Evocatio deorum

SOME NOTES ON THE ROMANIZATION OF ETRURIA

By PATRICK BRUUN

Evocatio deorum is an institution known in antiquity in the Roman and in the Hettite religions. It has therefore been regarded as part of the common Indo-European heritage. It is uncertain to what extent the Etruscans had inaugurated the evocatio in their world of religious practices. Suggestions that the Etruscans transmitted the institution of the evocatio to Italy and Rome have been taken to prove the Asiatic origin of the Tyrrhenoi. In this context, however, these theories are of little interest.

Basically evocatio is a kind of vow. In a trial of strength between two opposing armies, most frequently in the course of a siege, the Roman commander (because evocatio in our sources appears as a Roman institution, the subject, the agent is always a Roman) invokes the assistance of the tutelary god of the besieged, in fact evokes him urging him to desert his people and promising him a sacred precinct, temple, cult and devotion in Rome.

Now you may ask what on earth this has to do with the subject of our symposium. I would look at it in the following way:

Evocatio is a precaution, or a weapon against the enemies of the Romans. The efficacy of this weapon was based on the Roman belief in a firm connexion between the gods on the one hand and the territory or the society, the state, protected by them on the other. A study of the evocation is consequently apt to shed light on the religious foundations or motivation of the state according to Roman views.

Personally, I had my attention drawn to the problem in the course of some research aiming at clarifying the Romanization of Etruria and the Etruscans. My approach is therefore the one of the "traditional" historian. In fact, when reading up the aspects of evocatio appertaining to the sphere
of religious history, I several times felt myself at a loss to know what to do and what to think. I found myself under fire mainly from two directions when trying to interpret the myths of primaeval Roman religion. There is the French school headed by Georges Dumézil, and there is the opposing point of view, not exclusively German but possibly best represented by Kurt Latte and his *Römische Religionsgeschichte*.\(^1\) Except for pungent polemics against Latte in the books of Dumézil, these two schools largely ignore one another. They do not review or refer to books written on the other side of the fence. This state of affairs makes it very awkward for an outsider to find his way in the maze of theories, and to draw any conclusions from earlier research. All the same, I have a general feeling that the German school could be named the philological one because of its primary concern with textual interpretation and with the Graeco-Roman sphere *per se*, whereas the French school has developed its own methodology with due regard to the possibilities of a comparative study of religion.

When now with appropriate trepidation I approach the Roman myths illustrating the *evocatio*, I would like to start by adopting Lauri Honko's definition of the myth as expressed in the last issue of *Temenos* (1970, p. 41), and particularly the following words:


I propose to start by showing the connexion between religion and society, between the gods and the state.

After the Gallic disaster, and after the recapture of Rome the tribunes of the *plebs* are reported to have suggested that the Romans leave their destroyed city and move to Veii, *in urben paratam* (Livy v.50.8), *ad integra omnia Veios* (v.53.1). Camillus, the conqueror of Veii, reacted strongly to the proposal in an ardent speech, underlining, according to Livy, that the

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gods had not only determined the location of the habitation but also had attended the rite of foundation.

Camillus opens his pleading by stressing that, when the Gauls had captured the city proper, “Capitolum tamen atque arcem dique et homines Romani tenuerint” (v.51.3). Although we Romans were forsaken by gods and men, we never interrupted the cult of the gods (v.51.9). The city had been founded in accordance with the requirements of religion (“urbem auspicato inauguratoque conditam habemus”, v.52.2). Camillus then asks rhetorically whether the Romans really are going to abandon all their gods, thereby showing that the gods and their cults were tied to the city and to the site.

Do you really accept, as a corollary to the moving to Veii, now in peace time, that publica sacra et Romanos deos ... deseri (v.52.4) continues Camillus. The religious duties cannot be performed in Veii, nor can the priests be dispatched to Rome for this particular purpose salvis caerimoniis (v.52.5).

Camillus then demonstrates the absurdity and the impossibility of moving the gods. The Romans had inherited the responsibility for certain cults on the Alban mount and in Lavinium from their forefathers for the simple reason that they had not been able to transfer these cults to Rome—the inference being that gods cannot be moved at will from one place to another. Would it then be right for the Romans to transfer their gods in hostium urbem Veios (v.52.8)? Apart from the purely religious functions of the society, what is going to happen to all the civic tasks “quae auspicato agimus omnia fere intra pomerium” (v.52.15)? “Comitia curiata, quae rem militarem continent, comitia centuriata, quibus consules tribunosque militares creatis, ubi auspicato, nisi ubi adsolent, fieri possunt” (v.52.16)?

Accordingly, Camillus regards it as impossible to carry out the normal tasks of society, of political life, if the requirements of religion cannot be complied with. The site is here of fundamental importance: “non sine causa di hominesque hunc urbi condendae locum elegerunt” (v.54.4). Again, the cult was firmly linked to the place, and the choice of the place was confirmed by the sacred rite of foundation.

The connexion between the state and the gods can be illustrated by recording some additional texts.

Vesta played an important part in Roman religious life; she was the object
of state worship as *Vesta publica populi Romani Quiritium*. In her temple burned a fire which was never let out, her hearth was a *focus publicus* (Cic. *leg. ii.8*) or *urbs* (ibid. *ii.12*). The fire was a *pignus imperii Romani* (Livy *xxvi.27.14*) and, in fact, more than a mere symbol.\(^1\) It is characteristic that when, during the most difficult years of the II Punic War, a fire breaks out and threatens to destroy the temple, the Romans suspect sabotage and succeed in apprehending five youngsters from the secessionist Campania, who are accused of “Vestae aedem petitam et aeternos ignes et conditum in penetrali fatale pignus imperii Romani” (loc. cit.). Plotting to destroy the temple of Vesta was a plot against the Roman state. Therefore it is no wonder that, threatened by the Gauls in 390 B.C., the Romans saved the cult of Vesta by evacuating the Vestal virgins and the *sacra*, who found an asylum in Etruscan Caere.\(^2\) Subsequently the Roman sense of gratitude towards Caere became an important circumstance in Etrusco-Roman politics.

These remarks may be concluded with some references to Vergil’s view of the subject as expressed in his presentation of the vicissitudes of Aeneas. It is quite obvious that, according to Vergil, the city of Troy had been destroyed, but not the Trojan state. Pious Aeneas takes care that the fire should still burn on the hearth and that the cults of the gods be observed. The state and the gods escape with Aeneas\(^3\) looking for a new home … “Ilium in Italian portans victosque penatis” (*Aen. i.68*). When he lays the foundations of the new city he gives at the same time the gods a new home in in Latium … “dum conderet urbem/inferretque deos Latio” (*Aen. i.5–6*).

The foundation ceremony is a religious rite. “Aeneas urbem designat aratro” (*Aen, v.755*) in the same way as Romulus *etrusco ritu* ploughs a furrow denoting the boundary of the city of Rome, indicating the sacred *pomerium*.\(^4\) Therefore Camillus in his reply to the tribunes had emphasized that the city had been founded in accordance with the requirements of the

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\(^1\) Cf. also C. Koch, *Religio. Studien zu Kult und Glauben der Römer* (Erlanger Beiträge zur Sprach- und Kunstwissenschaft, 7), Nürnberg 1960, p. 8 f., 11 f., 14, 16.


\(^3\) N. D. Fustel de Coulanges, *La Cité antique*, Paris 1866, p. 180 f.

\(^4\) Note Gaius ii. 8 “sanctae quoque res, velut muri et portae quodammodo divini iuris sunt”.
Roman religion. Mere physical destruction did not desecrate Rome or deprive the Roman gods of their home. Something more was obviously required in order to make the gods homeless.

The religious rites of the *evocatio* seem to answer all the necessary requirements. The question is, was the *evocatio* the only way of achieving this end?

It is probably easier to understand the extent of the problem if we consider how many city states with their local deities the Romans conquered on their way to supremacy in the Mediterranean world. What happened to these communities and to their gods?

First of all we should remember that everything outside the Roman territory was exempt from the normal Roman division into *res sacrae* and *res religiosae.* When the Romans conquered a territory, private ownership of land ceased to exist. The Romans did not accept the dedication of a temple in foreign territory nor regard it as sacred. This implies that the looting of foreign temples was permitted. I think we are justified in assuming that innumerable non-Roman deities had their temples plundered and destroyed in the course of the Roman conquest of the world. In many cases the Romans took steps to assure that the cults were restored and carried on under the ultimate supervision of the Roman pontifices, but I doubt whether we are justified in saying that the gods of the conquered communities became *Staatsgottheiten des römischen Volkes.* There may have been a difference

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1 Cf. Gaius ii. 5-6 "sacrum quidem hoc solum existimatur, quod ex auctoritate populi Romani consecratum est... religiosum vero nostra voluntate facimus mortuum inferentes in locum nostrum"...

2 *Dig.* xi.7.36 "omnia desinunt religiosa vel sacra esse, sicut homines liberi in servitutem perveniunt".

3 Latte, p. 200, n. 1.

4 Festus 157 M "municipalia sacra vocantur, quae ab initio habuerunt ante civitatem Romanam acceptam, quae observare eos voluerunt pontifices et eo more facere quo adsuessent antiquitus". This reflects, I presume, the situation when the citizenship had been extended to all Italy.

5 G. Wissowa, *Religion und Kultus der Römer* (Handbuch der klassischen Altertumswissenschaften, 5: 4), München 1912, p. 44 in accordance with T. Mommsen, *Römisches Staatsrecht,* 3:1 Leipzig 1887, p. 579 f. Arnobius iii.38 "nam solere Romanos religiones urbium superatarum partim privatim per familias spargere partim publice consecrare, ac ne aliqui deorum multitudine aut ignorantia praeterirentur, brevitatis et compendii causa uno pariter nomine cunctos Novensiles invocari" implies that of those who it had been thought necessary to conciliate, only a few were consecrated publicly. But the rest and all those who had been neglected entirely most certainly cannot be described as *Staatsgottheiten.*

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between the peoples and gods vanquished fighting and those who in surrendering submitted themselves in populi Romani dicionem;¹ in the latter case the populus Romanus at least seemingly assumes the responsibility, which may have been a guarantee of an orderly conduct on the part of the army and the Roman officials.

Now the evocatio contains a pledge to provide for the foreign god in Rome (Macrob. Sat. iii.9.8 “voveo vobis templa ludosque facturum”). Evocatio is a vow, a kind of agreement between the Roman people and the god. The rite is obviously of great antiquity. Two cases of evocatio can be identified with certainty, the first, described in our narrative sources, the evocatio of Juno Regina of Veii by Camillus in 396 B.C. (Livy v.22.4–7), the second concerning Vertumnus-Voltumna of Volsinii in 264 B.C. (Basanoff 53–63)² which seems to have ended with the dedication of a shrine, the aedes Vertumnii in Aventino.³ However, in honour of Vertumnus a statue of much earlier date had been erected in the vicus Tuscus.⁴ A third possible case is constituted by Falerii captured in 241 B.C. The tradition speaks of a Minerva capta (Ovid. Fasti iii.483 f. “an quia perdomitis ad nos captiva Faliscis/venit?”) which in the same year had a temple vowed for her on the Caelius (ibid. 835 ff.). Now the tutelary god of Falerii was Juno Curitis, who also received a temple in Rome, in campo. The exact year is, however, in doubt (Basanoff, p. 52 f.), and consequently we cannot with certainty establish that she had been evoked from Falerii.⁵

The evocatio of the Juno Caelestis (Tanit) of Carthage in 146 B.C. by Scipio is frequently mentioned as the final instance of this ancient rite. Macrobius (Sat. iii.9.7–8) records the only evocation formula known as addressed to a Carthaginian god or goddess (“si deus si dea est cui populus civitasque Carthaginensis est in tutela …”). His source goes back to the

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¹ Livy i.38.2 “deditisne vos populumque Conlatinum, urbem, agros, aquam, terminos, delubra, utensilia, divina humanae omnia in meam (sc. Tarquinii) populi Romani dicionem”.
³ Basanoff, p. 56.
⁵ Juno Curitis was worshipped in Veii too. Basanoff, p. 54 f. hints at the possibility that she might have been exorata in Veii by Camillus and that a temple would have been dedicated to her 150 years before the siege of Falerii.
reign of Septimius Severus\(^1\) when the interest in things African greatly increased in Rome. Because of the lateness of the source Macrobius' text has been regarded as spurious. Nevertheless the archaic tenor of the *carmen evocationis* suggests that behind the sources of the second century of the Christian era there may have been an authentic text of Republican origin. There seems to be little reason to doubt Servius (*Aen*. xii. 840) "sed constat bello Punico secundo exoratam Junonem, tertiio vero bello a Scipione sacris quibusdam etiam Roman esse translatam".\(^2\)

These are the traces of the few seemingly orthodox cases of *evocatio*. Summing up, we may say that the archaic Romans and possibly their forefathers of the terramare period (Basanoff, p. 197) at the moment of the foundation of the city by means of certain religious rites put the new community under the patronage of a certain god. This may very well have created the impression that other cities similarly were *in alicuius dei tutela* (Plin. *n.h.* xxviii. 18). *Evocatio* is simply a way of trying to enlist the assistance of foreign gods.\(^3\) It is traceable to the *primordia civitatis*, to early Roman mythological prehistory. Basanoff (pp. 21–30) with reason attaches much importance to the fact that *evocatio* presupposed that the name of the god-protector of Rome, and the name of the city itself should be kept secret "nam propterea ipsi Romani et deus, in cuius tutela urbs Roma est, et ipsius urbis Latinum nomen ignotum esse voluerunt" (Macrob. iii.9.3, cf. Plin. *n.h.* xxviii.18)). Otherwise the enemies could have employed the same device and evoked the protector of Rome. Basanoff argues ingeniously and not without success that the *nomen urbis* was Palatium and that the *nomen numinis* was Pales (cf. pp. 92–110)—we should remember that Roma probably is a name of Etruscan origin and consequently of a much later date.

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\(^1\) Latte, p. 346, n.4 with reference to a paper by Wissowa in *Hermes*, 16, 1882, p. 502 ff.

\(^2\) Cf. Basanoff, p. 3 f., 63–66, and Dumézil, p. 453 f.

\(^3\) Basanoff's suggestion, p. 197 ff., that the *evocatio* was employed exclusively in the Etrusco-Latin territory because it was valid only in the case of cities founded ritually *etrusco ritu*, is highly hypothetical and most likely incorrect. Our records of the *evocatio* end with the notes concerning Juno Caesestis; the few earlier cases were therefore connected with the conquest of Italy and, in fact, of Etruria and Latium. It is therefore a coincidence that the instances known concern ritually consecrated cities. Basanoff's demonstration, p. 208 f., that the *evocatio* was addressed to the tutelary god of the enemy city is a truism.
Now, to my mind it is very significant that *evocatio* represents a very old tradition known in detail only by way of an account of a late and watered down version connected with the grand epic of the Early Republic, the Veientane war. Subsequent instances are little more than deductions; the case of Juno Caelestis represents, I believe, a genuine tradition dug up in the archives to please the African emperor Septimius Severus.

Seen in this light *evocatio* appears as a myth in accordance with the definition given by Professor Honko. Its origins are to be found in pre-Etruscan Rome, if not even further back in the common Indo-European past; the rites connected with the myth were still known some eight centuries later. The fact that so few instances of *evocatio* have been recorded by our sources must testify to the prevalence of the rites, considering the perpetuity of the state of war and the evidently almost constant need of invoking the assistance of foreign deities.

Now, what was *evocatio* in terms of military and political practice? An excuse for depriving an enemy community of its liberty, a formula covering the victorious assault of the Roman arms under a cloak of righteousness or even of heavenly command. I am convinced that the Romans kept this allusion alive to the end, that they faithfully adhered to the prescribed rites and that the commander rarely before a battle or an assault failed to execute the *carmen evocationis* (or to have it executed).

It would have been trivial or tedious for the Roman historians to report each time these rites were performed; similarly they omitted to describe in detail or even to mention a number of ceremonies which were part of the everyday life of a Roman commander (e.g. the taking of the *auspicia*). It is my contention that for instance the following text of Prudentius\(^1\) generally speaking is accurate: "amid the smoking ruins of temples the victor’s armed right hand took her enemies' images and carried them home in captivity, worshipping them as divinities." A fitting illustration of this behaviour is Livy’s picture of the Roman commander carrying away the image of Jupiter Imperator from the captured Praeneste (Livy vi.29.8). This may well be an example of *evocatio* in its penultimate phase when the god leaves his old templum “assisted by the Romans”.

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\(^1\) *contra Symm. ii. 349–351*, Loeb translation.
In actual fact, behind each one of the extraordinary number of divinities incorporated with the Roman Pantheon must lie not only the rites connected with the arrival in Rome (the case of Magna Mater shows how elaborate these ceremonies could be) and with the dedication of the altar or the shrine, but also the solemnity accompanying the gods parting from their old home.

It goes without saying that all originally alien gods were not brought to Rome by force. Wissowa has analyzed the influx of the Latin gods (p. 44 f.), who later by Tertullian (apol. 10) were named di adoptivi as distinguished from the di captivi. He has shown how the close ties between the Latin peoples, and particularly the connotation of the commercium, gradually prepared the ground for them and their acceptance not only within individual gentes but also by the Roman State.

Nevertheless, in this sphere too we know that there are exceptions. The case of Lanuvium, the foremost town of one of the original Latin tribes or peoples, is highly instructive. Livy records (viii.14.2) that after Rome’s war against the Latins in 338 B.C. “Lanuvinis civitas data sacraque sua reddita, cum eo ut aedes lucusque Sospitae Iunonis communis Lanuvinis municipalis cum populo Romano esset”.

The sacra reddita presuppose a preceding and different condition, the one of the sacra capta. In the course of the war the Romans obviously had succeeded in capturing the city and “make prisoner” (to evoke?) the Juno Sospita. In the peace treaty with the Latins the Lanuvians were treated well, and were conceded the status of a municipium. At the same time their Juno was returned to them although she retained her cult in Rome. ¹ With regard to the Romano-Lanuvian relations the peace treaty implied a political decision with religious repercussions.

The case of Juno Sospita is a good example of how closely interwoven politics and religion were. At the same time it shows how cults of neighbouring city states spread and found their way to Rome.

Juno Sospita Mater Regina was originally a uniquely Lanuvian goddess, an earth goddess not without connexions with Vesta, Mater Matuta and Juno Regina. Her worship was extended from Lanuvium to Rome but not any further, as far as I know.

¹ For a discussion of this incident, cf. Basanoff, p. 134 f.
Other gods seem to have been common to all Latin tribes although it is impossible to say whether or not the common worship represents the original state of affairs. Diana, no doubt, is the most striking example of a goddess worshipped by the entire Latin federation, the nomen Latinum. The place of worship seems, however, to have changed in accordance with the political situation of the day. Diana Nemorensis, Diana of Nemi or Diana of Aricia, was transformed into Diana of the Aventine when Rome, with Etruscan support, gained the upper hand among the Latin peoples. This means that the cult of Diana was transferred to Rome (Livy i.45.3 “confessio caput rerum Romam esse”), although outside the pomerium (possibly another case of evocatio instigated by the Etruscans and therefore not dedicating a temple to Diana within the pomerium). Subsequently, when the Etruscan power declined, two competitors claimed the leadership within the Latin federation by establishing rival shrines of Diana, namely Aricia, where the cult of Diana Nemorensis was restored and Tusculum with a place of worship at Corne.

The Dioskouroi are another case in point, though our knowledge of them is far from sufficient. These divine twins have usually been regarded as deities with a particular claim on Tusculum (Basanoff, p. 156, Latte, p. 173 ff.). In connexion with the battle of Lake Regillus they are supposed to have been evoked by the Romans. Religious and, it would seem, in this case therefore reliable tradition, dates the dedication of the temple of Castor (note: not of Castor and Pollux) to 484 B.C., a date not easily recon-

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1 It may have been observed all the time at Nemi, although the annual festivities of all the Latin peoples were celebrated on the Aventine.

2 Cf. J. Bayet, Histoire politique et psychologique de la religion Romaine (Bibliothèque historique), Paris 1957, p. 123. Basanoff, p. 154, 189 differentiates between the evocatio proper, i.e. the evocatio connected with a siege and the evocatio referring to the exercitus. I am inclined to disagree. I cannot see why a god supposedly appearing as a participant in a battle might not be object of the evocatio exactly as a god “residing” in his temple—as long as the Roman commander was in the position to fulfil the requirements of the ritual.

3 I think we are justified in not accepting Castor as indigenously Roman—it is noteworthy that his temple was constructed outside the pomerium of the urbs quadrata. According to the chronology of Livy 15 (or 12) years passed between the battle and the fulfilment of the vow. In a different context I have proposed a much later date for the battle of Regillus, namely 460 B.C. (P. Bruun, “The Foedus Gabinum,” Arctos, N.S. 5, 1967, p. 53 ff.). This is not necessarily in conflict with the date of the dedication of the temple of Castor in 484 B.C. The case of Juno Curitis, discussed above, shows that a goddess, the cult of whom had been brought to Rome from out-
clicable with the chronology of the Early Republic if the battle is really connected with the dedication of the temple.

At present, however, it seems advisable not to press this point. The part played by the Dioskuroi among the Latin tribes is still very obscure,¹ and general conclusions with regard to the evocatio cannot be elicited from the data known. I therefore propose to conclude this paper with some general remarks.

The expansion of Rome was a result of the extraordinary capacity of the Romans to organize their army and their art of warfare, as well as the conquered territories—and was not effected by enlisting foreign gods by means of the carmen evocationis, though some Romans may have thought otherwise. However, the rite of evocatio suggests that the Romans regarded their state as the happy result of a co-operation between human beings and the gods; the Roman state having concluded a foedus with the gods (Koch, p. 100), or doing it every time the need arose. It is significant that there were no professional priests in Rome. The same persons who were responsible for the political decisions acted as priests, performed the rites, interpreted the will of the gods, and were responsible for the auspicia and the evocatio. When they thought in terms of conquest and expansion they were obliged to consider the religious aspects as well as the political (Bayet, p. 277 f.). Consequently, and because of the Roman conception of the close relationship between the state as a ritual and religious foundation, the Romans not only added new territories to their state, to the ager Romanus, but also new gods to their Pantheon.

This view, I think, helps us to understand the evocatio and related phenomena. If we now return to Professor Honko’s definition of the myth, I

¹ In recent years, as a palpable illustration of the religious coherence of the nomen Latinum, an impressive row of 12 altars has been unearthed in Lavinium (Pratica sul Mare, today) together with a dedication to the Dioskuroi, Castorei Podlouqueique gurois, written from the right to the left, cf. Dumézil, p. 402. In this context this discovery may serve as an illustration of how scanty our knowledge really is of the relations of the triginta populi Latini to one another.
believe we are justified in saying that the Camillan *evocatio* is the key of the problem. I think it is, on the one hand, the result of a historical situation, on the other it is employed as a model of behaviour—in a meaningful relation to the past. *Evocatio* no doubt was much older than the Veientane incident, but the particulars, individual and improvised as Livy's text suggests¹ could well have created a precedent subsequently transformed into a rite supported by a myth.

When recording the Roman history of later times, our narrative sources have little to add to our knowledge of the *evocatio* as compared with the story of Camillus' capture of Veii, though the antiquarian interest is apparent in the *evocatio* of Juno Caelestis. Late Roman writers like Macrobius start interpreting the *evocatio* psychologically (one of the ways mentioned by Professor Honko) ascribing the rite to reverence with regard to the gods: "nefas aestimarent deos habere captivos" (*Sat. iii.8.2*). The cases of *Minerva capta* and of *Iuno Sospita Lanuvianis reddita* (*Livy viii.14.2*), which presupposes an earlier stage of *Iuno capta*, show that the Romans did not hesitate to take the alien gods prisoners if need be.

Finally we might consider what deductions can be made from these considerations with regard to my point of departure, the Romanization of Etruria? I think we can express it very briefly. A city, a state, a territory which once had lost its tutelary god to Rome—at least when this had happened through the solemn rite of *evocatio*—did not regain complete independence. This regards Veii, Volsinii and Falerii, but also Lanuvium,² a city never *expressis verbis* said to have lost her Juno Sospita through *evocatio*. If the *Iuno reddita* had endowed the Lanuvians with Roman citizenship, she had also provided them with a tax to pay, something which few peoples consider to be a social privilege.

¹ v.22.5 "dein cum quidam, seu spiritu divino tactus seu iuvenali ioco, 'visne Roman ire, Iuno?' dixisset, adnuisse ceteri deam conclamaverunt", cf. Basanoff, p. 43 f.
² R. Werner, *Der Beginn der römischen Republik*, München 1963, p. 426, n. 3.