

Mapping Rome Final

Prologue: Let's start at a point we know!

- 771 BCE → begins with a Vestal
- Rhea Silvia → gives birth to twins
 - Not a happy ending
 - Vestal Virgin = no conceiving children (even with gods!)
 - Children are abandoned
 - Twins are Romulus and Remus
 - Saved by a wolf in the woods
 - Grow up to be the mythical founders of Rome
- **Big Reveal:** this is all just a myth (obviously)

The Temple Itself

1. The modern-day Temple of Vesta → mound of concrete with some modern reconstruction
- **QUESTION: What do you notice about the form of this temple?**
 1. Temple is round → different from other temples in Rome **
 2. Reconstructed western wall (1930s)
 1. Made with travertine
 2. And recycled remnants found in the area
1. would have been a door to the house of the Vestals on the eastern side of the building, connected to it by a walled pathway
2. Mainly house eternal flame (re: Aeneas)
 1. A wooden phallus, which symbolizes fertility and prosperity, and was used in processions.
 2. The Palladium, a statue of Pallas Athena, believed to be brought from Troy by Aeneas (re: household gods)

Origins and Meanings of the Vestals

1. Cult of Vesta came from Lavinium with Numa —> 7th century bce
 1. Temple → Dedicated to Vesta,
 1. the goddess of the hearth.
 2. similar → Greek goddess Hestia —> connect idea of hearths and community
2. Lavinium → founded by Aeneas
3. **QUESTION: Has anyone read the Aeneid? If no, brief summary to establish Aeneas.**
 1. Where he brought eternal flame / household gods (i.e. palladium)
4. requirements to become a Vestal Virgin (THERE ARE 6 AT ANY GIVEN TIME)
 1. ages of six to ten years old.
 2. socially adept and physically “unblemished.” (MEANING HEALTHY!!)
 3. had to come from families alive + married
 4. Social status was not a requirement
5. One of the greatest sources for information about the Vestals is the Roman author, Livy.
 1. *Ab Urbe Condita*, goes into great detail the history of Rome, and within it some history of the Vestals (specifically scandal).

The Rituals of the Vestals

1. The rituals of the Vestals were cyclical
2. The products from past rituals would take part in future ones.
 1. Sacred Meal produced (explain later) was used to sanctify victims of sacrifice
 2. the ashes of the sacrifice calf of the “Fordicidia” → mixed with the dry blood from the “October Horse,” from October ritual.
 3. Mixture of ashes + blood → spread over the fires of the “Parilia,”
 1. ritual for purifying the shepherd and his sheep.
3. Eternal flame was renewed March 1st every year → honors Vesta
4. Vestals were tasked with performing these rituals + protecting flame and artifacts previously mentioned
 1. Most importantly protecting the palladium which was somewhat representative of Rome itself

Incestum - Failed Vestals

- two recorded executions of Vestals within Rome during the republic
- Both occurred when the military was lacking.
 1. When a Vestal was suspected of having committed a sexual act in her term serving the Temple of Vesta, it was known as an “incestum.”
 1. Only nineteen cases over time
- **QUESTION: Does anyone know what the method of execution was for Vestals?**
 1. If convicted of “incestum” → death. Method → interment,
 1. Vestal was buried alive in a box after being paraded through the streets of Rome
 2. Interment may signify being sewn back to earth for renewal and growth
 1. Mistakes of failed → growth
 3. This was not viewed by the Romans as putting the Vestal to death.
 1. Viewed as “habitable room” for eternity.
 2. Vestals were sacred and could not be directly killed → “elaborate fiction” to dissuade Roman public

Famous Vestals

1. Rhea Silvia
2. Tarpeia (mention appearance yesterday)
3. The two executions of the Vestal Virgins, one in 216 BCE and the other in 114 BCE, are two of the three examples of human sacrifice within the age of the Roman republic.
 1. These sacrifices served as “scapegoats” events occurring alongside executions;
 2. these being the threat of defeat by Hannibal (216 BCE)
 3. minor defeat in Thrace orchestrated by Scordisci (114 BCE).
 - ○ The trial in 216 BCE ended with one Vestal being sacrificed, while the other committed suicide.
 - ○ The trial in 114 BCE resulted in what is believed to be the sacrifice of all three Vestals accused.
3. Oppia, a Vestal Virgin who was found guilty of being “unchaste” and was thus sentenced to death during the age of the monarchy.
4. Postumia, the Vestal Virgin was acquitted of committing a “sexual offense,” one example of Vestals proving their innocence when accused of a crime against their role.

Move to House of Vestals!

1. semi-surrounded by streets, which line three sides of the Vestal's residence. The fourth side of the house abuts the warehouses of Vespasian.
 1. They were surrounded by the bustling city of Rome.
 2. Rome's identity as a city that houses both sacred and commercial sites within the same area.
2. Not much is known of the House of the Vestals during the time of the republic
 1. excavations have revealed that the building likely contained six bedrooms, as well as a common space. The existence of a portico, as well as an inner courtyard is theorized as well.
3. Even less information is known about the house of the Vestals during the time of the monarchy.
 1. strong evidence to suggest that the building was remodeled between those two times in Roman history.
 2. Even after the Republican period, the House of the Vestals underwent severe remodeling over time which was built over top of the existing site.
4. The House of the Vestals was pillaged countless times throughout the centuries leading up to the eighteenth century.
 1. As a result, many artifacts from the days of the Vestals are untraceable and lost to time
 2. Could this be a palimpsest?

Household Duties and Perks of Vestal-hood

1. Vestal Virgins tasks → “housework”

1. supervising the eternal flame of Rome
2. they looked after and regularly cleaned their storehouse
3. they produced something called “sacred meal”
 1. first ears of corn from the harvest in Rome → grind up and bake.
 2. This sacred meal would be used to “sanctify victims” for a sacrifice.

2. The job of being a Vestal Virgin came with many advantages.

1. Vestals were always accompanied by a lictor whenever they went into public.
2. Vestals had distinctive dress, in order that everyone would be able to recognize them in public settings.
 1. Vestals would wear very modest dress – veil, frock, ribbon → portraits of vestals source
 2. On their head was what looked to be a ribbon which some sources have claimed was red
3. Vestals had reserved seats at all public events within the city.
4. Vestals also had the ability to pardon any criminal that they may come across, should the criminal be on their way to execution.

Vestal Virgins and Misconceptions: Believe it or not!

1. Unlike catholic nuns, Vestals → tried and executed for failing their vow of chastity
2. The Vestal's house would host people frequently, be it clients or guests of the Vestals.
 1. Vestals were not a coveted group of → rather served as quasi-public figures
3. They were no longer obligated to remain Vestals after their thirty-year term, nuns were obligated for life.
4. After their thirty-year term, Vestals were allowed to marry, though it rarely happened due to the taboo nature of marrying a retired Vestal.
 1. Vestals would often remain vestals for the rest of their lives.
 2. However, there are plenty of cases where former Vestals did marry!

Epilogue: The End of the Vestals

1. The end of the Vestal virgins was a result of laws inspired by anti-paganism passed in the year 382 CE
 1. These were passed by Emperor Gratian
 2. Some scholars however are of the opinion that Emperor Theodosius gave the most powerful push against the Vestals.
2. After, House of the Vestals → house members of the imperial court
 1. Determined → midden. “fine table service”, “small treasure of coins”
 2. This was done by constructing dividing walls within the standing structure
- The existence of the Vestal Virgins is indicative of their importance in Rome during the time of the monarchy, as well as the republic.
- The stability of Rome itself stood on the shoulders of these young women
 - Women are the structural support of society
 1. The virginity of the Vestal Virgins = stability of Rome on all accounts.
 2. The concept of vestals protecting the Palladium is. Signifying of them protecting all of rome