

Sacrifices and Presents to the Gods

1. What are “nūmina” ?

"Nūmina" are the divine spirits which the Romans believed existed in all objects and forces and must be acknowledged and appeased in order to receive their benefits and not their ire.

2. What are “vōta”?

"Vōta" are the promises made to gods for the fulfillment of favors asked. They usually were promised during an animal sacrifice and the offering of other gifts and prayers.

3. What are "lares" and "penates"?

Spirits of the household food cupboard. Daily sacrifices were made in most households to these spirits at a small shrine in the house called a "lararium".

Divination

4. What are the two types of priests that performed divinations and what did each do to accomplish their duties?

haruspex An haruspex would observe the smoke and flames when victims were burned on the altar and examine the entrails of the victim, noting size, color, texture and any abnormalities.

augur An augur would base his finding on the flight of birds, their direction, formation and type.

5. What were “omina”?

“Omina” were omens or warnings of impending danger given by a god. Proper action in response to the “omina” could avert the danger. The diviner interpreted these warnings in the course of plying his craft.

The Roman State Religion

6. Which gods were particularly promoted by the state?

Jupiter
Apollo

Juno
Diana

Minerva
Mars

Ceres
Venus

7. Who conducted the services and ceremonies of the state religion?

Colleges of priest were organized to oversee various religious functions.

8. Who were the Arval Brothers?

The “Arval Brothers” were a college of priests who oversaw praying for the emperor and his family.

9. Who was the chief priest of the state religion?

The “pontifex maximus” which position during the empire was always held by the emperor.

10. What were two requirements of a successful ceremony?

The rituals had to be carried with perfection, both action and word and it was necessary for the audience to remain quiet. Any extraneous noises were considered unlucky.

Religion and Romanization

11. How did Romans treat the religious beliefs of conquered peoples in the provinces?

The Romans generally tolerated foreign religions as long as they were not seen as dangerous. They attempted to get these other religions to identify their gods with one of the Roman gods and merge them together into one.

12. What was the “genius”?

The “genius” was the protecting spirit of the emperor and was worshiped as part of the “Cult of the Emperor”. When the emperor died he was “deified” or made into a god.

Astrology

13. What about astrology was particularly offensive and frowned upon?

Using a person’s “horoscope” (the position of the stars at his birth) to predict a relative day of death. Inquiring into the emperor’s horoscope was a grave offense and could result in death.

14. How popular was the use of astrology?

Although it was officially disapproved of, many people including the emperors themselves had private astrologers.

*****This is not all you need to know. Re-read the reading.*****