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THE SIBYLLINE BOOKS AND THE GAULS*

Pax deorum defined as a state of equilibrium between the real and supernatural worlds, people and the gods who protected them, was the basic category of the Roman state theology. In the ancient Rome political and religious activities were inseparably interwoven therefore keeping this equilibrium was extremely important. Every official action had to be preceded with a relevant religious rite conducted scrupulously and with great attention in order to avoid any ritual mistakes. If the traditional sacrifices were carelessly conducted, prayers or auguries could provoke the gods' wrath and break *pax deorum*. As a consequence it could result in the gods' favour towards the Romans being lost, and *neglegentia deum* (negligence, disdain for the gods) was treated as a „sin”. The notion of sin was unequivocally associated with ritual neglect, causing a lack of political success, but it was not regarded as going against the moral rules. The Romans therefore treated seriously all kinds of signs that could be considered as the gods' signs of *pax deorum* being broken or endangered. Emergence of this danger was signalled by a *prodigium*. This term was one of the most fundamental religious categories of the Republican Rome and it may be defined simply as an unnatural event. It was not so much about the events clearly unnatural in their nature but about these happenings somehow not on their place¹. The way of how thunders were perceived was a good example of this kind of interpretation of a *prodigium*. An atmospheric discharge – a phenomenon natural in itself – could become portentous when, for example, the lightning hit the temple or nearby or other building important for

* Polish version of the article was published as: *Metus gallicus i libri sibyllini. Kilka uwag o politycznych i społecznych przyczynach prodigium*, „In Gremium”, 1, 2007, 7–19.

¹ Although this happened fairly rarely – the rain of stones (Liv. VII 28,6–8), crying statues (Liv. XXII 1,8–20), a statue sweating with blood (Liv. XXII 16), pregnant mule (Liv. XXXV 9,3–5), the rain of blood and the emergence of the new island on the sea (Liv. XXXIX 46,5), the birth of three-fingered mule (Liv. XL 45), black wool springing from the earth and fish jumping out of the chunks of ploughed earth (Liv. XLII 2,3–7). The appearance of a hermaphrodite, which happened quite often during the First and the Second Punic Wars, was considered by the Romans as a *prodigium* of a particularly ominous character.

the Romans². Interestingly, the Romans almost never searched for the reason of the appearance of a *prodigium* but they rather focused on interpreting it correctly in order to perform the propitiating rites³. That is why Roman religious tradition did not know magical activities through which the future could be influenced and the gods' will changed. Everything was dealt with, so to say, „institutionally”, and magical practices were categorised as *superstitio* – superstition. What is more, „typical” fortune-tellers, although very popular among the people, were not accepted by the state and were many times expelled from the City⁴. A *prodigium* was the most apparent proof of the lack of social and political balance, and the way of its expiation was an efficient mean to propitiate gods and bring order into the life of the citizens⁵. As we can easily imagine restoring the equilibrium was extremely important for the community to function properly, therefore Romans swiftly elaborated efficient methods to expiate the signs of the gods' disfavour. The specialised colleges – *pontifices*, *decemviri* and Etruscan *haruspices* made the latter. The decision of which of the mentioned bodies was to deal with a given *prodigium* was made by the Senate, which also on its own had the competences to decree the expiation rites. The analysis of the collation of *prodigia* confirms the thesis of Dionysius of Halicarnassus that *decemviri* and related to them Sibylline Books become involved when a *prodigium* was particularly dangerous and triggered social anxieties (*stasis*)⁶.

One of the four great priestly colleges functioning within the frames of the Roman public religion was the college of *decemviri sacris faciundis*. The beginning of it is unclear – it emerges from the obscurity of the regal period⁷. According to the myth commonly accepted by the Romans it was established by Tarquinius

² Cass. Dio XII fr. 50 (the fire-ball hitting near the Apollo's temple); Liv. XXVII 37 (lightning hitting the temple of Juno Regina); Liv. XXXVII 3=Obs. 1 (lightening hitting the temple of Juno Lucina?); Liv. XLII 20 (lightening hitting the column decorated with the ship prows); cf. J. P. Davies, *Rome's Religious History: Livy, Tacitus and Ammianus on their Gods*, Cambridge 2004, 29–30. See also C. Santi, *La nozione di prodigio in età regia*, „Studi e Materiali di Storia delle Religioni”, 62, 1996, 505–524.

³ Davies, *op. cit.*, 97.

⁴ Ex. g. Liv. XXXIX 16,8.

⁵ S. William Rasmussen, *Public Portents in Republican Rome*, Rome 2003, 47; A. Gillmeister, *Strażnicy ksiąg sybillińskich: collegium viri sacris faciundis w rzymskiej religii publicznej*, Zielona Góra 2009, 179–192.

⁶ Dion. Hal. IV 62,5. The Roman writers also used the term *tumultus*, Val. Max. I 1,1. See G. J. Szemler, *Religio, Priesthoods and Magistrates in the Roman Republic*, „Numen”, 18, 1971, p. 111. The list of *prodigia* can be found among others in William Rasmussen, *op. cit.*, 53–116.

⁷ About *decemviri sacris faciundis* college see: G. Radke, *Quindecemviri sacris faciundis*, RE 24 (1968), 1114–1148; A. A. Boyce, *The Development of the Decemviri Sacris Faciundis*, TAPhA, 69, 1938, 161–187; C. Santi, *I libri sibyllini e i decemviri sacris faciundis*, Roma 1985; Eadem, *Sacra facere. Aspetti della prassi ritualistica divinatoria nel mondo romano*, Roma 2008; A. Gillmeister, *The Role of Viri Sacris Faciundis College in the Roman Religion*, [in] *Society and*

Priscus to take care of the Sibylline Books bought by the king from a mysterious prophetic woman later identified by Varro with the Cumaean Sibyl called Amalthea⁸. This myth was of particular importance for the Romans because it gave the Books appropriate patina and rank since it emphasised their antiquity and supernatural origin.

Libri Sibyllini gained an exceptional position in the Roman religion. In ancient Rome there was no state oracle similar in its character to prophetic institutions known in other ancient civilisations. The Romans learnt about the gods' will through auspices or consultation with the Sibylline Books, which were the state oracle⁹.

Prodigia of a political character draw particular attention among the reasons for the Sibylline consultations. As a matter of fact only three times purely political events were considered as a *prodigium*. The conflict of the orders in which the custodians of the Books unequivocally sided with the patricians was the first case. The second one was the set of consultations connected with the Gauls and the last one was *metus Punicus* (fear of the Carthaginians)¹⁰ similar in certain ways to *metus Gallicus* (fear of the Gauls). It is necessary to yet again remind the opinion of Dionysius of Halicarnassus cited above about the reasons for consulting the Books. When the suspicion of breaking *pax deorum* arose, Senate could refer to any priestly college. Apart from the *prodigium* connected with the appearance of a hermaphrodite which expiation was, so to say, reserved for the college of *decemviri sacris faciundis* and *haruspices*, we cannot say of any „specialisation” in staving off the gods' wrath depending on the appearance of a *prodigium*. There was however one exception – *prodigia* that caused social anxiety or emerged during its time, quite often in the early Republican Rome. Many times they were sent to *decemviri* who, on the Senate's order, searched for the answer of how to placate the gods in *libri fatales*. It is perfectly understandable that in particularly difficult cases the governing elites appealed directly to the gods' authority.

Occupation of Rome in 390 and its religious importance

In 390 we come across the first consultation connected with *metus Gallicus*. The invasion of the Gauls and the occupation of Rome was an extremely traumatic

religions. Studies in Greek and Roman History, vol. 2, ed. D. Musiał, Toruń 2007, 57–74; Idem, *Strażnicy ksiąg sybillińskich...*

⁸ Var., *Ant. rer. div.*, fr. 56a–58 Card.; Aul. Gel. I 19; Lact., *Div. Inst.*, 1.6; Dion. Hal. IV 62; cf. H. W. Parke, *Sybil and Sybilline Prophecy in Classical Antiquity*, London–New York 1988, 30–31.

⁹ Aul. Gel. I 19,11: *ad eos quasi ad oraculum quindecimviri adeunt cum di immortales publice consultendi sunt.*

¹⁰ See H. Bellen, *Metus Gallicus – metus Punicus. Zum Furchtmotiv in der römischen Republik*, Mainz 1985.

experience for the Romans¹¹ confirmed by numerous mentions in the Roman and Greek sources¹². Ancient writers analysed carefully the origins of the warlike Gauls as well as their customs and appearance¹³. I would like to discuss the narration of Livy – probably the most thorough Latin account about these events, which gives the information about consultation of the Sibylline Books after the expulsion of the Gauls from the City.

A year before the invasion of the Gauls on Rome its inhabitants were warned by the gods about the coming danger. In 391 Marcus Cedicius, a plebeian from an insignificant family, told the tribunes that *vocem noctis silentio audisse clariorem humana, quae magistratibus dici iuberet Gallos aduentare. Id ut fit propter auctoris humilitatem spreum et quod longinqua eoque ignotior gens erat*¹⁴. Further in the narration we can find a longer discourse about the origins of the Gauls and the reasons for their invasion on Rome. According to Livy one of the main causes was the conduct of the patrician *gens Fabia* whose members being the Roman deputies fought at Clusium against the Gauls, and in 390 were appointed the tribunes with the consular power. The Gauls outraged by this fact marched on Rome which resulted in the first clash. Several kilometres north of Rome at the river Allia a battle took place in which the Roman army was completely defeated and the Roman soldiers simply deserted the battlefield. The route to Rome was open and the next day the enemy troops entered the city¹⁵. Livy writes that the night before the seizure of the city the decisions how to minimize the potential loses were made. Young senators and all the men able to carry arms together with their wives and children were to hide at the Capitoline Hill. *Flamines* and Vestal Virgins were to escape to Caere taking all the Roman sacredness. It is fairly understandable that the purpose of this desperate action was to preserve the *sacra* in order to rebuild the community of the citizens in case the city was not recaptured. The historian presents a pompous description of the patrician old men who were sacrificed to

¹¹ See J. von Ungern-Sternberg, *Eine Katastrophe wird verarbeitet: die Gallier in Rom*, [in] *The Roman Middle Republic. Politics, Religion and Historiography c. 400–133 B.C.*, ed. Ch. Bruun, Rome 2000, 207–222. All the dates in the article refer to BC unless marked otherwise.

¹² More in-depth analysis of the sources regarding the Gallic invasion and the occupation of Rome can be found in: J. H. C. Williams, *Beyond the Rubicon. Romans and Gauls in Republican Italy*, Oxford 2001, 100–139 and 140–184. Therefore I cite only the Livy's narration.

¹³ A cross-section of this issue can be found in an article of D. Rankin, *The Celts through Classical Eyes*, [in] *The Celtic World*, ed. M. J. Green, London–New York 1995, 21–32.

¹⁴ Liv. V 32,6–7. This relation is interesting also for another reason. Some researchers think that it is a proof of existing divination, competitive to the official Roman divination controlled by the patricians, based on the Sibylline Books and auspices. It was supposed to be based on the night *auditones* – the unexpected voices through which the gods were to contact plebeians, C. Santi, *I libri sibyllini...*, 26. This hypothesis seems to me not fully justifiable although it explains fairly well the use of the patrician books for the expiation after the recapture of Rome.

¹⁵ Liv. V 39,8.

the gods (*devotio*) by the *pontifex maximus* as they awaited the enemy in front of their houses wearing the most dignifying raiment. The slaughter was commenced by the blow with an ivory stick delivered by one of the old men to a Gaul. What comes next in the historian's narration is the description of an attempt to capture the Capitoline Hill and the division of the army of the enemy into the city occupants and the expedition for looting the neighbouring tribes. The Gauls decided to desist the besiege of the Capitoline Hill and leave the city once having been given the ransom of 1,000 pounds of gold. During the weighting of the gold an event took place the conclusion of which became proverbial until today. The Gauls were weighting the ransom with the fixed weights and when a Roman tribune complained about it his protest was dismissed with one sentence – *vae victis*¹⁶. Meanwhile the dictator Marcus Furius Camillus arrived to Rome and disrupted the weighting of the ransom. He managed to defeat the Gauls in one battle, liberating the city not with gold but with arms. This, however, certainly belongs to the legend that was supposed to rehabilitate the Romans in the eyes of their descendants. Neither Polybius nor the early annalists knew the legend about Camillus. Counter to Livy's relation the occupation of Rome was fully successful for the Gauls and they almost certainly left the city with rich booty and required gold.

The city itself was considered as defiled and the dictator Camillus who was called the second Romulus and the father of the homeland¹⁷ proposed in the Senate that all the temples occupied by the enemy should be renovated and re-consecrated. The Senate agreed and the members of the *sacris faciundis* college were granted the task of finding the means for their re-consecration in the Sibylline Books¹⁸.

The occupation of the city and expulsion of the Gauls became a turning point in the history of Rome. As J. H. C Williams accurately pointed out, chronologically and emotionally it directed the Roman attitude towards the past¹⁹. As for Polybius, he considers the recapturing of Rome (on the Gauls' conditions, which is worth noting) as the omen of the future prosperity of *Urbs*²⁰. Livy goes further and writes about the second foundation of the City (*secunda origine*) and counts the chronology according to the dates of the founding of Rome and expulsion of the Gauls²¹.

Two years after these traumatic for the Roman community events Titus Quintus Cincinnatus, a member of the *duumviri sacris faciundis* college, consecrated the

¹⁶ *Ibidem*, V 48.

¹⁷ *Ibidem*, V 49,7.

¹⁸ *Ibidem*, V 50,1–2.

¹⁹ Williams, *op. cit.*, 140.

²⁰ Polyb. I 6,3–4.

²¹ Liv. VI 1,3, VII 18,1.

temple of Mars Gallicus, which was to have been done during the Gallic War²². This fragment of Livy's narration caused researchers some troubles²³. It is one of the two remaining source narrations saying that dedications of the temples were among the duties of the *virī sacris faciundis*. The first relation says about the consecration of the temple of Mercury²⁴. As a consequence, historians researching this problem, either assumed that Livy made a mistake or considered these dedications as a stages in the process of forming an independent *duumvirī aedi dedicandae*²⁵ office. However placing the consecration of the temple of Mars just after the war with the Gauls and also in the context of great social anxieties linked to, among other things, the tribunes' activities makes Livy's remarks correct. As Mariangela Monaca rightly stated, this dedication fits perfectly well in the frame of the actions undertaken by the patricians, who controlled the Sibylline Books, to restore the political stability. Therefore it should be considered together with, already discussed above, the question of re-consecration of all the temples ordered by Camillus on the basis of consultations with the Books²⁶.

***Metus Gallicus* as one of the causes of introducing human sacrifice**

The events described above caused one of the greatest citizen traumas experienced by the Romans. Although they fairly quickly recovered politically and economically, deep visible wounds were left in the social psyche. Yet again it is worth noting, that most of the relations, being for us the source, where we can learn about the phenomenon of *metus Gallicus*, come from the Augustan era. This proves that the power of their importance goes far beyond the vitality of an ordinary stereotype. Since then each threat of the Gallic attack, be it real or imagined, provoked the emergence of a *prodigium* to expiate which *decemvirī sacris faciundis* were called. The forms of propitiating the gods inspired by the Sibylline Books in the face of *metus Gallicus* were also uncommon and undoubtedly spectacular. The events of 228, when for the first time the human sacrifices were made *ex libris*, can be another example of this kind of expiation.

The ceremony was rare and must have had a strong effect on the citizens' mentality. The sources say about three sacrifices of this kind made within the frames of the Roman public religion – in 228, 216 and 114. Soon afterwards in

²² *Ibidem*, VI 6–5.

²³ M. Monaca, *La Sibilla a Roma. I libri sibillini fra religione e politica*, Cosenza 2005, 206–207.

²⁴ Liv. II 27,6.

²⁵ E. Orlin, *Temples, Religion and Politics in the Roman Republic*, Leiden–New York–Köln 1997, 172, n. 32.

²⁶ Monaca, *op. cit.*, 207.

the nineties of the first century they were banned by the Senate²⁷. The issue of human sacrifices aroused much interest among the researchers²⁸ mainly because of Livy, who wrote that their character was *minime Romano sacro*²⁹. It seems that the Roman historian meant certain „innovation” of this rite, which was not about its novelty in a sense of lacking the Roman character but rather its bloodiness. The human sacrifices were undoubtedly made before and Livy writes about it. He claims that the sacrificed wretches were buried in 216 on *Forum Boarium*, in the place soaked with human blood and closed with a rock³⁰. It is precisely this remark and the political circumstances accompanying the introduction of the human sacrifice that can easily explain ordaining it from the Books. So cruel was the new rite according to which the sacrifice was made, and the sacrifice itself so extraordinary, that the Senate used the authority of the national oracle to conduct it. The political situation of Rome at that time was becoming more and more dangerous. The Cisalpine Gauls made an alliance with the Ligures and were undertaking firm actions against Rome. They also allied with the Transalpine Gauls, that only intensified the feeling of threat and brought panic into the city. Plutarch reports that having consulted the Books the Romans decided to make a sacrifice of a Gaul man and a Gaul woman as well as a Greek couple³¹. He further adds, that even in his time in November, when nobody watches, the sacrifices had been still accomplished.

He also indicates certain similarity of the human sacrifice to the punishment applied to the Vestal Virgins who broke the purity vows. It is necessary to note that the events of 216 were also caused by the impurity of two Vestals³². It was the first case of treating *incestum* as a *prodigium* in a very difficult political situation since the Romans had just lost the battle of Cannae. All the sources indicate the military danger to be the direct reason for conducting the rite and stress that the

²⁷ Plin., *NH* XXX 12.

²⁸ The bibliography is abundant, see e. g. S. Ndiaye, *Minime Romano sacro, à propos des sacrifices humains à Rome à l'époque républicaine*, DHA, 26, 2000, 119–127; A. M. Eckstein, *Human sacrifice and fear of military disaster in Republican Rome*, AJAH, 7, 1987, 69–95; D. Porte, *Les enterrements expiatoires à Rome*, „Revue de Philologie, de Littérature et d'Histoire Ancienne”, 58, 1984, 233–243; D. Briquel, *Les propositions nouvelles sur le rituel d'ensevelissement de Grecs et Gaulois au Forum Boarium*, REL, 59, 1981, 30–37; A. Fraschetti, *Le sepolture rituali del foro Boario*, [in] *Le délit religieux dans la cité antique*, Rome 1981, 51–115; P. Fabre, *Minime romano sacro. Note sur un passage de Tite-Live et les sacrifices humains dans la religion romaine*, REA, 42, 1940, 419–424; Monaca, *op. cit.*, 137–141; Z. Várhelyi, *The Specters of Roman Imperialism: The Life Burials of Gauls and Greeks at Rome*, CA, 2007, 277–304; F. van Haepere, *Sacrifices humains et mises à mort rituelles à Rome: quelques observations*, FEC, 8, 2004 (<http://bcs.fltr.ucl.ac.de/fe/08/sacrifices.html>).

²⁹ Liv. XXII 57,6.

³⁰ *Ibidem*.

³¹ Plut., *Marc.*, 3. About the Gallic threat as a reason for introducing human sacrifice *ex libris* see also A. Fraschetti, *op. cit.*, 78–85.

³² Liv. XXII 57,2–6.

ceremony itself, having perhaps its roots in the Etruscan rites, was performed in a purely Roman way³³. The novelty, as I have already mentioned, was about the way of making the sacrifice and giving it the magic importance. Burying two couples of the foreigners on the Forum Boarium meant giving the Roman soil their power, what was supposed to reverse the expected capture of the city by the enemies. In relation to year 228 Zonaras writes about certain oracle, which predicated that Greeks and the Gauls would take the city. The oracle comes probably from the half of 4th c. and is linked to the first fights between Rome on one side and the Greeks and the Gauls on the other. Somewhat mysterious information given by Cassius Dio, that anxiety rose in the city as the Sibylline prophecies told to beware of the Gauls³⁴, refers to the same period. What makes one wonder is the silence of Polybius who in his narration omits completely this problem writing only about the panic in the city caused by the possible invasion of the Gauls³⁵. That is why the Romans were to make the sacrifices exactly in the way described – the prophecy was fulfilled but with a little cost on the Roman side³⁶. This also explains the rarity of the sacrifice. It was made only in times of the direct, true or imagined, threat for Rome as it was in 228, 216 and 114. It is worth noting that, however, in 216 the Romans were in defensive, in 241–232 the aim of the military actions was to finally conquer the valley of Po³⁷.

The impurity of three Vestals and the necessity of expiation of their sin is, according to Plutarch, the reason for making the human sacrifice in 114³⁸. However it is necessary to mention that the political situation at that time was rather unstable. In the summer consul C. Porcius Cato was defeated in Southern Macedonia, which triggered off serious religious hysteria in Rome. At the same time the Scordisci, who were considered to be one of the Gallic tribes, defeated the Roman army³⁹ and a year later Cymbri entered Illyricum⁴⁰. The information about planned movements of the Gallic armies were probably known to the Romans earlier, especially that almost during the whole of the 2nd century they fought with various tribes identified as Gallic.

³³ About Etruscan character of the sacrifice K. Latte, *Römische Religionsgeschichte*, München 1960, 256–257; G. Dumezil, *La religione romana arcaica*, Milano 2001, 390–391; Ndiaye, *op. cit.*, 127–128.

³⁴ Cass. Dio fr. 50. In reference to the Sibylline Books there is an ongoing discussion about their character. The relation of Cassius Dio is one of the earliest saying about not only consultative but also prophetic character of the books.

³⁵ Polyb. II 23,11–13.

³⁶ Zon. 8.19.

³⁷ R. Feig-Vishnia, *State, Society and Popular Leaders in Mid-Republican Rome*, London 1996, 13–26.

³⁸ Plut., *Quest. Rom.* 83.

³⁹ Eckstein, *op. cit.*, 70–73. Cf. R. E. A. Palmer, *Roman Religion and Roman Empire. Five Essays*, Philadelphia 1974, 154–155.

⁴⁰ Obs. 38.

The information about *incestum* of the Vestals is very interesting in relation to the thesis about *metus Gallicus* as a *prodigium*-making factor. In 114 intense fights with the Gallic tribes took place, that, however, did not threaten Rome or its empire directly but each defeat of the Roman army brought back the trauma of the beginning of the 4th century. If we consider the impurity of the Vestals from the perspective of the religious hysteria caused by Caton's defeat, the crime of these priestesses would become even more inauspicious. It intensified the feeling of breaking the alliance with the gods since the Vestals were responsible for the prayer for the state security. The negligence of the duties seemed to be even more dangerous in the face of the fights with the Gauls⁴¹.

In the twenties of the 20th century AD C. Cichorius proposed a thesis that the main cause of introducing the human sacrifice to the public cult was the impurity of the Vestals⁴². In the light of the above remarks it seems that the gravity point should be moved on *metus Gallicus* as the cause of the sacrifice. At least this is how the ancient relations present it and it is the only common element of all three known to us human sacrifices made *minime Romano sacro*⁴³.

In addition to that, it is worth adding that the rites known as a quite mysterious ritual Argei⁴⁴ were introduced probably in order to replace the original human sacrifices. The ritual involved the procession with the straw effigies that were drowned in Tiber. In this ceremony we can easily find the traces of the theory characteristic for the archaic societies where one person took the blame of the whole community on and was killed or expelled from the city. Human sacrifices accepted by *decemviri sacris faciundis* support the theory. The couples buried alive on the *Forum Boarium* represented the enemy in a general as well as in a strictly defined sense⁴⁵.

Other examples of *metus gallicus* being treated as a *prodigious*-making factor

Several times the Sibylline Books were the source of inspiration for the Romans to bring new cults or honour specific gods. What draws particular attention among this type of consultation is introducing the Asian goddess Cybele

⁴¹ Hor., *Carm.* I 2,26; Plin. Min., *Epist.* IV 11,7 cf. Eckstein, *op. cit.*, 89–90.

⁴² C. Cichorius, *Staatliche Menschopfer*, [in] *Römischen Studien*, Leipzig 1922, 7–16.

⁴³ Plut., *Marc.*, 3,2–4.

⁴⁴ On the Argei see also A. Ziolkowski, *Ritual Cleaning-up of the City: from the Lupercalia to the Argei*, „Ancient Society”, 29, 1998–1999, 191–218; F. Graf, *The Rite of the Argei – once again*, MH, 57, 2000, 94–103.

⁴⁵ See Eckstein, *op. cit.*, 82.

at the end of the Hannibal war in 205. This consultation is also interesting because it confirms the existence of the prophetic element in the Sibylline Books. Looking into *libri fatales decemviri sacris faciundis* learnt that the enemy could be defeated and driven out from the Italian soil once *Mater Magna*⁴⁶ had been brought from Pessinunt. Isolde Stark suggested an interesting interpretation of this event⁴⁷. She thinks that at the end of the 3rd century Cybele was perceived by the Romans as the goddess purely Gallic, not Phrygian, and her bringing was similar in its character to *evocatio* of the goddess Uni from Veii in 393. It should be linked with the belief characteristic to the republican religiosity, that by including a god important for the enemy into the Roman pantheon its support was transferred to the Romans, leaving the previous worshippers unprotected. Stark's argumentation is based on the fact that at that time Pessinunt was controlled by the Galatians, closely, in the Roman idea, related to the Transalpine Gauls, and on stating the influence of king Attalos I in Asia Minor. This interpretation supports the Roman practice of using Sibylline Books when the Gauls threaten the country, which only confirms the great influence of *metus Gallicus* on the mentality of the Romans and subsequently on their decisions concerning the religion.

An interesting example of an expiation made *ex libris* can be found in 143. It also proves that *metus Gallicus* was present in Roman mentality much longer than to the end of the war with the Boii in 191 as some scholars think⁴⁸. In 143 *decemviri sacris faciundis* having consulted the Sibylline Books went to Gaul to make a sacrifice on the border. This bizarre expiation was a reaction to the defeat of Appius Claudius by the Gaullic tribe of the Salassi, that itself was treated as a *prodigium*⁴⁹. The defeated consul by conducting the rites could continue the fight and pushed the Salassi back to the mountains. The end of this war was quite interesting. Claudius demanded the right for the triumph but possibly most of the senators remembered the lost battle as well as the Gallic threat, not the consul's victory – he was refused the honour. Appius Claudius did something which none of the Roman commanders had dared to do so far – he held the triumph at his own cost without the Senate consent and the god sanction. In order to prevent the procession from being stopped he rode in a chariot with his Vestal daughter whose sacredness guaranteed him security.

⁴⁶ Liv. XXVII 10,4. See R. E. Roller, *In Search of God the Mother. The Cult of Anatolian Cybele*, Berkeley 1999, 263–285, where a thorough analysis of the literary and archaeological sources regarding the beginnings of the cult of Cybele in Rome can be found.

⁴⁷ I. Stark, *Kybele als keltische Göttin: zur Aufnahme der Kybele von Pessinus als Mater Magna unter die römischen Staatsgötter 205/204 v. Chr.*, „Klio”, 89, 2007, 67–117.

⁴⁸ *Ibidem*. It is worth noting that in the same year the consultation with the Sibylline Books was made.

⁴⁹ Cass. Dio XXII fr. 74; Obs. 21; L. Breglia Pulci Doria, *Libri sibillini e dominio di Roma*, [in] *Sibille e linguaggi oracoli. Mito – storia – tradizione*, Pisa–Roma 1998, 298.

Other expiation from the second half of the 3rd century conducted on the border with Gaul can explain better the nature of the rites, which had clearly magical character. In 271 A.D. Aurelianus facing the war with the barbarians ordered to consult *libri fatales*. As a result the sacrifices were made in particular places for the barbarians not to pass⁵⁰. The analysis of the events of 143 provoked the researchers to formulate two hypotheses. The first one stressed the deeply rooted tradition of consulting the Books in the event of the Gallic threat. The other linked this consultation with the internal situation of Rome pointing at the hostility of the *nobilitas* families, e. g. the Scipions, against the public activity of Appius Claudius⁵¹. In my opinion both hypotheses should be considered jointly.

The situation in 100 is an interesting example of using the Sibylline Books to overcome irrational yet still strong fear of the Gauls. A new Roman colony called Eporedia was established in Galia Transalpina that year. Pliny claims that the colony was established on the basis of the statement drawn from the Sibylline Books⁵². This information is completely unique since in the whole history of the Books we do not encounter any case of this kind of use. What is more, it seems that the *decimviri* by ordering the establishment of the new colony entered the competency of *pontifices* and *auguri*. The name Eporedia comes from the Celtic language and means the person who specialises in horse curbing. It was a border colony (Pliny called it *oppidum*) however its control over the mountainous Gallic tribes was very restricted and it was threatened with the enemy attacks⁵³. Strabo says that the inhabitants of the city felt safe from the constant raids only after they had seen the Sallassi tribe warriors lead through the city streets by Augustus' legionaries. It is clear that the fear of the Gauls in the turn of the 2nd and the 1st centuries was so great that without the help of the oracle it would not be possible to break the recalcitrance of the citizens against populating the colony despite the fact that the Republic had been experiencing the domestic conflict concerning the division of the state land (*ager publicus*).

Iulius Obsequens, the author of *Liber Prodigiorum*, which is a summary of Livy's *Ab urbe Condita*, often mentioned the events linked with the wars with the Gallic tribes as a political context for the appearance of the signs of the gods' disapproval. Interestingly it concerns wars not only lost but also won by Rome – as if the sound of the Gaullic name was enough to explain the reasons why the *prodigium* occurred. The frequency of these references rather rules out its purely

⁵⁰ SHA *vit. Aurel.*, 18–19. Monaca, *op. cit.*, 256–268.

⁵¹ More thorough analysis of this problem *Ibidem*, 236–237; about political situation in Rome in 143 and the involvement of the *decemviri* see: Gillmeister, *The Role*, 59–60; M. G. Morgan, *The Introduction of the Aqua Marcia into Rome, 144–140 B.C.*, „Philologus”, 122, 1978, 25–58.

⁵² Plin., *NH* III 123.

⁵³ Strabo IV 6,7–9; S. L. Dyson, *The Creation of the Roman Frontier*, Princeton 1985, 78.

informative annalistic character. It seems right to treat this kind of references as a direct background or even the cause of a given *prodigium* to appear and, what frequently occurred, the reference to the highest authority of the state oracle, which in the ancient Rome were the Sibylline Books. Considerable amount of the consultations was done while facing the Gallic threat and I think that it was the threat itself that generated them. As a consequence we can observe a double character of this issue. On one hand, it had a *prodigium*-making importance, which means that it either elicited the bad signs or made them more significant. On the other hand, the threat coming from the Gauls was without doubt considered as a *prodigium per se* at least in three cases: in 390, 228 and 143. Since 390 the Romans had been living in the collective psychosis of fear that *metus Gallicus* turned to be. Not surprisingly the great statesmen of the end of the Republic chose the wars with the Gallic tribes as a basis for gaining the highest power in Rome. Gaius Marius who crowned his career with two Gallic triumphs in 102 and 101⁵⁴ used the Gaullic Cymbri and German Teutones as an archetype of an aggressor. Caesarian *Commentarii de bello Gallico* is another example of the same way of thinking.

⁵⁴ Cf. T. S. Burn, *Rome and the Barbarians (100 B.C. – A.D. 400)*, Baltimore–London 2003, 65–69.