



Notwithstanding the problematic character of the interpretation of several Lupercalia rites, on the whole V. has written a thought-provoking book. Especially valuable are two of his evidence-based conclusions: (a) the Lupercalia descended from prehistoric Indo-European young male initiation rituals; (b) the Luperci identified themselves with wolves and imitated their behaviour during the ritual.

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LIVED ANCIENT RELIGION IN THE ROMAN EMPIRE

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The study of religion in the Roman world has remained a topic of perennial interest among scholars. This collection of essays aims to provide an up-to-date introduction and overview of that topic. Needless to say, the volume joins an already extensive bibliography. The book is part of the wide-ranging series *Die Religionen der Menschheit*, which seeks to offer general overviews of humanity's various religious traditions and communities, from the prehistoric period to the present day. With that aim in mind, the editors Rüpke and Woolf have brought together seven other scholars to present ten essays that introduce a range of themes in the study of Roman religion.

In response to traditional emphases on the communal and collective qualities of religion in Rome, the editors and authors have chosen to emphasise 'lived ancient religion' and the ways in which individuals may have experienced it. They argue that such an emphasis allows for a more complete view of ancient Roman religious life, its variations and its transformations. Instead of chapters that follow a chronological narrative or treat a particular geographical domain or examine a particular cult, practice or community, the essays explore a series of themes across the broad chronological and geographic expanses that made up the Roman empire.

Rüpke and Woolf open the volume with an introductory essay, in which they argue for the emphasis on 'lived ancient religion', which they believe foregrounds the agency of ancient individuals. This emphasis in turn leads to what they see as three *foci*: first, on the ways in which individual actors and groups appropriated (or even eschewed) traditional religious norms; second, on the interactive nature of religion as an element of culture, what they describe as 'religion in the making' (p. 16); and, lastly, on changing symbols that manifested in varied configurations across time and space. These engagements of individuals with various norms and practices constitute what gives texture to religion in the Roman empire.

Next follow two essays that explore different cultural spaces – what the authors call 'field[s] of religious action' – in which ideas about religion existed and transformed. First, Woolf and M.J. Versluys, in 'Empire as a Field of Religious Action', examine the

empire as an expansive but 'leaky' vessel in which religious change occurred (p. 27). The empire's breadth, they argue, facilitated the spread of ideas among diverse peoples even as it failed to produce and impose uniformity (an 'Imperial Religion', 'Reichsreligion' or 'Religionspolitik') in the place of local custom – at least until the late empire and the advent of imperial Christianity. Second, W. Van Andringa, in 'The City as a Field of Religious Action: Manufacturing the Divine in Pompeii', takes Pompeii as a case study and turns readers' attention to the city as a field of religious action, stressing the omnipresence of 'the sacred' throughout the cityscape, in what we would today call both 'public' and 'private' contexts.

In a dense essay, 'Sanctuaries – Places of Communication, Knowledge and Memory in Roman Religion', R. Raja and A.-K. Rieger take a more literal approach to religious space as they explore 'sanctuaries' as the places in which religion 'lived' (p. 61). As a result, they argue, these spaces shaped and re-formed the ways in which individuals practised and experienced religion in different places over time. Rüpke and G. Petridou follow with an essay, 'People and Competencies', that highlights the role of people in the relationship with the divine by exploring the role of religious professionals, such as priests and diviners. Unfortunately, the authors admit they embrace a limited scope, at the expense of the 'average citizen or woman or slave' (p. 107). The omission of these people's religious expertise in a volume that emphasises the ways in which individuals experienced lived religion is a curious one and seems at odds with the aims of the volume as a whole. In the next chapter, 'The Gods and Other Divine Beings', H. Wendt contends that notions about divine and supernatural forces (a collection of ideas that, she argues, we can fruitfully call 'religion') remained somewhat ubiquitous and constant, even as other aspects of Roman religious experience profoundly changed.

R. Gordon's chapter, 'Managing Problems: Choices and Solutions', examines the ways in which individuals employed religious symbols and actions in response to the contingencies of human life, including but not limited to healing illnesses, planning personal and civic ventures, and dealing with death. What we today call 'magic', divination and healing rituals (among other ways of solving problems) comprised an important way in which many individuals encountered the religious sphere. Next, Versluys and Woolf offer a compelling chapter on the materiality of Roman religion ('Artefacts and their Humans: Materialising the History of Religion in the Roman World'). Taking a broad chronological and geographical sweep, the authors argue both that the empire's material history reflects changes in religious culture and that transformations in the empire's material culture re-configured the practice and experience of Roman religion. In the penultimate chapter, 'The Impact of Textual Production on the Organisation and Proliferation of Religious Knowledge in the Roman Empire', Petridou and Rüpke tackle the role of text in organising and disseminating knowledge about religion. They argue that texts documented (and sometimes challenged) both long-existing and new ideas and practices, while various behaviours likewise provided an impetus for the production of new texts. Finally, starting from the observation that religious life was part and parcel of the empire's material world and that its material reality had economic consequences, Gordon, Raja and Rieger, in 'Economy and Religion', examine the financial elements of religious practice, touching on topics such as the costs of ritual action, the role of individual and civic patronage, and the development of pilgrimage.

There is much to commend in the volume, though it is not without its limits. First and foremost, its collaborative nature, which the editors acknowledge in the introduction, has brought together scholars with a range of interests in and approaches to the study of Roman

religion. Eight of the ten essays are co-authored, allowing scholars with different expertise to supplement and to complement one another's contributions. As a result, these collaborative essays offer a broader perspective than single-authored works might have. However, individual pieces occasionally suffer from significant internal shifts in tone or style from one section to the next that may jar readers, but they usually do not hinder comprehension. It is also worth noting that most of the contributors (seven out of nine) contribute to at least two essays in the volume. While this is an effective way of bringing together several scholarly perspectives, one wonders what the volume might have looked like if the editors had been able to put even more voices into dialogue with one another.

The volume offers a relatively short overview of a relatively large topic. As a result, topics are omitted that might have enriched the volume overall, including but not limited to ritual, the senses, emotions etc. Consequently, the scope of each chapter is likewise selective. This is not, in other words, a volume that covers every aspect of Roman religion imaginable. Nonetheless, many readers will derive great benefit from it; for instance, the chapter on the material footprint of Roman religion is fascinating and immensely thought-provoking. However, its place or use in the classroom is unclear. While the series of which this volume is a part aims to make its contents 'generally understandable' ('Allgemeinverständlichkeit'), some of the essays are more successful than others in not assuming the background information necessary to achieve that aim. I am certain that all the essays will benefit teachers as they prepare lectures or select primary sources to analyse with students, but I cannot help but worry that some of the essays may not be accessible to a general audience one might find in a classroom.

The thematic approach and structure challenge readers to think about broad topics in new and meaningful ways, but there are occasions when doing so may create problems. The treatment of 'magic' is one particular example. Readers interested in the discourses, rituals and practices that have traditionally been called 'magic' might expect to find this topic discussed at length in at least two chapters (probably more): Petridou and Rüpke's chapter on religious personnel (i.e. those who practised 'magic') and Gordon's chapter on problem management (i.e. what individuals might have hoped magic would accomplish). While Gordon integrates these types of practices into his discussion, Petridou and Rüpke chose (as noted above) to focus their discussion on a certain normative kind of expertise. Doing so comes at the expense of other practitioners whom Gordon, following others, calls 'minor ritual specialists', while interaction with them, when individuals sought to solve the problems they confronted, undoubtedly constituted a significant part of religious experience in Roman antiquity. At best, the omission in a chapter on persons and expertise obscures an important part of the story, while, at worst, it dangerously reifies traditional biases in scholarship. Scholars must be wary of the degree to which the realities of Roman religious experience transcend and transgress the thematic boundaries we seek to impose on our subject when we organise our knowledge in this way.

These observations and critiques should not detract from the value of this volume for scholars and teachers. While it must be read with caution, the volume will nonetheless serve as a helpful introduction for expert and general audiences alike.

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