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Author:	Rüpke, Jörg
Title:	“Roman Warfare and the Dialectics of Religion and Politics“
Published in:	Dialectics of Religion in the Roman World Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag
Year:	2021
Pages:	87 - 108
ISBN:	978-3-515-13066-0

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Chapter 2
Roman Warfare and the Dialectics of Religion and Politics

JÖRG RÜPKE[1]

At the beginning of the twenty-first century the understanding of war as the mere continuation of politics by other means, as famously formulated by Clausewitz,[2] no longer seems to be a phenomenon of the nineteenth century. Small, 'sub-atomic' wars are possible on European soil and a widespread reality in West Asia. Territorial gains achieved by force – an outcome typical of how highly organised states go about war – earn a new legitimacy. Nevertheless, it is precisely when the threshold for waging war is lowered that the difference between war and politics is demonstrated: 'other means' consist first and foremost in the activation of a military apparatus that under certain circumstances unleashes its own dynamic that slips out of the hands of the previously existing political means of control – in German politics the expansive war aims of the Prussian, soon to be Prussian-German military after the initial success of the war against France and how it ended a century ago are a 'good' example of how this state of affairs comes about even within a stable political framework.[3]

However, nor ought war to be identified simply with the military, it ought not to be reduced to conflict pure and simple. With the increasing mechanisation of warfare, the importance of long-term preparations for warfare grew; but at the political level too, war is presented rather as just one means of resolving conflict (if also an extreme form) which can only be interpreted within the framework of the conflict as a whole, of the solutions that have failed and of the apparent strategies of escalation. And so too of de-escalation: wars leave traces behind and have consequences, even if the only

1 I am grateful to the editors for the invitation to contribute to this volume. I am building above all and still on Jörg Rüpke, *Domi militiae: Die religiöse Konstruktion des Krieges in Rom* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1990) / *Peace and War in Ancient Rome*, trans. David M.B. Richardson (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2019).

2 Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, trans. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (London: Everyman's library, 1993), 1.1.24.

3 Thomas Nipperdey, *Deutsche Geschichte 2: 1866–1918, Machtstaat vor der Demokratie* (München: Beck, 1993), 65–66, 71–73.

form they take is the requirement to demobilise. Usually, re-construction needs to be undertaken on a larger scale.

Nor, against this background of the interconnection of warfare and politics, should the relationship of war and religion be investigated as a strange specimen that invites our attention by means of particularly bloody rites or the overt opposition of religion. The concept of dialectics, as proposed in the introduction of this volume, invites a more nuanced analysis. The question to be posed in this chapter is much more interested in the details of the dialectical relationship between both. Conceptualising religion as communication[4] allows asking not only for the initiators and participants in such communication, but also for the aesthetics and rhetorics[5] of such communication in ritual forms and its change of the social context. The 'religious construction of war', suggested as an approach here, starts from a concept of the sociology of knowledge,[6] but moves on to ask about the agents of ritual, legal, and discursive formations of peace and warfare. Accordingly, this chapter will demonstrate not only how religious communication is employed by powerful (and afterwards even more powerful) political actors, but also, how these actors are forced into the open urban space with regard to consequential decisions, gaining prestige, or consumption of booty. My argument will not deny that there are political 'publics', open spaces for political deliberation and decision-making (even if highly regulated and highly restrictive with regard to many social groups and above all women). However, one might argue on the basis of the findings that the 'public' itself is a category that is frequently established and permanently shaped by the involvement of religious communication – a communication addressed to the gods and ascribing agency onto them, but at the same time enlarging the competence of the human patron.[7]

Against the background of some classical arguments in the anthropology of war,[8] I will show how religious communication construes what constitutes 'war' in ancient Rome (and is quite different from our more and more fluid notion of it). This review of rituals and discourses will demonstrate how political competences and options are dialectically shaped by religious communication – and modify the latter.

4 Enzo Pace, "Religion as Communication," *International Review of Sociology* 21, no. 1 (2011): 205–29, Jörg Rüpke, "Religious Agency, Identity, and Communication: Reflecting on History and Theory of Religion," *Religion* 45, no. 3 (2015): 344–66; Niklas Luhmann, "Religion als Kommunikation," in *Religion als Kommunikation*, ed. by Hartmann Tyrell, Volkhard Krech, and Hubert Knoblauch (Würzburg: Egon, 1998), 135–45; Jörg Rüpke, "Antike Religionen als Kommunikationssysteme," in *Gebet und Fluch, Zeichen und Traum: Aspekte religiöser Kommunikation in der Antike*, ed. Kai Brodersen (Münster: Lit, 2001), 13–30; see also Günther Schörner and Darja Šterbenc Erker (eds.), *Medien religiöser Kommunikation im Imperium Romanum* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2008).

5 On the concept see Robert A. Yelle, *Semiotics of Religion: Signs of the Sacred in History* (London: Bloomsbury, 2012).

6 Above all Berger and Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge* (New York: Doubleday, 1967).

7 See Rüpke, "Religious Agency."

8 Cf. Hans Joas and Wolfgang Knöbl, *War in Social Thought: Hobbes to the Present* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012) for the dearth of sociological theorizing.

Religion and Warfare

It is indisputable that religious motivations, conflicts between religions, and confessions repeatedly crop up as the causes of war. But such a picture is deceptive. For historical reasons the boundaries between religions are often overlaid with social, economic, and ethnic fault lines, they are consequences of processes of subjugation or stratification. Furthermore, when there is great pressure to provide legitimation for waging war the recourse to religious symbols, with their claim to finality, offers great advantages. Above all this applies precisely where the parties to a conflict do not correspond to the dividing lines between political systems or states.[9] 'War of Religion' is a familiar concept for such conflicts: it suggests a predominance of religious motives over the interests of power politics or economics – a predominance that often does not exist in individual cases. Even where the crusades and the wars of the European Reformation are concerned, non-religious motivations should not be underestimated.[10]

The Islamic concept of *jihad* seems to belong clearly to the field of religiously motivated wars. This kind of war is targeted at 'unbelievers' – it is conducted for the 'strengthening of [the] religion'. But a closer look at how it was discussed in Islamic legal scholarship shows that in no way does this fit seamlessly into the previously outlined category of 'religious war'. What is at the forefront is not the justification of war but rather its promotion among the participants.[11] From a historical point of view this goes back to the disputes of the founding period and of the period of early expansion; relations dating to the period before state formation are apparent in the neglect of war preparations on the part of both political and religious authorities, as well as in the conduct of such wars; only in the post-war phase, when the spoils were distributed, is political leadership sought for the purposes of mediation. Comparable phenomena can usually also be established for religiously motivated military actions in the European Late Middle Ages and in the era of the Reformation: it is above all the small groups lacking stabilised political structures that use 'messianic' concepts of war that are steeped in religion.[12]

Even in the handful of cases cited here, the religious or power-political interests are quite varied. The concept of 'Holy War' contributes nothing towards explaining it. Carsten Colpe has traced its history as a concept and has shown that the term's more

9 See Rüpke, "War / Armed Forces," *The Brill Dictionary of Religion* 4 (2006), 1960–63.

10 E.g. Geoffrey Parker, *The Thirty Years' War* (London: Routledge, 1984).

11 E.g. Rudolph Peters, *Islam and Colonialism: The Doctrine of Jihad in Modern History* ('s-Gravenhage: Mouton, 1980); Abdulaziz Sachedina, "The Development of Jihad in Islamic Revelation and History," in *Cross, Crescent, and Sword: The Justification and Limitation of War in Western and Islamic Tradition*, ed. James Turner Johnson and John Kelsay (New York: Greenwood), 35–50; Albrecht Noth, "Der a priori legitime Krieg im Islam: Hauptaspekte des islamischen Rechts zum Thema 'Krieg und Frieden'," in *Töten im Krieg*, ed. Heinrich von Stietencron and Jörg Rüpke (Freiburg/Breisgau: Alber, 1995), 277–95.

12 Georg Kretschmar, "Der heilige Krieg aus christlicher Sicht," in *Töten im Krieg*, ed. Heinrich von Stietencron und Jörg Rüpke (Freiburg/Breisgau: Alber, 1995), 297–316.

widespread use in the twentieth century has its roots in the wars of liberation of the start of the nineteenth century; Ernst Moritz Arndt, in particular, is supposed to have been of importance to its spread within German-speaking areas.[13] 'Holy' indicated no *specific* religious meaning here. Rather, it articulated, how the nation was considered as sublime, demanding an unquestioning sense of duty. The semantics of the sacrifice made by the war dead, which by no means reflects ancient tradition, also belongs to this field[14] – as we will see, for understandable reasons the elites of the Roman Republic were not interested to highlight the cost side of warfare; burying and mourning the dead was an affair of the comrades and the individual families. Thus, it is possible to apprehend a religious construction of politics itself, a semantic that in the context of modern Europe was nonetheless detached from institutionalised religion in particular ways.

The extreme case, the identification of religion with the state waging war, thus does not offer a viable alternative to the more nuanced analysis of the dialectical relation of religion and war respectively politics. Likewise, the notion of 'Holy War' is not central to the ever more complex anthropological research in warfare. Mono-causal theories that reduced the function of war to the controlling of the population or to the regulation of territorial size between societies at different levels of development, or which associated the frequency of war with the individual level of aggression within a society, have been replaced by theories that consider material as well as ideological factors and regional 'constellations' (alliances). In a classic synthesis of the 1990s, R. Brian Ferguson has tried to integrate the various explanatory components into a three-part model of infrastructural, structural, and super-structural factors[15] – a useful model for highlighting areas of potential religious functions. He claims that in every society 'infrastructural' reasons – the environment, ecology, and geography – are responsible for many of the characteristic paths to warfare. However, he concedes that structural factors – kinship systems, economic structures, and the political constitution – shape the structure of processes to resolve conflicts leading to war. Political factors, such as the education of central authorities or the capacity to forge alliances, become more significant with rising social differentiation. The same applies to the 'super-structural' factors: the rules of warfare and the esteem in which bravery was held, in respect of the trophies won or institutions of vengeance that are in place, influence the behaviour in warfare and the speed of escalation; at the same time there is the oral material with which members of society are themselves able to express their own motives. However, in themselves these things are not normally sufficient for war to break out.

13 Carsten Colpe, *Der "Heilige Krieg": Benennung und Wirklichkeit, Begründung und Widerstreit* (Bodenheim: Hain, 1994).

14 Hildegard Cancik-Lindemaier, "Opferphantasien: Zur imaginären Antike der Jahrhundertwende in Deutschland und Österreich," *Altsprachlicher Unterricht* 30, no. 3 (1987): 90–104.

15 R. Brian Ferguson, "Explaining War," in *The Anthropology of War*, ed. Jonathan Haas (Cambridge: University Press, 1990), 26–55.

Ferguson has formulated his model with reference to pre-state societies, but it can also encompass still further developments. Upon further differentiation within society the levels of conflict shift. No longer does the ecological position of the society as a whole, its share of land suitable for cultivation, of fishing grounds or of pastures, constitute the main field of conflict. It is rather in the determining of positions within the starkly differentiated society that the potential for conflict now lies. Correspondingly, where war is concerned, the expectations of victory among different members of society diverge. Hence, the decision to go to war is taken according to the interests of the ruling elite or the military leadership: force, not consensus, constitutes the basic foundation of mobilisation in societies based on the city. Economically, socially, and cognitively 'trapped' in the city,[16] at Rome participation under the command of the freshly elected (and annually changing) 'magistrates' demonstrated social status and promised an individual share in the booty in successful campaigns. The 'polis ideology' of ancient Mediterranean cities with its equation of military obedience and political participation[17] demonstrates how much the dominating motives are concealed by ideological manipulation. Vested interests were presented as being in the interests of the whole society. The success rested, however, on the apparent unity of those in power. At Rome, in the slow process of state formation,[18] the competitive political elite always navigated between successful mutual control and individual distinction due to military success that threatened to turn (and finally led) into civil war.

On the whole the radical shift in the relative significance of individual factors, that is, the historical dimension of the anthropology of war, is still neglected. With regard to religion, attempts to explain the characteristics of more recent warfare with reference to elements of pre-state warfare predominate. The religious elements of war are in many cases associated with the individual motivations of those fighting. Under the circumstances of state organisation, however, the cohesion and thereby the effectiveness of

16 Thus Michael Mann, *The Sources of Social Power 1: A History of Power from the Beginning to A. D. 1760* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986), quoted according to Mann, *Geschichte der Macht: Studienausgabe: Von den Anfängen bis zur griechischen Antike. Vol. 1* (Frankfurt a. M.: Campus, 1994), 211.

17 A comprehensive overview: Arjan Zuiderhoek, *The Ancient City* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017). Hoplite ideology: Martin P. Nilsson, "Die Hoplitentaktik und das Staatswesen," in Id., *Opuscula Selecta* (Lund: Gleerup, 1928), 897–907; Anthony Snodgrass, "The Hoplite Reform and History," *The Journal of Hellenic Studies* 85 (1965), 110–22; Victor Davis Hanson, *Warfare and Agriculture in Classical Greece* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998); see also Edward van der Vliet, "The Early Greek Polis: Regime Building, and the Emergence of the State," in *State Formation in Italy and Greece – Questioning the Neoevolutionist Paradigm*, ed. Nicola Terrenato and D. C. Haggis (Oxford Oxbow Books, 2011), 119–34.

18 See Christopher Smith, "Citizenship and Community: Inventing the Roman Republic," in *State Formation in Italy and Greece – Questioning the Neoevolutionist Paradigm*, ed. Nicola Terrenato and D. C. Haggis (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2011), 217–30; Nicola Terrenato, "The Versatile Clans: Archaic Rome and the Nature of Early City-States in Central Italy," in *State Formation in Italy and Greece: Questioning the Neoevolutionist Paradigm*, ed. Nicola Terrenato and Donald C. Haggis (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2011), 231–44.

armies is not manufactured through collective sacrifices: in the Roman army such acts were perhaps performed only by specialists, who are at all times surrounded by officers; the soldiers as a whole might perhaps never so much as get to see the scene. This is suggested by the limited space within the court of the *principia* (headquarter buildings) in Roman legionary camps as well as the spatial arrangements visible on reliefs, admittedly all stemming from the imperial period like Trajan's column or Marcus Aurelius'.[19]

These leading and subaltern officers formed by no means an unworthy audience. This kind of choreography in the act of sacrifice would only underline the military's steep hierarchy, which is expressed by the extreme inequality of authority, salary (share of booty), and living conditions. Thus, religion served to legitimate the military apparatus and so – once more – its efficiency, though it would not be the means of transmission to convey it to individual fighters: harsh discipline, the effective lack of alternative choices as to how to act, ultimately the group-dynamic processes of small groups, such as communal living in tents,[20] were probably the decisive factors in the individuals' 'motivation'.

It also becomes clear from this that the 'super-structural' factors (ideology) do not offer anything additional, but are most strongly connected with the structural ones, with how society is actually put together. But at the same time a perception of those structural factors that is too static is to be guarded against: internal tensions can break out – or be suspended – precisely under the strain in the political system that war entails, if understood as the last step of escalation (and intermittent de-escalation) in attempts at conflict-solution.[21] So it is precisely by analysing war that we can lay bare the precarious cohesion of state formation[22] and the dialectical relationship of politics and religion. As a consequence, the analysis needs to start with the phase of mobilisation.[23] Its significance is intrinsically bound up with the technical organisation of warfare, with rates of participation.[24] So it plays only a limited role in wars that are

19 Frank Lepper and Sheppard Frere, *Trajan's Column: A New Edition of the Cichorius Plates. Introduction, Commentary and Notes* (Gloucester: Sutton, 1988); Salvatore Settis, Adriano La Regina, Gianfranco Agosti, and Vincenzo Farinella, eds., *La Colonna Traiana* (Torino: Einaudi, 1988).

20 See Charles C. Moskos, "Why Men Fight: American Combat Soldiers in Vietnam," *Transaction* 7 (1969), 13–23, and the application to antiquity by Ramsay MacMullen, "The Legion as a Society," *Historia* 33 (1984), 440–56.

21 E.g. Carol R. Ember and Melvin Ember, *Anthropology* (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1981), 407–14; Klaus-Friedrich Koch, "Access to Justice: An Anthropological Perspective," in *Access to Justice 4: The Anthropological Perspective. Patterns of Conflict Management: Essays in the Ethnography of Law*, ed. Klaus-Friedrich Koch (Alphen aan den Rijn/Milan: Sijthoff and Noordhoff/Giuffrè, 1979), 1–16.

22 Mann, *Sources of Social Power*; Terrenato and Haggis, "State Formation in Italy and Greece – Questioning the Neoevolutionist Paradigm," in *State Formation in Italy and Greece: Questioning the Neoevolutionist Paradigm*, ed. Nicola Terrenato and Donald C. Haggis (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2011), 1–16.

23 Classic formulation: Anthony F. Wallace, "Psychological Preparations for War," in *War: The Anthropology of Armed Conflict and Agression*, ed. Morton Fried, Marvin Harris, and Robert Murphy (Garden City, New York: Natural History Press, 1968), 173–82.

24 Developed by Stanislav Andreski, *Military Organization and Society* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1968).

conducted by mercenary armies (as in the Hellenic east of the ancient Mediterranean or in Early-Modern Europe), as well as in colonial, nuclear, or mechanised warfare too, but it assumed tremendous significance for the *levée en masse* or in forms of total war in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, with their requirement that the economic sector as a whole move to a war footing. The analysis of religion and war must adequately reflect this complexity.

Taking the Field in the Republican and Imperial Periods[25]

Religious communication was crucial in mobilizing the urban population. This applied not only to the military personnel involved in combat – even in ancient warfare often only a small proportion[26] – but also to many other groups and individuals, from clan members and clients of commanders to dependents and slaves. As in many ancient city-states, obligatory military service was a defining element of political identity in Rome: only *cives Romani* (Roman citizens) were allowed to serve in the Roman legions.[27] However, the military apparatus was not confined to this group. Even disregarding the baggage train, which probably comprised mainly non-Romans, there were non-Roman units that played a major role in warfare itself. Under the Republic one thinks first of all of the Italic allies, and in the Imperial Age there were the auxiliaries, who were awarded citizenship only upon leaving service. If not the backbone, these numerous and sometimes specialist troops were the front face of the Roman military apparatus.[28]

Both Romans and non-Romans – Italians produced the majority of 'Roman' soldiers for a long period – were made subject to military discipline by an unconditional oath sworn to the person of the commander (later the emperor as notional commander). This, like other oaths, was called *sacramentum*. The term related to a kind of 'wager' that, in other forms of this oath, required that a security deposit be left at a temple, and become forfeit to the god concerned in the event of failure. The relationship between the leader and members of the organization was in this novel way accorded religious

25 The following description is based on Rüpke, *Domi militiae* and the summary in Jörg Rüpke, "Not Gods Alone: On the Visibility of Religion and Religious Specialists in Ancient Rome," in *Seeing the God: Image, Space, Performance, and Vision in the Religion of the Roman Empire*, ed. Marlis Arnold, Harry O. Maier, and Jörg Rüpke (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2018), 85–97.

26 Cf. John Keegan, *The Face of Battle* (New York: Viking Press, 1976); John Lazenby, "The Killing Zone," in *Hoplites: The Classical Greek Battle Experience*, ed.Victor Davis Hanson (London: Routledge, 1991), 87–109.

27 During the period of the Principate, the age of recruitment was between 17 and 21: Walter Scheidel, "Inschriftenstatistik und die Frage des Rekrutierungsalters römischer Soldaten," *Chiron* 22 (1992), 281–97.

28 Ian Haynes, *Blood of the Provinces: The Roman Auxilia and the Making of Provincial Society from Augustus to the Severans* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

sanction.[29] In the course of the Republic this must have replaced the dependency of relatives and clients to the clan leader that had initiated raids before (and were to be internally checked by the fetials[30]). During the empire the oath relationship was established and annually repeated between the legionaries and the emperor rather than the present commanding officer.

An analogous relationship was also given expression in the *lustratio exercitus* performed upon departing for war. In this elaborate boundary ritual, a special group of sacrificial animals – a sheep, a pig, and an ox (hence the name *suovetaurilia*) – was led around the assembled army or camp, accompanied by musicians and sacrificial assistants. The animals were then sacrificed. This ritual would have been familiar to a Roman citizen from the similar five-yearly *lustratio populi* census ritual, which required the presence of the entire citizenry on the Field of Mars, and to a Roman peasant in the form of the *lustratio agri,* in which the sacrificial animals were led around the boundaries of the farm.[31] Although this is never explicitly attested, the *lustratio exercitus* may have been seen against this familiar experiential background, so that the unity of the active armed force, hierarchically structured under its commander, was demonstrated to its members by a reference to the gods. War service, and service as such in the case of the professional army, which developed from the end of the second century BC onwards, came to an end only upon release (*missio*). Religion served to convert collective identity into individual dependency on a person. When warfare became extended, lasting beyond an annual season and situated beyond Italy, similarly extended commands (enabled by the figure of the supra-annual pro-magistrate) led to the formation of enormous military *clienteles,* of military professionals in the service of an individual, mutually obliged in terms of obedience and retirement provisions. Here, the nexus proved crucial for the formation of civil war armies and the military power basis for emperors. Military rebellion could start in the very moment of withholding the repetition of the oath.[32]

As for rituals specifically related to wartime operations, the first that should be mentioned belongs to the unspectacular, routine category of rituals carried out by the commander, probably within the narrow circle of his staff, or even delegated to specialists, such as the accompanying musicians and sacrificial assistants. For the soldiers, such actions, as a rule combining sacrifice with divination, augury, or the examination of entrails, nevertheless defined dispositions, especially of a geographically related kind, as when a river was crossed, or a camp set up.

It is difficult to evaluate the public nature of the rituals performed in the context of a battle, a focal point in warfare. What is certain is that augury was used in the Republi-

29 Salvatore Tondo, "Sul sacramentum militiae," *Studia et Documenta Historiae et Iuris* 34 (1968): 376–96; Rüpke, *Domi militia,* 76–91.

30 See Rüpke, *Domi militiae,* 98–99; 115–17; e.g. Livy 9.1.6.

31 Cato, *De Agricultura* 141 gives a detailed account.

32 E.g. Tacitus, *Historia* 1.12.1.

can period. From the third century BC onwards, it was regularly performed in the field in the form of *tripudium*, the observation of the feeding behavior of the chickens that traveled alongwith the army. The procedure – greedy feeding indicated approval – was complemented or replaced during the late Republic by the examination of entrails. As ancient critics already remarked, commanders knew that hungry chickens ate more greedily, and that very dry feed was more likely to fall from the beak during such greedy eating.[33] The ritual could probably not be directly observed by the soldiery, but it would surely have been described to them by the commander's address before the battle, a scene frequently depicted in literature and in graphic imagery.

Just as the positive outcome of divination could fire up an army eager for the fray, a hesitant consul might postpone a battle by announcing that his communication with the gods he had chosen as addressees had been negative. It is hard for us to imagine the acoustic conditions for such an address. It would surely not have been possible to address the entire army; those standing closest to the consul would more than likely have reacted to his words, and their reaction would have spread outward, gathering impetus as it traveled. The same would apply to communication in yet more difficult conditions – in the battle itself, where, in moments of crisis, the commander might urge the gods at his side to greater efforts by making a vow. So long as he proclaimed his vow loudly and visibly – with raised arms – the soldiers would learn that they could now expect the support of the gods. If successful, splendid games would impressively, but *ephemerally*, temples (much more rare outcomes) *permanently* instigate the re-narration of such a scene.[34]

We are still in the realm of vows when it comes to challenges addressed to the protecting deities of cities that the Romans were besieging. During the middle Republic these deities were usually understood to be aspects of Juno,[35] and they would be 'called out' by being promised temples and cults in Rome if they forsook their city. As late as the first century BC, Publius Servilius Vatia performed such a ritual at Isaura Vetus in Asia Minor.[36] In earlier times, it was likely normal to remove the cult statue of the captured city, and this procedure may have been the model for the triumph that began to figure from the end of the fourth century BC onwards.[37] The religious dimension of war was

33 See Nicole Belayche, Veit Rosenberger, Jörg Rüpke, Andreas Bendlin, and Annie Vigourt, "Divination romaine," *ThesCRA* 3 (2005): 79–104; Jörg Rüpke, "Divination et décisions politiques dans la République romaine," *Cahiers du Centre Gustave-Glotz* 16 (2007): 217–33; Rüpke, "New Perspectives on Ancient Divination," in *Divination in the Ancient World: Religious Options and the Individual*, ed. Veit Rosenberger (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2013), 9–19.

34 Eric Orlin, *Temples, Religion and Politics in the Roman Republic* (Leiden: Brill, 1997); Jörg Rüpke, "Historicizing Religion: Varro's Antiquitates and History of Religion in the Late Roman Republic," *History of Religions* 53, no. 3 (2014): 246–68.

35 Giorgio Ferri, *Tutela Segreta ed Evocatio nel Politeismo Romano* (Roma: Bulzoni, 2010).

36 *AE* 1977, 816; see Rüpke, *Domi militiae*, 164.

37 Jörg Rüpke, "Triumphator and Ancestor Rituals between Symbolic Anthropology and Magic," *Numen* 53 (2006): 251–89; Jörg Rüpke, "Neue Perspektiven auf alte Statuenrituale. Überlegungen

here demonstrated in the most concrete terms, as first the army and then the citizenry would see with their own eyes the excellent relationship of the Roman people with all gods. It seems as if above all total destruction of a captured city asked for and was legitimized by such religious performances and narratives.

Only a few elements of strategies of sacralisation[38] in warfare can be traced so far back. The display of trophies, for example, became established practice only in the course of the second century BC; earlier, the enemy's weaponry was normally collected together and burned; but the new practice, adopted from Greece, proved to be attractive.[39] The audience imagined for the display of successful warfare was not any longer the Roman populace only, but also the populations of those theatres of warfare that now came under permanent Roman rule in the form of 'provinces'. Understandably, individual achievements were communicated differently. Weapons won in single combat, especially those of the enemy commander, had long been given special treatment. They might be displayed in temples back in Rome, or hung up on the victor's own home, where they would witness to his individual share in the glory.[40] The treatment of the dead also remained an individual affair. They had to be cremated and buried after the battle, but this was treated as a private matter; only in exceptional cases, and not until the Imperial Age, were there public burials and public memorials to the masses of the fallen.[41] Again, religion, mourning rites, enabled the creation of public space, allowed to inculcate societal standards and cohesion. *Funera publica*, public funeral processions and imperial cremations, changed into rites in bright day light and open spaces.

A victorious battle ended with another address by the commander to his army. This was a moment to announce commendations and distinctions; we hear no mention of offerings of thanks. It was also the occasion for the troops to acclaim their general as *imperator* (commander); this performative speech act resulted in an honorific title during the Republic, later to be applied exclusively to emperors, with the acclamation of a different commander as imperator becoming the crucial act of usurpation, the mechanism for imperial succession that would conclude with the killing of the ruling

zu Res Gestae Divi Augusti 4," in *Triplici Invectus Triumpho: Der Römische Triumph in Augusteischer Zeit*, ed. Helmut Krasser, Dennis Pausch, and Ivana Petrovic (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2016), 11–26.

38 For the concept see Rüpke, "Neue Perspektiven."

39 See Raoul Lonis, *Guerre et Religion en Grèce a l'Époque Classique: Recherches sur les Rites, les Dieux, l'Idéologie de la Victoire* (Paris: Belles Lettres, 1979), 140–42.

40 On the Greek practice, see A. H. Jackson, "Hoplites and the Gods: The Dedication of Captured Arms and Armours," in *Hoplites: The Classical Greek Battle Experience*, ed. Victor Davis Hanson (London: Routledge, 1991), 228–49.

41 A full account in Alfredo Valvo, "'Legibus soluti virtutis causa' nelle disposizioni della X 'tabula'," in *"Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori": La morte in combattimento nell'antichità*, ed. Marta Sordi (Milan: Vita e pensiero, 1990), 145–55. For the different treatment of individuals see e.g. Cicero, *Orationes Philippicae* 9.

emperor.[42] Such an acclamation gave retrospective recognition – either voluntarily or as the result of effective staging – to the religious legitimation that the commander had gained when his vow met with success. In public semantics, *imperium* and *auspicium* went together.[43]

The Urban Construction of War

In the city of Rome too, there were rituals marking the beginning of a war. Comprising the usual requests for success and divine favour, they centered on the commander, with an emphasis on establishing his legitimacy, although within the limits of his powers as a magistrate. Neither the army nor the city's wider population observed the proceedings in stark difference to the rituals after successful conclusion of warfare. Fundamental again were the auspices, observed before daybreak by the commander so as to establish Jupiter's approval for whatever action was planned for the day just beginning. These auspices upon departure did not cover the entire campaign. They were comparable to the auspices observed upon taking up office, in that their significance lay in their enabling a whole series of actions, each of which would require its own acts of divination, but which would nevertheless follow logically from the initial act and its auspices. It was not unknown for a general to have to return to Rome in order to renew the departing auspices *(auspicia repetere)* – offering a (rarely taken) way out of leading a campaign, or recalling an overeager general or unwanted competitor.

Consulting the auspices did not in itself constitute divine legitimation. It was, instead, a kind of test. The act of augury was not something that could be easily viewed, although it might be conveyed through various media, as, for example, augural symbolism on coins of the emperors. The *obnuntiatio* (augural veto) at most was publicly enacted: so long as the priests and magistrates authorized to declare the veto refrained from doing so, they indicated consent, and a military campaign might continue, sometimes even when defeat was seen to be inevitable, as in the case of Cannae.[44] The religious legitimation of a failed commander, the likes of a Gaius Flaminius after the catastrophe at Lake Trasimene, might of course subsequently be cast into doubt.[45] A specific statute, the *lex curiata de imperio* – which did not bestow the right to consult the auspices, but

42 Egon Flaig, *Den Kaiser herausfordern: Die Usurpation im römischen Reich* (Frankfurt a. M.: Campus, 1992).

43 Jochen Bleicken, "Zum Begriff der römischen Amtsgewalt: auspicium – potestas – imperium," *Nachrichten der Akademie der Wissenschaften in Göttingen* (1981): 255–300; Leonhard Schumacher, "Die Imperatorischen Akklamationen der Triumvirn und die auspicia des Augustus," *Historia* 34 (1985): 181–222.

44 Livy 22.42.7–9.

45 Cicero, *De Divinatione* 1.37.

merely confirmed the result – also assured the commander's extraordinary legitimation within the system of plebiscites.[46]

The departing commander registered vows on the Capitolium before Jupiter Optimus Maximus, the foremost custodian of the common cause by virtue of his towering Capitoline Temple, and promised to fulfill them upon his victorious return home. The actual ceremony of departure then occurred at one of the city gates. The commander exchanged the toga, the costume of peace, for the cloak of war, and trumpet blasts communicated the event to an audience whose make-up is unknown to us. War was primarily a spatial category, called *militiae* (in the spatial realm of the military), which began just outside the city walls. Trajan's Column depicts the opening of individual campaigns by means of processions through gates and crossings of bridges. It is telling for the personalization of warfare in the imperial period that the *profectio* (the departure) and the *reditus* (the return) became a topic of coinage, depicting the emperor on horseback heading to the right and returning by heading to the left.[47] Already Augustus had had a cult site built for him on such an occasion, namely the *ara Fortunae Reducis,* instigated by the senate. In contrast to a republican general, the emperor was not to wait outside the city gates to enter into lengthy discussions about his triumph – the latter as a medium of display as much as of control up till then as will become clear shortly.

At some time before this moment, the commander would have gone to the Regia on the Forum and there brandished a lance-shaped idol of the god Mars, while exclaiming *Mars, vigila!* (Mars, awake!). This ritual was practised until the beginning of the first century BC at the latest, but it continued thereafter to be reflected in omens and portentous events that had to do with the spears of Mars, such as mice attacking them or sounds as if the spears were clashing. These were then discussed publicly and ritually compensated for, in a form perhaps calculated to preserve a sense of the *presence* of the departure ritual for the benefit of a wider public. These rituals did not constitute a fixed system but made use of various traditions of religious activity that might repeatedly be reappropriated, modified, or simply ignored.[48]

When a campaign had ended, it was once more made *present* to the awareness of the city's population. Even before the commander's return, the Senate might react to the news of the victory by voting a *supplicatio,* a festival of thanksgiving, for which all the temples would be opened.[49] Thanks were directed to the gods "in the name of the commander," but the latter was himself honoured directly in proportion to the duration in days of the festival. After a gradual increase in length to five days, the number increased

46 Françoise Van Haeperen, "Auspices d'investiture, loi curiate et légitimité des magistrats romains," *Cahiers du Centre Gustave-Glotz* 23 (2012): 71–112; Christopher Smith, "Citizenship and Community: Inventing the Roman Republic," in *State Formation in Italy and Greece – Questioning the Neoevolutionist Paradigm*, ed. N. Terrenato and D. C. Haggis (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2006), 217–25.

47 The earliest depiction *RIC* Traian 297 was an *aureus* and hence visible to only very few people.

48 See Rüpke, *Domi militiae*, 133–35; for the following 215–17.

49 Fred Naiden, *Ancient Supplication* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 219–40.

dramatically in the final years of the Republic: Pompey received *supplicationes* of ten days' duration, Caesar of fifteen, twenty, and finally fifty days; Augustus mentions in his *Deeds* a total of 840 days of thanks decreed for him personally.[50] By this simple additive process, the medium eventually exhausted its power of expression and escalation. It no longer played any great role after the reign of Augustus.

The central and most complex ritual of return was the triumph, which, probably from the second half of the fourth century BC onwards, regularly concluded a victorious campaign. The decorated army entered the city in a long procession featuring prisoners and plunder, and including scenes of the war in the form of living tableaux or paintings.[51] I suggest that the *triumphator*, arrayed like the statue of a god in his chariot at the center of the proceedings, anticipated as a living image the erection of an honorific statue in the city center.[52] Before the massed public lining the streets, this ritual reprised the elements of the departure to war. After a breakfast furnished for the soldiers by their commander, the procession formed up on the Field of Mars outside the sacral city limit, the *pomerium*. The Senate awaited the *imperator* at the Porta Triumphalis, where it would join the triumph and thus appropriate the victory. The *imperator* donned colorful triumphal robes and the procession set off. It was headed by a display of war booty and representations of the campaign, and, as it crossed the city limits, was brought to a close by the soldiers crowned with laurel. Not until selected prisoners had been garroted in an underground room at the foot of the Capitoline hill did the *triumphator* step up to the statue of Jupiter Optimus Maximus and lay his crown in the god's lap. Decorated animals brought along for the purpose were then sacrificed, fulfilling the vow made before Jupiter at the campaign's outset. Games and banquets followed.

Triumphal processions in the Republican period were often preceded by prolonged and robust negotiations over the form, financing, and temporal limits of the celebrations. The commander's prerogative was assumed in principle, but in every individual case it could be contended, for there were risks involved in deviating from the established form for such a prestigious public ritual. Moreover, constraints on the lavishness of the ceremonials constituted a form of control by the elite in the face of a victorious commander, now standing before the city at the head of an armed force. The presentation of plunder, the representation of events from the war in the form of paintings or *tableaux vivants* of course constituted a bid for prestige; but the appearance of the pro-

50 Augustus, *Res Gestae* 4.2.

51 On the aesthetic and performative aspect of the triumphal procession and preceding negotiations: Tanja Itgenshorst, *Tota illa pompa: Der Triumph in der römischen Republik* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2005); Mary Beard, *The Roman Triumph* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007); Rüpke, "Neue Perspektiven;" Ida Östenberg, *Staging the World: Spoils, Captives, and Representations in the Roman Triumphal Procession* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009); Carsten Hjort Lange and Frederik Juliaan Vervaet, *The Roman Republican Triumph: Beyond the Spectacle* (Roma: Ed. Quasar, 2014).

52 Jörg Rüpke, *Religion in Republican Rome: Rationalization and Ritual Change* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press 2012), 62–81.

ceedings as a whole made possible a straightforward categorization: either the victor was a *triumphator* or he was not; in the latter case, he was a second-class victor or no victor at all. The monopolization of the triumphal procession by the emperor from the time of Augustus onwards makes it clear that the difference was of considerable significance. Celebrations of the *adventus*, the formal arrival of an emperor into a provincial town, and the triumph remained cornerstones of Roman victory propaganda beyond the end of the Western Empire.[53] The emperor could count on a ceremonial entrance at any stage of his progress, whether before or after a victory.[54]

Plunder provided the means for more victory celebrations of various forms, conceived of as the fulfillment of vows formulated on campaign, and especially on the battlefield as sketched above. *Ludi votivi* (games) dedicated to the deity whose aid had been called upon were a particularly flamboyant use of plunder that would surely have persisted in the collective memory. Defeats were not ritually addressed; at most, they were assessed as portentous events, signs of divine anger, and the date of their occurrence would be noted on the calendar so that battles might be avoided on that day in future. There do not appear to have been rituals of expiation, or declarations of guilt.[55]

The rituals celebrating the end of a war created a large audience and public space for communication with the gods. At the center of everything, of course, was the victorious commander; but in the triumphal procession at least, the troops brought back to Rome likewise became subjects of the ritual, and they were thus able to appropriate publicly an individual share in the victory, either by the display of plunder or by wearing decorations. These 'transference mechanisms' broadcast loud and clear in the very innermost heart of Rome the positive effects of military endeavor that a soldier might hope to achieve. The killing of enemy leaders and the spectacular display of *spolia opima* (the arms of fallen enemy commanders) must have been impressive, and then, finally, the games that consumed plunder, animals, and humans reinforced that impact. The incorporation of the vow into religious vocabulary legitimized the pomp and the public extravagance. The exaltation of a member of the leading elite, who demanded military obedience far beyond what was economically thinkable for an individual of more humble station, both required the (literally) spectacular consumption of plunder and, combined with it, enlisting the participation of the whole of the Roman people. Competition within the aristocracy found both its territory and its limits here. But aristocratic

53 Sabine MacCormack, *On the Wings of Time: Rome, the Incas, Spain, and Peru* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007); Sabine MacCormack, *Art and Ceremony in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley: University of California Press); Pierre Dufraigne, *Adventus Augusti, adventus Christi: Recherche sur l'exploitation idéologique et littéraire d'un cérémonial dans l'antiquité tardive* (Paris: Inst. d'Études Augustiniennes, 1994).

54 On Augustus' policy in this regard, see Frances H. Hickson, "Augustus Triumphator: Manipulation of the Triumphal Theme in the Political Program of Augustus," *Latomus* 50 (1991): 124–38.

55 On the absence of a negative effect of defeats on a general's further political career, see Nathan Rosenstein, *Imperatores victi: Military Defeat and Aristocratic Competition in the Middle and Late Republic* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990).

competitiveness and cooperation found both these elements again in the horizontal links that tied local elites in all the towns and tribes whose military contribution had been vital in assuring the military effectiveness of the Roman army. We are incapable, however, of gauging the role played by familial obligations and 'private' friendships in the success of Roman military adventures.[56] This element of collaboration did not become visible in the ritual enactment of a military victory, in the religious and urban construction of war.

Dialectics

The translation service provided by religion offered a medium for exchanging external military success for internal, urban prestige within mid- and late republican society. This prestige was not amorphous but rather it was cast in fixed forms, as far as possible, allowing for similarities (and hence mutual control) among the nobility. What matters was not the question of whether five or ten thousand enemies were killed on the field of battle, or whether five or ten enemy tribes were subjugated: all of them claims that defied practicable confirmation anyway. What counted were the functional values (in the sense of mathematics) of this success, as they were presented after negotiations with the Senate, the representative organ of the nobility: is it enough for a triumph, or only for an *ovatio* (entry on foot) – or does the commander feel so cheated that he organises a triumphal process on the Alban hill at his own expense? What will count later, with the commander's funeral procession, and what his family will have to reckon with for all time, was whether or not the deceased might be dressed in the triumphal robes. These symbols, elaborated within the framework of a religious ritual, would provide the language of honouring the emperor and, in a modified way, even female members of the imperial family.[57]

Ritual communication between the Roman population, in particular the inhabitants of the city of Rome itself, and the elite is concentrated on the post-war phase, or more precisely: the post-victory phase – defeats were not brought up within this framework, large-scale rites for those killed in action, as in Athens, did not exist despite the system of conscription and the personal bonds thus created between fighters, that is, those who were killed, and the civilian population. The extraordinarily high level of readiness to perform military service in the mid- to late period Republican era, as the documented success of mobilisation attests, was not only created by the appeal or maintained in the course of war: it was required for each new war, the 'state of the war' is not specifically

56 For a programmatic account, see Terrenato, "Versatile Clans," 513.

57 See Marleen B. Flory, "Livia and the History of Public Honorific Statues for Women in Rome," *Transactions of the American Philological Association* 123 (1993): 287–308.

denoted during the conflict. To put it bluntly: in Rome war is a spatial, not a temporal phenomenon.

Roman warfare was not a ritualised, automated system. Here, as a functional performance in conflict solution, war depended – as in other societies – on relationships in the wider geographical region – every analysis that concentrates on the inner workings of society, as stressed above, must take this into account. Considering the enormous expense of war preparations, the prospects of success had to be calculated. One could also earn one's spurs in other fields – though certainly not the laurels like those that the *triumphator* wore as a crown in his hair. Rationality was as entrenched in the individual striving after prestige, which had as its goal the long-term improvement of the family's position, as it was in the Senate (the complete assembly of competing parties), which was concerned with the situation at the start of the following year being better rather than worse. And yet, short-term and long-term rationality, family traditions, clients and enmities, and last but not least in its dialectical relationship the access to publics provided by religion made a difference. Between the third and the first centuries BC few 'public' temples were built from other revenues than warfare. To hold a public speech as a private man or organise a gladiatorial show, a relative must have died – more and more even a woman would do.

War put pressure on the leading strata in particular ways, for which religion, with its repertoire of behavioural forms with 'rules of the game' for communication between the political groups involved, made provision. Such religion was not a unitary system. Taken from the point of view of the majority of people and most places at which cults were regularly kept, there was no daily religious performance associated with the majority of the rites involved. Surely, some elements stood in relation to one another: the election auspices to the auspices of departure, the vows of departure with the redemption of these vows through the laying down of the laurel wreath in the same temple at the high point of the triumphal procession. A form of religion conceived specially for the needs of soldiers cannot be identified. A straightforward cult of the military standard among the masses did not exist; worship of the genius of military units in the imperial period followed the general lines of the cultic self-identification among social groups. Where there was a heightened atmosphere of crisis – beyond the individual acts of commanders seeking legitimation through divination – specialists, individual providers such as soothsayers, met the demand.[58] Such religion did not focus on integration of the society in the Durkheimian tradition.[59] The primary capacities for integration resided with the leading strata: they helped to constitute this as a coherent group, that is, thus capable of leading the people as a whole. That by no means excluded other religious activities

58 See Belayche et al., "Divination romaine"; also Heidi Wendt, *At the Temple Gates: The Religion of Freelance Experts in the Roman Empire* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016).

59 See Rüpke, "Religious Agency" for critique.

by members of the group: in Rome religious pluralism is attested just as much in the general populace as among the dominant strata.

Apart from the strict topographical separation of *domi* and *militiae*, which amounted to a spatial instead of temporal definition of war, the focussing on the general was the most important characteristic of the religious construction of war in Rome. By observing the general the conscript and the spectator alike learned about the momentary status of the war. In contrast, there were no individual rituals of departure and entry for the soldiers; the transgression of the city boundaries was not given importance for them. They had to pay absolute obedience towards the general, who defined the beginning and end of war as well as of actual fighting. There was no ideology of heroic death and no public memorial as in Greek ideology. Greek soldiers who were cowards and fled the battle-line lost their honour, not their lives.[60] Roman soldiers would prefer the chance of survival in fighting over the certainty of capital penalty in case of desertion – a true indicator for a society organized as an authoritarian state.

The comparatively unimportant (because purely instrumental) role of the man of the ranks in State's warfare makes one ask for the role of religion within the ruling class. As already noticed, some of the religious institutions offered possibilities of senatorial control over the general (fetials, divination). The importance of the rituals of return, which picked out the achievement of the general as their central theme and were performed in the case of victory only, have to be interpreted within a temporal framework, which surpasses a single campaign. One of the most astonishing characteristics of Roman warfare was the permanent change of command. It was not the victor of the previous year who was the regular general, but the consul of the running year, regardless of his military experience or even previous defeats. If both of the consuls led the same army, the supreme command changed on a daily basis. In the short run the military effects might be – and had been – disastrous. The domestic gain was worth it.

In an ever-precarious balance, the Roman nobility shared the political positions. An individuum could gain power, but within limits. The consulate was held for one year, later, the consul had to wait ten years for the next term of office. In the competition for prestige, political offices offered the best opportunities, in particular by waging war.[61] Gains were not made at the expense of the other members of the ruling elite, a successful war promoted the welfare of society as a whole. Religious offices, held for life, did

60 See Alberto Barzanò, "'Libenter cupit commori qui sine dubio scit se esse moriturum': la morte per la patria in Roma repubblicana," in *"Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori": La morte in combattimento nell'antichità*, ed. Marta Sordi (Milan: Vita e pensiero, 1990), 157–70.

61 See Rüpke, "Wege zum Töten, Wege zum Ruhm: Krieg in der römischen Republik," in *Töten im Krieg*, ed. Heinrich von Stietencron and Jörg Rüpke (Freiburg/Breisgau: Alber, 1995), 213–40, for details.

not gain higher visibility – after all, the dress was the same.[62] The big rituals drawing crowds were organized by magistrates, not priests.[63]

Against this background, the Roman construction of war shows its distinctive characteristics and its importance for the analysis of war and religion in general. It did not produce an image of the enemy, which could have reduced the trespass of aggression. It did not propagate heavenly rewards for those killed in action in order to mobilize the masses. However, it shaped war as to make it an ideal medium in the competition for prestige among the ruling class: a war easily initialized and easily brought to an end, a war directed by one person only, a war without (acknowledged) casualties or defeats, a war banished from Rome, banished from domestic affairs. In addition to the independence of fighting troops and their generals by geographical distance and slowness of the media of communication available, religious practices helped this externalisation of warfare – and offered the media to give legitimacy and visibility to the returning victor at the same time. This sharpened rather than mitigated the development of aristocratic competition and growing social differentiation in a playing field of the size of a world empire to a hundred years of civil strife and ultimately civil war. For the final winner, who transformed competition into a monopoly (and usurpation into the new form of competition) the same religious signs and rituals offered the instruments of urban self-representation. Ultimately, it transformed the supreme military commander into a religious figure at least in some important aspects. For the urban society, the continuity of the symbolic apparatus provided also a factor of resilience.

Conclusion

In dealing with the relation of religion and politics in the context of war, overly simple definitions of the relationship, as reflected in concepts like 'Holy War' or 'war of religion' have to be excluded. Analytically differentiating between politics and religion allows seeing how political and military agents used to frame warfare as an exceptional situation or rather space with regard to power relations and aristocratic consensus. Rituals involving directly or indirectly gods help articulate exceptionality, agency, and dependency, and – even to a higher degree – reintegrate success in prestige or acceptable wealth. The relationship is, however, not simply instrumental, but dialectical. Rituals afford self-presentation, but also enforce control, forcing the protagonists into the narrower limits of traditional forms of action, triumphs, or rituals of thanksgiving, for instance. What is more important, 'politics' are not simply given. Within the framework of a competitive aristocracy and incoherent processes of state formation,

62 Rüpke, "Not Gods."
63 Frank Bernstein, "Complex Rituals: Games and Processions in Republican Rome," in *A Companion to Roman Religion*, ed. Jörg Rüpke (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007), 222–34.

positions of power, 'magistracies', are transferred into a framework of legitimation by auspices, lots, and sacrifices. This is particularly relevant for military power with all its excess in comparison to urban standards. Here, religious semantics and rituals gain their plausibility and force against the background of widespread practices, shared by many down to the general populace, the inhabitants of Rome as much as of allied tribes or cities. In many instances, however, the symbolic communication is not between top and bottom, but within the political leading group and between members of the military hierarchy. In the process of the professionalisation of the Roman army from the end of the second century BC onwards, this internal communication, extended between ranks and files, becomes ever more important. Religiously, this was not the seedbed of religious innovation, but probably the single-most important channel for diffusion of religious innovation.[64] Military, empire, and religion dialectically shaped each other.

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64 See Jörg Rüpke, "Reichsreligion? Überlegungen zur Religionsgeschichte des antiken Mittelmeerraums in römischer Zeit," *Historische Zeitschrift* 292 (2011), 297–322.

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