

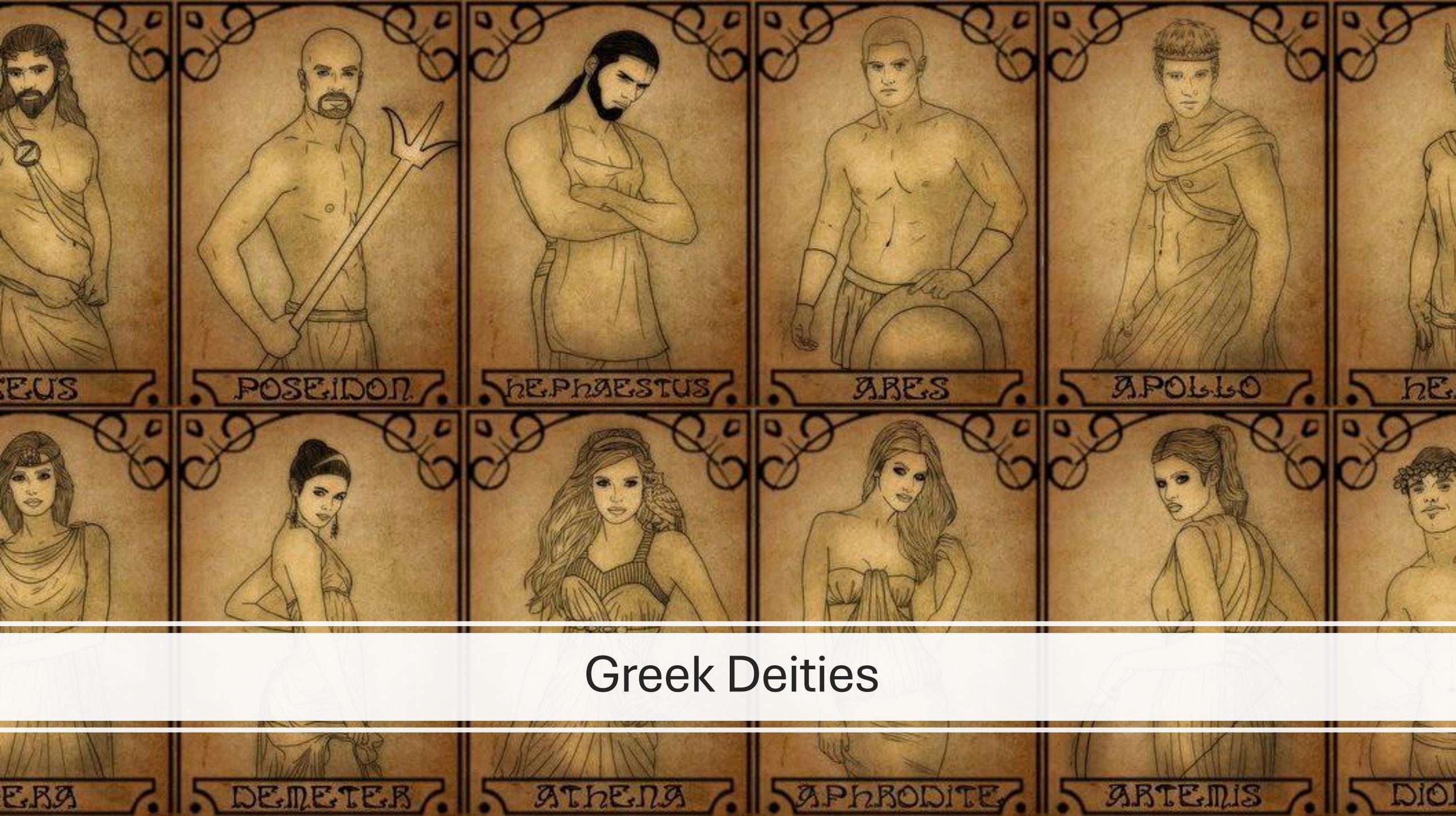


Ancient Greek and Roman Religion

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Greco-Roman

- God – polytheistic, mysticism, occultism, and mystery religions
 - Zeus (Jupiter)
 - Poseidon (Neptune)
 - Ares (Mars)
 - Hades (Pluto)
- Geography – Greater Greece and eventually the whole Roman Empire
- Time
 - Begin 1000 BC
 - AD 391 – Theodosius made Christianity the official religion of the Roman Empire.



ZEUS

POSEIDON

HEPHAESTUS

ARES

APOLLO

HE

HERA

DEMETER

ATHENA

APHRODITE

ARTEMIS

DIOS

Greek Deities

History

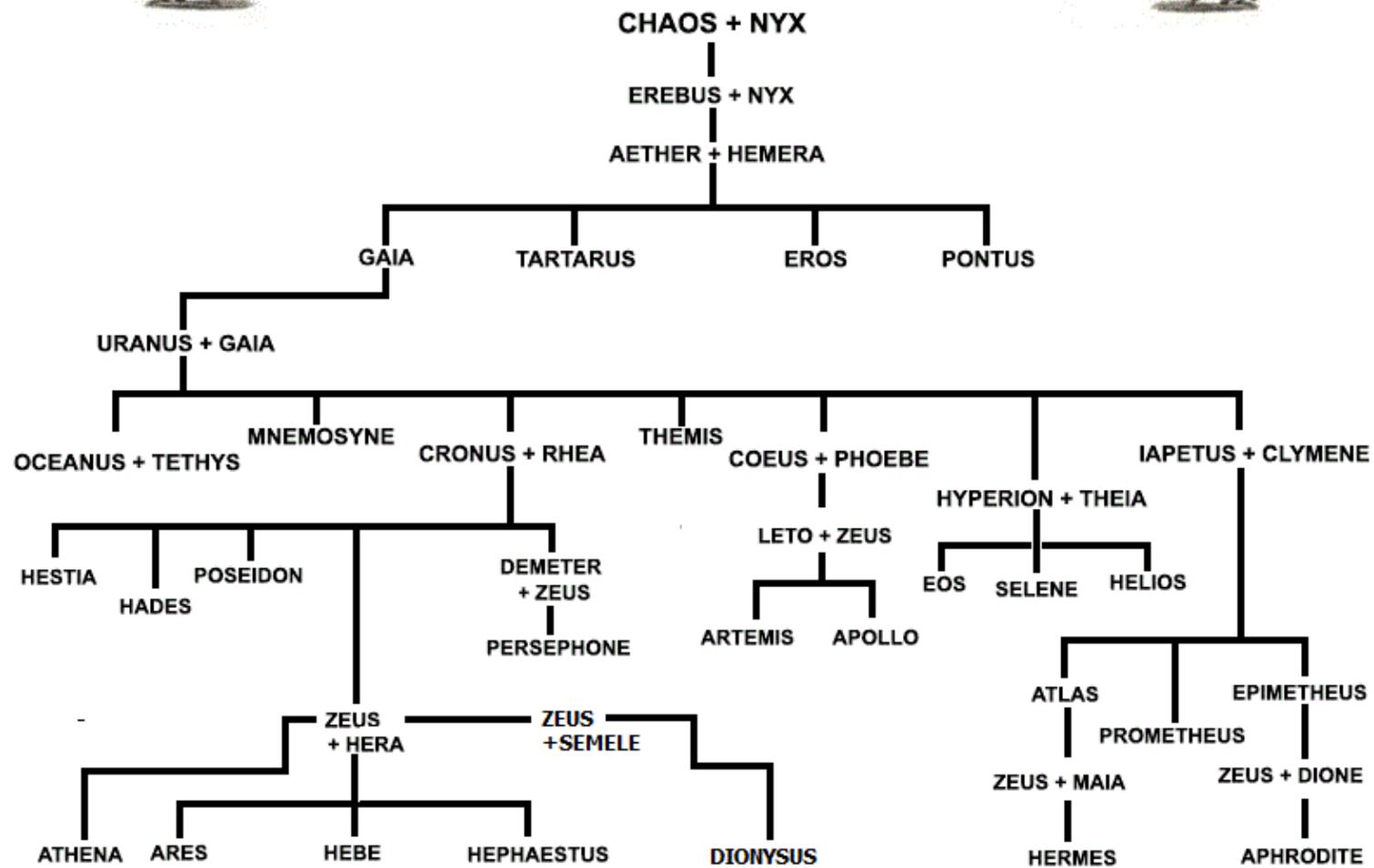
- Greek paganism dates to the early 2nd millennium BC, when Indo-Europeans migrated to the Aegeans and Minoans (Crete).
- Cult pantheons mixed and consolidated, resulting in a relatively uniform pantheon by the 8th century BC (Homer's Illiad)
- Troubles in 5th century BC caused a loss of faith in old religion - Marathon (490 BC), Salamis (480 BC), Wars of the Delian League (450 BC), Second Peloponnesian War (431–404 BC), Plague of Athens (430 BC)
- Focus on mystery religions and afterlife resulted

Greek Beliefs (1)

- Blend of Greek, Persian, Anatolian, Etruscan, and other influences
- Never an official system of ritual or doctrine. Instead, system was idiosyncratic and local
- Creation Myth
 - Earth (Gaia) emerges from primordial chaos and mates with Sky and Sea (Uranus, Poseidon).
 - The union produces 3 Hecatonchires (giants), 3 cyclops, and Titans
 - Titans Chronos and Rhea produced Olympian gods (Zeus, Demeter, Hades, Hera, and Hestia)
- Other myths were used to justify their divine right to the land



Greek Gods Family Tree



Greek Beliefs (2)

- Scripture – No canonical readings but Ovid, Plato, and Virgil were influential
- God – polytheistic. Gods were immoral but powerful and had to be propitiated with ritual. God's powers were limited by fate.
- Man – each person has a physical body and an immortal soul. Humans must endure whatever the gods send them, including loneliness, illness, old age, and death.
- Sin – the chief virtue is respect for the gods. To forsake sacred obligations is to be impure.
- Salvation – primarily socio-political for the city-state.

Greek Beliefs (3) - Afterlife

- The Dogs of Hades carry the deceased to the Land of Shadows.
- The person wanders across the Grove of Persephone to the Gate of Hades
- Cerberus, the 3-headed dog, must be appeased with honey-cakes
- The person must cross the Rivers Acheron, Cocytus, Lethe, Phlegethon, and Styx
 - The ferryman at Acheron requires a coin (obol) for his service
 - Styx is guarded by Phlegyas
- After crossing, spirits face a tribunal of Hades (the god), Aeacus, Minos, and Rhadamanthus.
- Most spirits are assigned to a neutral region of Hades. The evil go to Tartarus and the good go to the Elysian fields for earthly pleasures.

The Underworld in Greek Mythology



Greek – Distinctive Beliefs (1)

- Sacrifices – grain or animal. Blood, bones, and hide were offered to a god, while the rest was consumed by worshippers.
- Temples – not public gathering places. The altar was outside.
- Votive gifts – benefits conferred or anticipated, propitiation for crimes
- Public worship – to get success in harvest, economics, and military victory. Highly formulaic and ritualized.

Temple of Hephaestus Athens, Greece



Greek – Distinctive Beliefs (2)

- Oracles – a class of people who could give wise counsel and foretell the future.
- Sibyl (Oythia), the Oracle in the Temple of Apollo at Delphi
- Mystery religions – public cults of gods and goddesses
 - Mystical awakenings, systematic doctrine, and participate in worship
 - Examples – Dionysus, Eleusis, Samothrace
- Symbols
 - Earful of Corn – Demeter
 - Cornucopia (horn of plenty) – fashioned from the horn of the goat Amaltheia (Constellation Capricorn).



The Oracle of Delphi

Lydian King Croesus asked the Oracle if he should attack Persia. She responded, “if you do, a great empire will fall.”

Greek Religion Today

- Hellenic Reconstructionism
 - Temple of Demeter
 - Elaion
 - Hellenion



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History

- Mid-10th century BC – First settlement in the location of Rome, Tiber River
- Animism with local spirits (numina), ancestor worship
- Greeks colonized Italy in 8th century BC
- Roman was a major urban center by 625 BC and a republic in 510 BC
- First century BC – Roman Empire begins
- Mythracism, stoicism, and Christianity influence culture in 1st Century AD
- Christianity ascendent

Campo Marzio
(Campus Martius)

Viminale
(Collis Viminalis)

Capitolino
(Collis Capitolinus)

Esquilino
(Collis Esquilinus)

Isola Tiberina

Palatino
(Collis Palatinus)

Celio
(Collis Caelius)

Aventino
(Collis Aventinus)

Mura Serviane
(Murus Servii Tullii)

Roman Beliefs (1)

- Roman religion was transactional, a contrast with divine forces
- Unlike Greece, Rome did not concern itself with the personal histories of gods in its pantheon.
- The state cult dealt with public ceremonies for political, economic, and military affairs. Families carried out domestic rituals.
- God – no monotheism
 - Di indigetes – original gods of the Roman state (Jupiter, Mars, Quirinius)
 - Di novensides – gods introduced later
- Kurios (Lord) used for divine emperors.
- Creation – Rome adopted Greek narratives

Roman Beliefs (2) – Founding of Rome

- King Amulius of Albagonga forced his niece, Rhea Silvia, to become a vestal virgin.
- Rhea had sex with the god Mars, conceiving Remus and Romulus, founders of Rome.
- Amulius commanded a servant to kill the babies, but instead he put them in a bag and placed the bag on the Tiber River.
- A wolf found and nursed them until a shepherd, Faustulus, found them.
- At maturity, Remus and Romulus killed Amulius and founded Rome (753 BC)
- Romulus killed Remus

History – Growth of the City of Rome



Roman Beliefs (3) – Scripture and authority

- Collegia – priests for public religious rites
- Sodalia – lower-ranking priests
- Pontifex Maximus – Speaker for the CP
- Collegium Pontificum (CP) – Vestal Virgin supervision
- Rex and Regina Sacrorum – King and Queen of Sacred things
- Collegium Augurium – divination through bird flight, sacred space, and advised the Roman Senate
- Septemviri Epulones – organize public religious feasts
- Fratres Arvales – annual sacrifices for good harvest
- Luperci (brothers of the wolf) – officiate at purification and fertility rites
- Collegium Fetalium – diplomatic representatives of Rome
- Quindecemviri Sacris Faciundis – guarded and interpreted the Sibylline Books



Rome Under
Hadrian (AD
117)

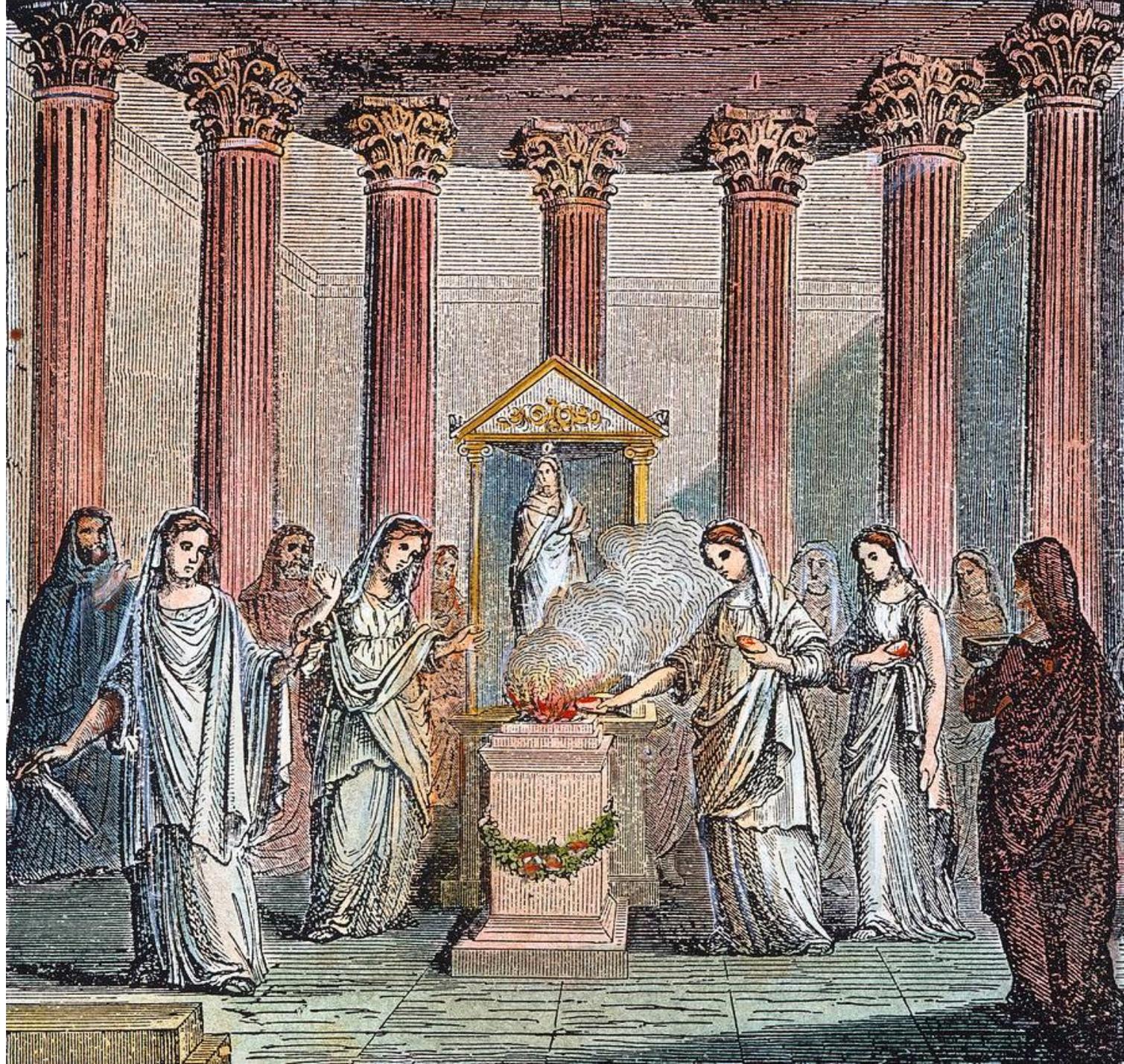
Roman Beliefs (4)

- Man – each person has a physical body and an immortal soul
- Sin – the primary vice is refusing to perform your obligations.
 - Not performing rituals
 - Criticizing gods or government
 - Any evidence of disloyalty, like failing to serve in the military
- Salvation
 - Individuals must ensure the peace, stability, and expansion of Rome
 - Sacrificial system and festivals, oaths, libations, prayers, and purification rites
 - The Emperor was the “Savior”
- Afterlife – similar to Greek paganism

Roman Distinctive Beliefs

- Omens – Highly superstitious. Flight paths of birds informed key decisions
- Haruspex – a person practicing divination, often by examining sheep livers.
- Vestal Virgin – a woman who had to keep the sacred fire in the Temple burning, performing prescribed rituals, and baking sacred salt cakes.
- Religious festivals
 - Parentilia – Nine days in Feb to worship dead ancestors
 - Lupercalia – fertility festival
- Caduceus – a wand with 2 serpents wrapped around it. Moral equilibrium and good conduct.
- Lar Familiaris (Family guardian spirit) – associated with a particular place and did not move, even if the family did.
- Penates (lesser spirits) were assigned tasks such as protecting doors, windows, hinges, or hearth

Vestal Virgins



Roman Religion Today

- Roman reconstructionism wants to return to Roman paganism
 - Nova Roma
 - Societatis Viae Romanae
 - Julian Society





Conclusion

Discussion



References

- H. Wayne House, Charts of World Religions, Zondervan, 2006