

## SOME REMARKS ON WAR RITUALS IN ARCHAIC ITALY AND ROME AND THE BEGINNINGS OF ROMAN IMPERIALISM

Maciej Piegoń

Jagiellonian University, Kraków

**Abstract:** The success of Roman expansion in the Republican period and the durability of the empire, which survived the fall of the Republic and continued to function for the next few hundred years under the rule of emperors, drew the attention of both scholars and rulers in subsequent eras. The Imperium Romanum became a model for other states that attempted to build their own empires in later times. What captures our attention in discussions on Roman imperialism is mainly one, so far unresolved, dilemma: was Roman expansion a result of the material and psychological benefits that individual social groups enjoyed as a result of the aggressive policy, or a product of the Roman society's atavistic tendencies for using violence? This seems to be a very difficult question to answer. If we also consider other elements that cause aggression, such as fright, fear (*metus Gallicus, Punicus, Etruscus*, etc.) of something or someone and a desire to win fame or glory over an enemy, then solving the problem seems impossible indeed. Finding the right answer is not made any easier by the historical sources. On the one hand, they are very biased, as they hide the actual reasons under a thick layer of propaganda and apologetic slogans; so thick, in fact, that in many cases the Romans' true motives seem incomprehensible. The majority of available accounts present the Romans as the defenders of the weak and their allies. This is the result of a strong propaganda rhetoric used by the Romans in order to justify themselves in contemporary eyes and in posterity too.

We should also note one more element that could have had an influence on the development of an imperial mentality in Rome, i.e. the broadly defined civilisation and cultural milieu in which Rome came to be – Italy. A cursory comparison of various Roman war rites with the rituals of other inhabitants of Italy indicates that war was very much a part of the mentality of Italic communities. The presence of war rites in Italic tribes suggests that in Italy, war was an important element of existence. Rome was an integral part of this world, which meant that the presence of a strong military component and aggressiveness in the life of the Roman community was natural.

**Key words:** Roman imperialism, Roman expansion, war rituals, *bellum iustum*, *devotio*, *clarigatio*, *ius fetiale*.

War is a phenomenon that is not restricted to military operations, tactics, weaponry, battles, etc. It also has an important social, economic, political, as well as religious, aspect. Specialists in various social sciences and the humanities ponder the causes of

wars and the resulting dominance of some states over others. Such reflections led to the development of the concept of imperialism, which is a term derived from the Latin word *imperium*. Imperialism became an important issue in the political, social, philosophical, economic, and historical discussion, debated and analysed since the 19<sup>th</sup> century AD.<sup>1</sup> The discussion on the reasons for the hegemony of some states or communities over others had a considerable influence on historians studying ancient Rome, who adapted the idea of imperialism for their reflections on Roman expansion.

The success of Roman expansion in the Republican period and the durability of the empire, which survived the fall of the Republic and continued to function for the next few hundred years under the rule of emperors, drew the attention of both scholars and rulers in subsequent eras. In later times, the *Imperium Romanum* became a model for other states that attempted to build their own empires. In many cases, they referred to Rome's heritage, frequently imitating, more or less successfully, its methods, tools, imperial ideology, or political system. This fascination was, incidentally, not restricted to rulers (kings and politicians), but was shared by great thinkers and philosophers.<sup>2</sup>

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Finding the right answer is not made any easier by the historical sources. On the one hand, they are very biased, as they hide the actual reasons under a thick layer of propaganda and apologetic slogans; so thick, in fact, that in many cases the Romans' true motives seem incomprehensible. The majority of available accounts present the Romans as

<sup>1</sup> Frézouls 1983, 145–147; Champion 2004, 1–2; Morley 2010, 1–11; Mattingly 2011, 8, 10, 30–35; Eckstein 2006, 567–568.

<sup>2</sup> The philosophers Montesquieu and Bossuet, the economist Adam Smith, the historian Edward Gibbon and the politician Benjamin Disraeli; cf. Frézouls 1983, 141–142; Morley 2010, 2–3; Eckstein 2006, 567–568.

<sup>3</sup> Badian 1967, 15–34, 50–108; Shatzman 1972, 206–223; Hopkins 1979; North 1981, 1–9; Frézouls 1983, 152–155; Gruen 1984, I: 288–315; Rosenstein 1990, 114–152; 2006, 365–382; 2008, 132–147; Harris 1992; Ziolkowski 1994b, 67–72; 2004, 159–164; Oakley 2002, 30; Rich 2002, 40–44; Mattingly 2011, 16; Maciejowski 2012, 39–41.

<sup>4</sup> Schumpeter 1919, 1–39, 275–310; Frézouls 1983, 148; Harris 1992, 259–261; Champion 2004, 2–3; Mattingly 2011, 15–16.

<sup>5</sup> Fear of danger, on the other hand, led not only to aggression but also to forming negative stereotypes about the opponent (Maciejowski 2012, 200–202) and phobias. Such phobias and the related fear were caused by extraordinary acts, such as the burying alive of a Greek and Gallic pair in the *Forum Boarium* – the *Graecus et Graeca*, *Gallus et Galla* ritual: Liv. 22,57; Plin. *NH* 28,12; Plut. *Marcell.* 3; *Quest. Rom.* 83; Minucius Felix *Octavianus* 30, 4; Dion fr. 48; 49; Oros. 4,13,3; Zonar. 8, 19; Várhelyi 2007, 276–304; Gillmeister 2009, 85–90; Poplawski 2011, 101–105. Cf. also Bellen 1985.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Badian 1967, 35–49; Harrison 2008, 1–22. John Rich (2002) provides an excellent summary of the discussion on the causes of Roman imperialism, which includes almost all the factors of Roman expansion. On glory, see Harris 1992, 10–40; Brunt 2001, 291–293; Rich 2002, 44–65.

the defenders of the weak and their allies. This is a result of the strong propaganda rhetoric used by the Romans in order to justify themselves in contemporary eyes as well as in posterity. The opponents of Rome who waged wars against it are dragged through muck and mire by the sources and labelled rebels, traitors, etc. Fortunately, not all the source materials are so apologetic.<sup>7</sup> On the other hand, the fact that the majority of available sources dates back to the 2<sup>nd</sup>–1<sup>st</sup> century BC, with only scant fragments dating to earlier times, also makes it impossible to understand the reasons for this apologetic undertone.<sup>8</sup>

We should also note one more element that could have had an influence on the development of an imperial mentality in Rome, i.e. the broadly defined civilisation and cultural milieu in which Rome came to be – Italy.

It should be remembered that Roman expansionism was a multi-layered process, which evolved over the history of the *Urbs* and was influenced by various internal and external stimuli. It was different in the Archaic period, when Rome's activities were confined to the borders of the city, and later Latium; different in the Republican times, when Rome had subordinated all of Italy and a considerable part of the Mediterranean Basin; and different still under the reign of the emperors. Contacts with other civilisations, particularly the Greek, Punic, and Celtic ones, and earlier also with variously advanced political bodies in Italy (the Etruscans, the Samnites, etc.) had a strong influence on the emergence of new tendencies in various spheres of life of the Roman community, including all aspects of matters of war.<sup>9</sup> What is particularly noticeable is the evolution of the Roman *civitas* under the influence of the increasingly stronger military component, as illustrated by the Roman terminology connected with an official holding power and his authority. Terms such as *imperium* and *provincia* gained a new, broader meaning as a result of their connection to the new military competencies of the Roman officials in newly subordinated areas outside Italy.<sup>10</sup>

An analysis of the available source texts, an understanding of human nature in the anthropological dimension, and a look at Rome as a political and social organism that developed in a specific cultural, civilisation and geopolitical environment (Italy, Latium) may take us closer to answering the question about the sources of the phenomenon of Roman expansionism. The statement that the Romans carried out their expansion simply because they wanted to, similarly to other political entities in Antiquity (the imperial states of the Middle East, Sparta, Athens, Macedonia of Philip II and Alexander the Great, etc.) should be the starting point in the discussion on the beginnings of Roman

<sup>7</sup> Polyb. 24,10,11; Cic. *Rep.* 2,34; Liv. 7,29, 3 (reasons for the First Samnite War). Cf. Toynbee 1965, I: 168–171 (dealing with the Falisci in 241 BC); Gruen 1984, I: 272–278; Cornell 1995, 293–309; Ziolkowski 2004, 171; Morley 2010, 11–13.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Gruen 1984, I: 274–287; Brunt 2001, 288–290; Yarrow 2006; MacMullen 2011, 30–35.

<sup>9</sup> Rich 2002, 44–68; Ziolkowski 2004, 234–236 presented the fluctuation of Roman imperialism. Cf. Eckstein 2006, 574. These changes can mainly be seen from the perspective of the evolution of Roman military science (weaponry, tactics), cf. Ziolkowski 1994b, 77–78; 2004, 173–174, but also in diplomacy, influenced by contacts with the Greek world, cf. Gruen 1984, I: 143–157, 161–162.

<sup>10</sup> Hermon 1983, 175–184; Richardson 1994, 564–599; 2008. The term *imperium* was not limited to the authority of an official, but also started to refer to that of the Roman state (*imperium populi Romani*). The term *provincia*, on the other hand, initially referring to the scope of a Roman official's powers in a wide sense, began to refer to the geographical and ethnic territories subordinate to Rome, cf. Gruen 1984, I: 273–278.

imperialism.<sup>11</sup> This desire was conditioned not only by a human need to use violence in order to possess material goods, due to rivalry or fear in the broadest terms, but also by the neighbourhood in which the settlement later named Rome developed.

Many years of archaeological work in Latium and Rome show that in the early Iron Age (Latial phase IIIB/IVA) scattered settlements, common in the late Bronze Age, were replaced by larger settlement areas, which were located in more defensive places (such as the hills in the territory of future Rome). Moreover, settlements (Antium, Aricia, Ardea, Corniculum, Crustumerium, Lavinium, Pedum, Pometia-Satricum and perhaps Ficulea, Fidenae, Gabii, Lanuvium, Nomentum, Praeneste, Tibur, Tusculum) were also protected by a rampart called *agger*. This indicates that the territory of Latium was endangered, which led to the foundation of this type of settlements in the 8<sup>th</sup> century BC. Naturally, there must have been someone behind such activities who could have persuaded and convinced scattered communities to work together and led them. This may indicate the emergence of an aristocracy, whose existence is attested by distinguished burial places (such as the “princely graves” at Praeneste). A little earlier (10<sup>th</sup>–9<sup>th</sup> century BC), a similar situation had occurred in the territory of future Etruria, but in this case the fear factor was not decisive for the foundation of the settlements (Proto-Villanovan and Villanovan agglomerations).<sup>12</sup>

This early period was essential not only for the shaping of the structures of the archaic society, but also for its identity. It seems that the moment was also important for the formation of customs and behaviours, including religious rituals, which became the basis for its specific mentality. Undoubtedly, Latium in that period was not a peaceful area, where one could graze livestock and move it between pastures (transhumance), or cultivate soil. Not infrequently, there must have been conflicts between the inhabitants of different settlements, as well as newcomers sometimes arriving from outside Latium (mountain peoples?), who not only pillaged those territories, but also went in search of better pastures, richer soil, and raw materials. Trying to settle in the area, they engaged in conflicts with the previous inhabitants. Certainly, such circumstances were conducive to the creation of war customs, behaviours and rituals. It is difficult to establish the exact relations between various communities of that period on the basis of very scant records. Written accounts were created several hundred years later, and their authors lived in a completely different reality and knew little about the origins of these early conflicts,

<sup>11</sup> Cornell 1989c, 384; Ziółkowski 2004, 164–167. The states mentioned above were no less aggressive than Rome. War-making was also a significant element of life in these societies, which also conducted war every year, cf. Assyria, Sparta, Macedonia, and the Hellenistic monarchies, where the ethos of the king meant that as a successor, Alexander the Great had to implement a policy of expansion, cf. Eckstein 2006, 579. These states (perhaps with the exception of Athens) were, according to some historians, more “suited” to imperial policy due to their monarchic system, cf. Eckstein 2006, 567–568 *contra* Ziółkowski 2004, 166. Cf. Brunt 2001, 290–291 (a comparison of the Roman Empire’s and Athens’ expansion).

<sup>12</sup> Generally: Torelli 1989, 30–51; Momigliano 1989, 52–112; Cornell 1989a, 243–294; 1995, 31–36, 77–79, 92–94, 304–309 (5<sup>th</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> centuries BC); 1997, 129–132; 2002, 155: *In the early years of the Republic the Romans fought for survival against the depredations of hostile neighbours*; Pallottino 1991, 46; 50–51; Ziółkowski 1994a, 11–48; 2004, 17–53; 2005, 31–51; Dench 1995, 111–129; Oakley 2002, 10–14; Forsythe 2005, 53–58, 78–93; Rich 2008, 8–10; Bietti Sestieri 2010; MacMullen 2011, 30–42. The archaeology of ancient Rome and Latium: Ross Holloway 1994; Cornell 1995, 48–57, 103–104; Bietti Sestieri 2010, 267–284, 308–309; Ammerman 2013, 169–180; Stek 2013, 249–250; Edlund-Berry 2013, 406–426. *Aggeres*: Ziółkowski 2005, 41–42.

other than the distorted tales which reached them indirectly through older writers, who had derived their knowledge mainly from oral tradition. This is why these accounts were mythologised.<sup>13</sup>

However, among our written sources, both annalistic (such as Livy or Dionysius of Halicarnassus) and antiquarian ones (such as M. Terentius Varro, Aulus Gellius, Macrobius, Festus, etc.), we will find interesting information about, among others, archaic war rituals. Their description (the primitive objects used, the wording of the magic spells) indicates that they were created in the early period of Rome's existence.<sup>14</sup> The sources also include accounts of practices connected with conducting warfare, such as *ius fetiale* and *clarigatio*,<sup>15</sup> *devotio* and *evocation*,<sup>16</sup> *ver sacrum*,<sup>17</sup> the ritual of making treaties (*foedus*), or the triumph; all of which were important during the Republic and even the Empire.<sup>18</sup>

In the communities of ancient Italy, and naturally also in Rome, war was a cyclical phenomenon. Its objective was not only to succeed and to capture loot or lands, or to prevent a genuine or imagined danger; it was also a religious phenomenon, accompanied by specific rituals. War against an enemy was conducted together by both communities of the Roman *civitas* – humans and gods (*pax deorum*). Gods, with whom humans communicated through sings (*signa*), were supposed to help them succeed, but in return expected loot and votive offerings such as the enemy's weapons or a new temple.<sup>19</sup> Preci-

<sup>13</sup> Written sources about the early history of Rome and their reliability: Cornell 1995, 36–41, 57–79, 104–105; Ziolkowski 2004, 30–43; Forsythe 2005, 59–93.

<sup>14</sup> I take the definition of ritual from Musiał 2009, 41–45. A spear: Polyb. 6,39,3; Sall. *Iugurt.* 85,26; Liv. 21,62,4; 24,10,10; 40,19,2; Dion. Halic. 10,37; Plut. *Romul.* 29; Gell. 2,11,2; Iust. 43,3; Zonar. 3,21. Grass: Liv. 1,1,26; 30,43, 9; Plin. *NH* 22,1, 5; 4; 7; Serv. *Aen.* 12,120; Festus s.v. *Sagmina*; Dig. Marc. 1,8, 8; Popławski 2011, 21–77. Cf. Śniezewski 2006, 89–97. Interestingly, the primitive objects such as a spear without an iron head (*hasta donatica*, *hasta pura*), or a crown of grass (*corona obsidionalis*), a precursor of the laurel wreath, were symbolically the most valuable rewards in the Republican Roman army. The Romans were originally called the Quirites (*populus Romanus Quiritum*). The name supposedly originated from a (Sabine?) word meaning spear (Dion. Halic. 2, 48, 4; Plut. *Romul.* 29,1–2; Paul. Diac. *Hist. Rom.* 1, 2), which means that a Roman citizen was, from the very beginning of the *civitas* a warrior (spearman). Cf. Cornell 1995, 76.

<sup>15</sup> Cic. *Off.* 1,36; Varro *Ling. Latin.* 5, 46; Verg. *Aen.* 7, 601–625; Liv. 1, 26; 32 5–14; 30,43, 9; Dion. Halic. 2, 72; Plin. *NH* 22, 1,5; Gell. 16, 4, 1; Nonius 529, 17; Serv. *Aen.* 9,52; 10,14; 12,120; Dig. Marc. 1,8, 8; Harris 1992, 166–175; Ziolkowski 2004, 169; Śniezewski 2006, 92–108; Popławski 2011, 21–77. The summoning of Roman citizens to war was also a religious act (*sacrumentum*): Popławski 2011, 234–237.

<sup>16</sup> *CIL* 6,16398; Cic. *Parad.* 1,12, 2; *Tusc.* 1, 37, 89; *Nat. Deor.* 2,3,10; 3,5,5; *Divin.* 1,24; 53; *Finib.* 19; 61; *Sest.* 21; 48; Varro *Ling. Latin.* 5,148; Liv. 5,18, 11–12; 21 2; 41 3; 7, 6, 1; 10; 8, 6, 10; 9; 10,11–14; 10, 28,13; Dion. Halic. 11,20–21; Plin. *NH* 28,12; 18; Val. Max. 5, 6, 2; 5; Plut. *Quaest. Rom.* 61; *Camill.* 21 4; Suet. *Tib.* 75; Serv. *Aen.* 2,351; Flor. 1,13, 9; 14, 3; Macrobi. *Sat.* 3,9,6–10; 10; *Vir. Ill.* 5,6,5; Aur. Victor *Caes.* 33; Zonar. 7, 26; 27; 8,5; Várhelyi 2007, 293–295; Popławski 2011, 88–100.

<sup>17</sup> Liv. 20,10; Popławski 2011, 118–119.

<sup>18</sup> Liv. 30,43,9: *fetiales cum in Africam ad foedus faciendum ire iuberentur, ipsis postulantibus senatus consultum factum est in haec verba, ut privos lapides silices privasque verbenas secum ferrent: ut ubi praetor Romanus iis imperaret, ut foedus ferrent, illi praetorem sagmina poscerent. Herbae id genu ex arce sumptum dari fetialibus solet.*; Verg. *Aen.* 12,119; Rich 2011, 187–242; Santangelo 2014, 83–103. The rituals of *foedus* and *clarigatio* (Dion Cass. 50,4, 5; 71,33, 3) were particularly long-lasting, as was the triumph, which continued to be an important element of the military ideology of Roman emperors: Balbuza 2005.

<sup>19</sup> On the cyclical nature of Rome's wars: Oakley 2002, 14–16; Rich 2008, 10. The relations between gods and humans in Roman religion are illustrated quite well e.g. by this sentence from Macrobius: *si ita*

sion in observing war rituals and obeying the signs given by a god not only promised to ensure support in fighting the enemy, but also relieved people of the unbearable sense of guilt for causing the conflict, gave them moral superiority over the opponent, and made war seem just (*bellum iustum* or *bellum pium*) to the Roman community. This important and strong ethical component was always present in Roman society, regardless of the historical era.<sup>20</sup> The customs illustrated not only how important war was in the life of the community, but also – due to the strict observance and performance of rituals (the same gestures, behaviours, formulas) – how the identity of the *civitas*, which was not uniform in ethnic terms after all, was built. The identity of the Roman community was shaped not only by war rituals, but also by those performed on other occasions. If we follow all Roman rites from the moment war was declared (*clarigatio*), through the troops being gathered (*sacrummentum*), to the moment it was completed (the signing of the *foedus* and the victorious general's triumph<sup>21</sup>), we will see that they constituted a religious whole. The fighting humans were accompanied by a deity at each stage, not only at the start and finish, but also all the way through. An example of a deity participating in war is the ritual of *devotio* performed by the general during battle; cf. P. Decius Mus during the Battle of Sentinum in 295, who sacrificed himself in order to persuade the god to give the Romans victory over the Samnites and the Senones (this was neither the first nor the last case of *devotio* in the family).<sup>22</sup> Another example was the arrival of Castor and Pollux

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*feceritis, voveo vobis templa ludosque facturum* (Sat. 3,9, 6) Cf. Cic. *Nat. Deor.* 3,5; Rüpke 2006, 226–229. *Votae*: Popławski 2011, 123–135. On votive offerings in the form of temples: Ziółkowski 1992; Orlin 2002, 117–138; Śnieżewski 2006, 49–53; Popławski 2011, 128–130; MacMullen 2011, 91–92; Edlund-Berry 2013, 414–418, 420; Davies 2013, 441–458. Cf. Oakley 2002, 27, 33–35. On weapons as votive offerings, including *spolia opima*: *Fasti Triumphales*: M. Claudius M.f.M.n. Marcellus DXX (XI) *cos. de Galleis Insubribus et Germ{an(eis)}*; K. Mart. *Isque spolia opima retu{lit}*, *duce hostium Virдумaro ad Clastid{ium interfecto}*; Liv. 1,10,6; 4, 20,5–11; 23,14, 4; 46,13; *Per.* 20; Plut. *Romul.* 16; *Marcell.* 6–7; Propertius *Eleg.* 4,10; Serv. *Aen.* 6, 855; Cornell 1989a, 298; Balbuza 2005, 40–43; Östeinberg 2009.

<sup>20</sup> Harris 1992, 166–175; Cornell 1989c, 384; Ziółkowski 2004, 166–170; Popławski 2011, 21–22. During the Late Republic, much importance was attached to whether a war was “just” or not. However, not infrequently the argument of “*bellum iustum*” or “*bellum iniustum*” was used as a tool in the political struggle; e.g. in the case of M. Licinius Crassus’ campaign against the Parthians, or G. Julius Caesar’s activities in Gaul in the 50s BC, cf. Yakobson 2009, 61, 63–64. This did not apply to civil wars, which were instantaneously regarded as ungodly: Cic. *Att.* 9,9; *Philipp.* 2,24; 6,2; Verg. *Aen.* 6,612–613; Lucan 1,21, 325; 4,172; 7, 447–448. Virgil was quite wary about wars, which according to him might have a negative influence: Verg. *Aen.* 6,86; 7,41, 325, 339; 11,96, 217, 362–367, 474, 535; Śnieżewski 2006, 108–116.

<sup>21</sup> The multicultural character of the Roman population *ab Urbe condita* is emphasised in Cornell 1995, 73–77. Non-war rituals which integrated the Roman community included those connected with festivals celebrating the borders of the archaic Roman *civitas*, such as the Terminalia, Ambarvalia, Robigalia: Strabo 5, 3,2 (230C), but also the *lustrum* and some ritual practices of the haruspices, cf. Gruen 1984, I: 278–287. *Foedus*: Popławski 2011, 211–258; Rich 2011, 187–242; Santangelo 2014, 83–103. There is extensive literature on the Roman triumph and the ovation (so-called lesser triumph), cf. e.g. Bonfante Warren 1971, 108–120; Marshall 1972, 669–673; Wikarjak 1984, 33–45; Oakley 2002, 29; Balbuza 2005; Beard 2007; Popławski 2011, 137–209; Flaig 2013, 32–47; Armstrong 2013, 7–22; Erskine 2013, 37–56.

<sup>22</sup> This is pointed out by Cornell 1989a, 291–295; Popławski 2011, 19. It seems that they were part of a whole and the Roman war should be analysed holistically from the point of view of religious rituals. This is confirmed by the words of Ovid (*Fast.* 1, 279): *Ut populo reditus pateant ad bella profecto tota patet dempta ianua nostra sera. Pace fores obdo, ne qua discedere possit...* Meanwhile, historians usually only paid attention to selected war rituals of the *ius fetiale* and *bellum iustum*, like W.V. Harris (1992, 166–175), or possibly the triumph, without treating them as a part of a whole. There are quite serious doubts as to whether the other

to help the Romans fight the Latins near Lake Regillus, or the appearance of other gods (such as Mars and Sylvan) on the side of the Romans during battles.<sup>23</sup>

Roman war rituals were not an exception in Italy. Many of them could also be found in other Italic communities. As has been mentioned, for the inhabitants of the Apennine Peninsula war was a normal part of existence and a religious phenomenon. The very act of gathering forces was a ritual, which the sources call the *lex sacrata*, and which was also present in such Italic tribes as the Samnites, Etruscans, Aequi, Volsci, and Ligures.<sup>24</sup> Our sources, both written and archaeological, frequently show the Italic tribes and settlements fighting against Rome under the auspices of their gods, so on both sides the conflict involved not just human communities but also their divine protectors, whose priests or leaders reached for their own assortment of war rituals. Moreover, in order to be victorious, one needed to win over and persuade the opponent's divine patrons to join one's side during the war.<sup>25</sup> Among the war rites of Italic tribes we also find Roman ones. The ritual of *evocatio* and *devotio* is mentioned on the Iguvine Tablet from Umbria; it contains the words of offering enemies from a different settlement or tribe (e.g. the western neighbours Etruscans, with whom the conflicts were quite frequent) to the gods of war.<sup>26</sup> The ritual of *ver sacrum*, on the other hand, was quite common in Italy, as we have mentions of the "sacred spring" in various ancient writers who ascribed it to the inhabitants of Picenum, the Samnites, Hirpini, and the Mamertines of Messina (Italic mercenaries!)<sup>27</sup> The ritual of *clarigatio* was also quite commonly accepted; according to

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*devotio* of the Decius Mus family in the sources are authentic. According to Livy (8,8,19) P. Decius Mus, consul of 340 BC, sacrificed his own life (*devotio*) so that the Roman army could defeat the Latins and the Campanians in a heavy battle near the Vesperis River (present-day Sarno?): Cornell 1989b, 362; Oakley 2002, 30. Cf. Richardson 2012, 24–26.

<sup>23</sup> Cic. *Natur. Deor.* 2,6; 3,11; Liv. 2,7,2; 11,20,12; Dion. Halic. 5,16; 6,13; Plin. *NH* 7,86; Plut. *Popil.* 9; *Aem.* 25; Flor. 1,38; Val. Max. 1,8,5; Dion 41,61,4; Śnieżewski 2006, 53–57; Poplawski 2011, 126–128. The Romans were not the only ones who could count on the appearance of divine patrons; such cases can also be found in other peoples, e.g. the Greeks from Homer's *Iliad*. The presence of some gods in the accounts of ancient authors, also those regarding war, signifies an evolution of the Roman religion under the influence of foreign cults, which successively appeared in and were imported into the Roman pantheon – *interpretatio Romanae*: Tacit. *Germ.* 43,4; Musiał 2009, 36–40. Cf. Cornell 1995, 108–113.

<sup>24</sup> Liv. 4,26,3 (the Aequi and the Volsci); 7,41,4; 9,39,5 (the Etruscans); 40,3; 40,9; 10,38 (the Samnites); 10,41,3; 36,38 (the Ligures); Cornell 1989a, 292–293; 1989c, 380; Poplawski 2011, 229–234.

<sup>25</sup> Liv. 4,32,2; 5,18,11–12; 5,21,2; 7,17,2; 26,5,9; 43,10,5; Flor. 1,6,7; Front. *Strateg.* 2,4,19. In wartime, it was also important to win over the enemy's divine patron, who had to be convinced to join the victor's side: Liv. 5,22; Dion. Halic. 13,3; Plut. *Camill.* 6; Valer. Max. 1,8,3 (the relocation of the goddess Uni, identified with the Roman Juno Regina, from Veii); Liv. 7, 28,4; Ovid. *Fasti.* 6,183 (Juno the patron of the Aurunci); Liv. 8,14,2 (Juno of Lanuvium). Not infrequently, the divine patrons of the Romans were worshipped by their opponents (this is strongly visible in Latium: Mars/Mavors at Preneste, Lanuvium, Falerii), cf. Cornell 1989a, 299; 1995, 293–294; Śnieżewski 2006, 45–46. For obvious reasons, our knowledge of Roman rituals is the most extensive, since it was on them that ancient authors focused in the first place.

<sup>26</sup> On the Iguvine Tablet, cf. Devoto 1954; Pallotino 1991, 104, 142; Ancilotti/Cerri 1996; Bradley 2000, 5; Poplawski 2011, 90–91, 97–99. The text of the *devotio* from the Iguvine Tablet resembles the wording of the *devotio* of the Romans, who devoted enemy cities and tribes to their gods of war: Macrobian. *Sat.* 3,9,10.

<sup>27</sup> Polib. 3,25,3; Liv. 1,14 (war priests of the Albanians); 20,10; Verg. *Aen.* 1,1; 12,116, 169, 195, 212; Dion. Halic. 2,1,2; Strabo 5,24, 2 (C 250); Plin. *NH* 3,98; Serv. *Aen.* 7,796; Festus, s.v. *Mamertini; ver sacrum* 519 L. = 379 M.: *Ver sacrum vovendi mos fuit Italia. Magnis enim periculis adducti vovebant, quaecunque proximo vere nata essent apud se, animalia immolatueros. Sed quum crudele videretur pueros ac puellas innocentes interficere, perductos in adultam aetatem velabant atque ita extra fines suos exigebant.*; Nonius,

accounts the Roman *fetiales* were accepted by the Italic opponents of Rome. The most popular war ritual, the triumph, also shows traces of external influences, most likely Etruscan, but also others.<sup>28</sup> The captured weaponry was, as *vota*, sacrificed to gods by the Sabines and the Ligures, who also destroyed the trophy weapons before they sacrificed them, like the Romans, after battle. Trophy weapons also served as *tropaea* in other Italic tribes, such as the Volsci, the Veneti, as well as the Romans.<sup>29</sup>

Even this brief and rather cursory comparison of various Roman war rites with the rituals of other inhabitants of Italy indicates that war was very much a part of the mentality of Italic communities. The presence of war rites in Italic tribes indicates that in Italy, war was an important element of existence. This is confirmed by written sources (scant inscriptions), findings of weapons (e.g. in graves),<sup>30</sup> depictions of military clashes on everyday objects and in graves, and figurines of warriors (e.g. the Warrior of Capestrano from the 4<sup>th</sup> century, the so-called Mars of Todi (Tuder), etc.). We should also remember that the Romans belonged to all sorts of unions (Latin League), which gathered together numerous political entities under the patronage of gods (Jupiter of Latium, Diana of Ariccia or the Aventine) and whose objective was not only to perform cults but also to act together in case of danger.<sup>31</sup>

Apart from religious rituals, the Italic neighbours of the Roman *civitas* were also characterised by a strong element of aggressiveness and the warrior ethos, which were conducive to conducting wars.<sup>32</sup> Rome was an integral part of this world, which meant that the presence of a strong military component and aggressiveness in the life of the Roman community was natural.<sup>33</sup>

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p. 522, s.v. *ver sacrum*; Pauli, *exc.*, s.v. *ver sacrum*; *Irpini*; *Picena*; *sacrami*; Cornell 1989a, 292; 1995, 305; Dench 1995, 179–180, 184–217; 1997, 43–52; Oakley 2002, 12; Popławski 2011, 116–121; Pina Polo 2011, 112–115 (*ver sacrum* in Rome). Similar practices can also be found in other Indo-European peoples, such as the Celts: Polib. 2,17; Liv. 5,34; Piegdoń 2009, 70–72.

<sup>28</sup> Plut. *Rom.* 16; Dion. Halic. 3,31,6; Val. Max. 2,8. The ritual of triumph evolved under the influence of various cultural elements. They included not only Etruscan, but also generally Italic and Greek influences: Bonfante Warren 1971, 108–120; Balbuza 2005, 30–45; Popławski 2011, 137–209. In later periods, the sacral character of the triumph was overridden by increasingly strong political and military elements.

<sup>29</sup> Liv. 10,2,14 (the Veneti); 41,18,3 (the Ligures). The Roman *tropaea* other than the *spolia opima*: Liv. 10,29,14; 23,46,6; 30,6,9; 41,12,6; Plut. *Aem.*; Serv. *Aen.* 8. Other peoples, such as the Greeks, the Gauls (Caes. *BG* 6,17) and the Germans (Tac. *Ann.* 1,59) also offered weapons as votive offerings. The Greeks also set up *tropaia* built with the enemy's weapons.

<sup>30</sup> In archaic Italy, war was conducted by family militia commanded by leaders of the *gens*. Such clan militias were common in Rome (the *Fabii* at Veii) but also in other political entities in Italy. Cf. also the inscription (*lapis Satricanus*) found at Satricum (Pometia) in the temple of Mater Matuta. See Cornell 1989a, 295–301; 1995, 143–150; Ziółkowski 2004, 108–111; Richardson 2012, 65–83 (the role of *gens Fabii* in the 5th c.). Cf. Bietti Sestieri 2010, 243–348.

<sup>31</sup> Political subjects from Latium associated in these organisations could integrate as a result of their existence: Cato *Orig.* 2, 28 C = fr. 58 P; Dion. Halic. 3,34,3; 5,61,3; 6,63,4; 7,53,5; Plin. *NH* 3,69; Cornell 1989a, 272–274, 285; 1989b, 317–318; 1995, 294–301; Ziółkowski 2004, 65–68.

<sup>32</sup> Cornell 1989c, 384; 1995, 365. This was very significant, since Rome encountered opponents whose military social structure and strong warrior ethos also played an important role, such as the Samnites in Italy (Salmon 1967, 101–112; Dench 1995, 98–103), but also the Celts in Italy and elsewhere (Piegdoń 2009, 70–76,) or the Celtiberians from Spain (Maciejowski 2012, 213–222).

<sup>33</sup> This is emphasised by Polybius, who quite strongly states that violence was used in various spheres of Roman society (1,37). Perhaps this was the reason why the Romans so quickly adapted gladiator fights,



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adopted from their Italic neighbours (sic!), as an important element of their everyday life. On Polybius as a source about imperialism: Harris 1992, 107–117 *contra* Oakley 2002, 31–33. Cf. Justin 38,6,7–8 (part of the speech that Pompeius Trogus, and Justin after him, attributed to Mithridates VI Eupator, in which the king of Pontus discussed the reasons of Roman expansion).

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