁷ Liv. *Per.* 14.

¹⁷⁸ Cass. Dio. 26.87; Liv. *Per.* 63.

¹⁷⁹ For the foundation, case progression and probable causes of accepted settlements see: Jońca, *Głośnie rzymskie procesy*, 34; Schreiber, "L. Cecyliusz Metellus Dalmatyński", 30.

¹⁸⁰ Liv. *Per.* 20; For the accepted interpretation of those events see Wildfang, *Rome's Vestal Virgins*, 84 et seq.; Saquete, "Las vírgenes", 93.

¹⁸¹ Małunowicz, „Z problematyki”, 65, similarly Zieliński, *Religie świata antycznego*, 285.

¹⁸² Beltrão, Horvat, „The Name of a Vestal”, 180.

¹⁸³ Liv. 4.44. See: Beltrão, Horvat, „The Name of a Vestal”, 181.

¹⁸⁴ Ovid. *Fasti*, 4.307. The doubts about the status of a woman (a matron or a Vestal Virgin) were indicated by Gallia, "Vestal Virgins", 267, fn. 66 and M. Beard, „Re-reading”, 171.

¹⁸⁵ Plut. *Crass.* 1.

¹⁸⁶ Plin. *NH* 28.12; Dion. Hal. *Rom. Ant.* 2.69 1–3.

¹⁸⁷ Val. Max. 1.1.7.

dubted in her guilt.¹⁸⁸ On the other hand, Caracalla sentenced to death four Vestals: Clodia Laeta, Aurelia Severa, Pomponia Rufina and Cannutia Crescentina.¹⁸⁹ All of them were buried alive except from the last one who had committed suicide.

At the times of Christian Rome, when “the cult of Vestal Virgins used to be a stronghold of dying paganism”¹⁹⁰ an unwonted event probably happened when a *Virgo Vestalis Maxima* named Claudia abandoned the faith of ancestors and adopted Christianity. Such developments were indicated by finding in 1883 under the deepened floor of *atrium Vestae*, a base of a Vestal Virgin’s statue, whereas a visible inscription had only the first and the last letter of her name, the rest of them had been removed.¹⁹¹ One cannot be certain about the cause of removing the Vestal’s name. However, it can be assumed that abandoning the current beliefs in the eyes of the old Roman *religio* confessors was a crime of such great significance that it had been decided to not commemorate this Vestal Virgin by removing her name from the statue in order to not leave any trace of her existence. However, the name of a priestess under the *damnatio memoriae* survived and her adoption of Christianity was recorded by her brother in faith, Prudentius, in his poetry.

Prudent., *Perist.* 2.525
 Vittatus olim pontifex
 adscitur in signum crucis,
 aedemque, Laurenti, tuam
 Vestalis intrat Claudia.¹⁹²

In reference to the described example some doubts have arisen indicating that the name of Vestal Virgin was probably longer, as nine letters had been removed from the statue, and consequently Claudia from Prudentius’ poetry could not have been the same women as the Vestal from the statue.¹⁹³ On the other hand, the fact of rubbing off the letters of the priestess name and hiding her statue could be arguments for supporting a thesis about abandoning the ancestors’ faith by *Virgo Vestalis Maxima*. L. Małunowicz did not decide about solving this case, whereas T. Zieliński, confidently supported the thesis about changing the faith by the Roman priestess.¹⁹⁴

¹⁸⁸ Plin. *Ep.* 4.11; Suet. *Domit.* 8. Cornelia’s case has been analysed in several studies. See: Cobb, *The Cult*, 91 et seq.; Gallia, “The Vestal Habit”, 238; Linder, *Portraits of the Vestal*, 32 et seq.; Sihvonen, *The Vestal Virgins*, 202 et seq.; Wildfang, *Rome’s Vestal Virgins*, 104.

¹⁸⁹ Cass. Dio 78.16. Sihvonen, *The Vestal Virgins*, 196 et seq.

¹⁹⁰ Zieliński, *Religie świata antycznego*, 286.

¹⁹¹ Małunowicz, “Koniec kolegium”, 117.

¹⁹² Zieliński, *Religie świata antycznego*, 278.

¹⁹³ Małunowicz, „Koniec kolegium”, 118.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 119; Zieliński, *Religie świata antycznego*, 278.

Conclusions

It is astonishing that since the beginning and in decline of the ancient Roman beliefs, the sin of a Vestal Virgin has been found. The first one, Rhea Silvia who by annihilating a duty of keeping *castitas* committed the worst crime a Vestal Virgin could commit, became at the same time a mother of Romulus, the founder of Rome. The second one, presumably mentioned Claudia, had abandoned the old beliefs by “putting out the Vesta’s flame”, had turned the goddess away, had ceased to perform rituals older than Rome in order to abandon noble priesthood and adopt Christianity. Two women, separated by a thousand years lasting historical gap, sharing a function of Vesta’s priestess and everything related to this function: respect, admiration, being influential, responsibilities, rituals. However, both of them, although for different reasons, took the risk and decided to walk their own path. Undoubtedly, the decision made in both cases required courage, alike in the other situations when priestesses were trying to reach their goals using their status and possibilities.

It is known a lot about the Vestal Virgins’ tasks, privileges, committed crimes, nevertheless, perceiving priestesses in a society and their role in the life of Rome are the subject matter of researchers and create space for new concerning the social role and priestly duties of the Vestals. All the previously mentioned information lead to the conclusion that the uniqueness of the Vestal Virgins, women-priestesses was real, firmly established and did not result only from a superior tradition of status and from the fact of performing sacrificial rituals. The Vestals, certainly aware of this exclusivity, although not always faithful to sacerdotal duties, have strongly marked their lasting over thousand years presence throughout the history of Rome.

Bibliography

- Beard, Mary, North, John, Price, Simon. *Religions of Rome, vol. I: A. History*. New York: Cambridge, 1998.
- Beard, Mary. “The Sexual Status of Vestal Virgins”. *The Journal of Roman Studies* 70 (1980): 12–27.
- Beard, Mary. “Re-reading (Vestal) Virginité”. W *Women in Antiquity: New Assessments*, ed. by Richard Hawley and Barbara Levick. London: Routledge, 1995: 166–77.
- Beltrão, Claudia and Horvat Patricia. “The Name of a Vestal or the Vestal is Named”. *Archimède. Archéologie et histoire ancienne* 5 (2018): 175–84.
- Nowak, Polikarp. *Biblioteka Ojców Kościoła. Św. Ambroży z Mediolanu. Listy. Tom III*. Kraków: Wydawnictwo M, 2012.
- Biezuńska-Małowist, Iza. *Kobiety antyku. Talenty, ambicje, namiętności*. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, 1993.
- Boatwright, Mary T., “Women and Gender in the Forum Romanum”. *Transactions of the American Philological Association* 141 (2011): 105–41.
- Carcopino, Jérôme. *Życie codzienne w Rzymie w okresie rozkwitu cesarstwa*. Przeł. Maria Pąkcińska. Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1966.

- Cobb, Jennifer Mary. *The Cult of Vesta in the Roman world*. London: The Open University, 1984. <http://oro.open.ac.uk/63830/> (data pobrania: 4.03.2021).
- DiLuzio, Meghan. *A Place at the Altar: Priestesses in Republican Rome*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016.
- Dumézil, Georges. *Archaic Roman Religion vol. 1*. Przeł. Philip Krapp. Baltimore–London: The John Hopkins University Press, 1996.
- Dziuba, Agnieszka. *Klodia Metelli. Literacki portret patrycjuszki*. Lublin: Wydawnictwo Katolickiego Uniwersytetu Lubelskiego, 2016.
- Edlund-Berry, Ingrid. “Hot, Cold or Smelly: The Power of Sacred Water in Roman Religion, 400–100 BCE”. In *Religion in Republican Italy*, eds. by Caelia E. Schultz and Paul B. Harvey. *Yale Classical Studies* 33 (2006): 162–80.
- Gallia, Andrew. B. “The Vestal Habit”. *Classical Philology* 109, no. 3 (2014): 222–40.
- Gallia, Andrew. B. “Vestal Virgins and Their Families”. *Classical Antiquity* 34, no. 1 (2015): 74–120.
- Garofalo, Paolo. „Augusto e le Vestali”. In *Saeculum Aureum. Tradizione e innovazione nella religione romana di epoca augustea. Vol. 2: La vita religiosa a Roma all’epoca di Agosto*, red. Igor Baglioni, 167–76. Roma: Edizioni Quasar, 2015.
- Gillmeister, Andrzej. “Cum tacita virgine. Westalki – kobiecość – religia w republikańskim Rzymie”. In *Kobiety i władza w czasach dawnych*, red. Bożena Czwojdrak i Agata Aleksandra Kluczek, 22–32. Katowice: Uniwersytet Śląski, 2015.
- Gillmeister, Andrzej. “Foucault i matrony. Kobiety w religii rzymskiej. Między potestas a potentia”. *Klio. Czasopismo poświęcone dziejom Polski i powszechnym* 24 (2013): 3–16.
- Gillmeister, Andrzej. „Le donne e la religione civica romana. Note a margine del culto di Pudicitia Plebeia in epoca augustea. W Saeculum Aureum. Tradizione e innovazione nella religione romana di epoca augustea. Vol. 2: La vita religiosa a Roma all’epoca di Agosto”, red. Igor Baglioni, 227–239. Roma: Edizioni Quasar, 2015.
- Goux, Jean-Joseph. “Vesta, or the Place of Being”. *Representations* 1 (1983): 91–107.
- Greenfield, Peta Nicole. *Virgin Territory: The Vestals and the Transmission from Republic to Principate*. Sydney, 2011. <https://partialhistorians.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/greenfield-p-n-2011-virgin-territory-the-vestals-and-the-transition-from-republic-to-principate.pdf> (data pobrania: 4.03.2021).
- Grimal, Pierre. *Słownik mitologii greckiej i rzymskiej*, red. Jerzy Łanowski. Wrocław: Ossolineum, 1990.
- Jaczynowska, Maria. *Religie świata rzymskiego*. Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1987.
- Jońca, Maciej. *Głośnie rzymskie procesy karne*. Wrocław: Ossolineum, 2009.
- Kaczmarek, Zofia. „Strój kapłana w starożytnym Rzymie w czasach Oktawiana Augusta”. *Studia Europaea Gnesnensia* 1–2 (2010): 235–60.
- Koch, Carl. “Vesta”. RE 8.2A, 1717–1732. Stuttgart: Metzler, 1958.
- Koch, Carl. “Vestales”. RE 8.2A, 1732–1753. Stuttgart: Metzler, 1958.
- Krawczyk, Monika. „Pozycja prawna i status społeczny westalki”. W *Honeste vivere... Księga pamiątkowa ku czci Profesora Władysława Bojarskiego*, red. Ewa Gajda i Andrzej Sokala, 75–88. Toruń: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Mikołaja Kopernika, 2001.
- Krawczyk, Monika. „Odpowiedzialność za incestum westalki”. W *Crimina et mores. Prawo karne i obyczaje w starożytnym Rzymie*, red. Marek Kuryłowicz, 73–87. Lublin: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Marii Curie-Skłodowskiej, 2001.
- Kroppenberg, Inge. “Law, Religion, and Constitution of the Vestal Virgins”. *Law and Literature* 22, nr 3 (2010): 418–39.
- Lacey, Walter K. *Patria potestas*. In *The Family in Ancient Rome: New Perspectives*, red. Beryl Rawson, 121–44. New York: Cornell University Press, 1986.

- Libanios, *Wybór mów*. Przeł. L. Małunowicz, Wrocław: Ossolineum DeAgostini, 2006.
- Linder, Molly M. *Portraits of the Vestal Virgins, Priestesses of Ancient Rome*. Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 2015.
- Makiewicz, Tadeusz. *Formy kultu bóstw domowych na terenie Europy w starożytności*. Poznań: Wydawnictwo Naukowe UAM, 1987.
- Małunowicz, Leokadia. "Koniec kolegium Westalek". *Eos* 47, nr 2 (1954–1955): 109–19.
- Małunowicz, Leokadia. "Z problematyki castitas Westalek". *Roczniki Humanistyczne* 6, nr 2 (1957): 57–73.
- Margul, Tadeusz. "Ostatnie koleje losu wiary starorzymskiej". *Annales Universitatis Mariae Curie-Skłodowska. Sectio F. Nauki Filozoficzne i Humanistyczne* 25 (1975): 1–25.
- Mekacher, Nina. *Die vestalischen Jungfrauen in der römischen Kaiserzeit*. Wiesbaden: Reichert Verlag, 2006.
- Mekacher, Nina i Van Haerperen, Françoise. "Le choix des Vestales, miroir d'une société en evolution". *Revue de l'histoire des religions* 220, nr 1 (2003): 63–80.
- Mitchell, Jillian. *The Religious World of Quintus Aurelius Symmachus*. 2016. [https://repository.uwtsd.ac.uk/id/eprint/731/1/Mitchell,%20J.%20\(2016\)%20The%20%20Religious%20World%20of%20Quintus%20Aurelius%20Symmachus.pdf](https://repository.uwtsd.ac.uk/id/eprint/731/1/Mitchell,%20J.%20(2016)%20The%20%20Religious%20World%20of%20Quintus%20Aurelius%20Symmachus.pdf) (data pobrania: 24.02.2021).
- Mitchell, Jillian. *Symmachus and the Vestal Virgins*. https://www.academia.edu/3046423/Symmachus_and_the_Vestal_Virgins (data pobrania: 24.02.2021).
- Misztal-Konecka, Joanna. *Incestum w prawie rzymskim*. Lublin: Wydawnictwo Katolickiego Uniwersytetu Lubelskiego, 2007.
- Mommsen, Theodor. *Römisches Staatsrecht. Cz. II*. Leipzig: S. Hirzel, 1877.
- Morgan, Gwyn M. "Priests and Physical Fitness". *The Classical Quarterly* 24, nr 1 (1974): 137–41.
- Nenkova Silvia i Minkov Petar. "Templum Divi Augusti et Vesta on the Coins of the Tiberius and Nero. Some Notes on Its Identification". *Annali. Istituto Italiano di Numismatica* 62 (2016): 287–92.
- Mossakowski, Wiesław. *Sakralne zbrodnie westalek*. In *Religia i prawo karne w starożytnym Rzymie. Materiały z konferencji zorganizowanej 16–17 maja 1997 r. w Lublinie*, red. Antoni Dębiński i Marek Kuryłowicz, 103–25. Lublin: Redakcja Wydawnictw KUL, 1998.
- Oldenkotte, Carlijn. *Where did the daughters go? A research on the lack of candidates for the function of Vestal Virgin, seen from the perspective of elite competition during the Late Roman Republic and the Early Empire*. Leiden: 2014. https://www.academia.edu/34290326/Where_did_the_daughters_go (data pobrania: 22.02.2021).
- Parker, Holt N. "Why Were the Vestals Virgins? Or the Chastity of Women and the Safety of the Roman State". *The American Journal of Philology* 125, nr 4 (2004): 563–601.
- Piechocka-Kłos, Maria. "Virgines Vestales w «Nocach attyckich» Aulusa Gelliusza". *Studia Warmińskie* 55 (2018): 279–90.
- Prowse K.R., "The Vestal Circle". *Greece & Rome* 14, nr 2 (1967): 174–87.
- Pyne, Stephen J. *Vestal Fire: An Environmental History, Told Through Fire, of Europe and Europe's Encounter with the World*. Seattle; London: University of Washington Press, 1997.
- Robinson, Olivia. F. *Ancient Rome: City planning and administration*. London: Routledge, 1994.
- Roberts, Joshua M. *Rome's Vestal Virgins: Public Spectacle and Society*. WWU graduate School Collection 188/2012. <https://cedar.wvu.edu/wwuet/188> (data pobrania: 22.02.2021).
- Rüpke, Jörg. *Fasti sacerdotum: A Prosopography of Pagan, Jewish, and Christian Religious Officials in the City of Rome*. Oxford–New York: Oxford University Press, 2008.
- Santinelli, Itala. "La condizione giuridica delle Vestali". *Rivista di Filologia* 32 (1906): 63–82.
- Saquete, José Carlos. "Las vírgenes Vestales, un sacerdocio femenino en la religión pública romana". *Anejos de archivo español de arqueología* 21 (2000).
- Schreiber, Łukasz. "L. Cecyliusz Metellus Dalmatyński". *De re Militari* 5 (2020): 18–39.
- Sear, David R. *Roman Coins and Their Values*. Vol. 5. London: Spink Books, 2014.

- Seng, Helmut. "Tarpeia Vestalis". *Hermes* 143, nr 2 (2015): 172–84.
- Sihvonen, Outi. *The Vestal Virgins and Power: Tradition and Change in Third Century Rome*. Vantaa, 2020. <https://trepo.tuni.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/122913/978-952-03-1670-9.pdf?sequence=2&isAllowed=y> (data pobrania: 22.02.2021).
- Śmiałek, Wincenty. "De prisci Vestae cultus reliquiis". *Eos* 29, nr 1 (1926): 39–50.
- Staples, Adriane. *From Good Goddess to Vestal Virgins: Sex and Category in Roman Religion*. London–New York: Routledge, 1998.
- Stevenson, Tom. "Women of Early Rome as "Exempla" in Livy, "Ab Urbe Condita", Book 1. *The Classical World* 104, (2011): 175–89.
- Suder, Wiesław. „Gniew bogów. Etiologia religijna epidemii w Republice Rzymskiej”. *Acta Universitatis Wratislaviensis* nr 3063. *Prawo* 305 (2008): 391–97.
- Van Driel, Claire. *What Vesta can do for Your Country: A Study to Discern and Interpret Political Comments within Augustan Poetry Concerning the Vesta Cult By Means of a Literary Analysis of Propertius' Elegiae IV.4 and Ovid's Fasti VI*. Leiden, 2012. https://www.academia.edu/3050472/What_Vesta_Can_Do_For_Your_Country_A_study_to_discern_and_interpret_political_comments_within_Augustan_poetry_concerning_the_Vesta_cult_by_means_of_a_literary_analysis_of_Propertius_Elegiae_IV_4_and_Ovid_s_Fasti_VI (data pobrania: 22.02.2021).
- Van Haepere, Françoise. „À propos de recherches récentes sur les vestals”. *L'antiquité classique* 77 (2008): 309–19.
- Wildfang, Robin Lorsch. *Rome's Vestal Virgins: A Study of Rome's Vestal Priestesses in the Late Republic and Early Empire*. London–New York: Routledge, 2006.
- Winniczuk, Lidia. „Kalendarz starożytnych Greków i Rzymian”. *Świat Starożytny. Biblioteczka Popularna Meandra* 5 (1921).
- Winniczuk, Lidia. *Kobiety świata antycznego*. Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1973.
- Worsfold, Thomas Cato. *The History of the Vestal Virgins of Rome*. Auckland: Muriwai Books, 2018.
- Zabłocki, Jan. *Kompetencje patres familias i zgromadzeń ludowych w sprawach rodziny w świetle Noctes Atticae Aulusa Gelliusa*. Warszawa: 1990.
- Zabłocki, Jan. *Rozważania o procesie rzymskim w Noctes Atticae Aulusa Gelliusa*. Warszawa: Liber, 1999.
- Zieliński, Tadeusz. *Religie świata antycznego. T. 4: Religia Rzeczypospolitej Rzymskiej*. Toruń: Wydawnictwo Adam Marszałek, 2001.