

INFLUENCE OF COLLEGE OF PONTIFFS ON PUBLIC LIFE IN THE ROMAN REPUBLIC IN VI-I CENTURIES BC

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The relevance of the problem discussed in the paper is predetermined by the necessity to carry a systemic research on the functions performed by the College of Pontiffs (Collegium Pontificum) for profound understanding of mechanisms and principles how various spheres of public life functioned in the Roman Republic which allows us to conduct a more precise reconstruction of the events during the Republican Period. The aim of the paper is to estimate the degree of the influence of the College of Pontiffs on public life of the Roman Republic. The leading approach to the investigation is the systemic analysis of historical resources and literature which allow to conduct a deep and multifaceted research on the functions of the College of Pontiffs and to make trustworthy conclusions on the role of the College in life of Rome during the Republican Period. The main results of the investigation reside in the assessment of the role the College played in public life of Roman citizens during the Republican Period. The authors single out the spheres of life in which the pontifices participated most actively, and which, as opposed to any other religious college, they had the biggest influence on.

Key words: education, university education, College, Pontifices, Roman Republic, society

INTRODUCTION

Religious life was one of the most significant spheres of public life in the Roman Republic. Religious world view, which had formed at the earlier stages of development, served as a source for the rules of conduct (Kofanov, 2001). Hence, human and heavenly worlds came together. That served the reason for numerous colleges of priests regulating this kind of relations to appear (Smorchkov, 2007). The College of Pontiffs may be treated as one of the examples of such colleges. It regulated a vast spectrum of both private and public relations (Turkan, 2000; Santangelo, 2011, Smorchkov, 2012). It seems quite essential to carry out the analysis of the College practices since the absence of the systemic analysis of the work of sacral institutions may lead to partial or absolute misunderstanding of the peculiar features of different spheres of life of the Romans, which might bring to wrong conclusions. The chronological framework of our investigation lies between VI-I centuries BC and Anno Domini. IVth century BC is marked by the transition of Ancient Rome to the republican form of governing. This is the period of substantial changes in all spheres of public life. These changes were characteristic for the College of Pontiffs as well. Anno Domini is the time when the Republican

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period came to an end, thus the choice of this date in our research is predetermined by the fact that since then Ancient Rome proceeded into the period of Roman Empire when Augustus (Octavianus Augustus) came to power.

METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

The methodology of investigation approaches allowed the authors to estimate the degree of coverage of the current problem under study, to explore numerous works of Russian and foreign researchers and analyze the importance of the issue for historical world.

The synthetic approach gave the authors the opportunity to envisage the integrated work of the College of Pontiffs and reveal peculiar features of its functioning in public life of the Republic.

The application of common historical logical method allowed the authors to render the investigated period as a coherent whole with its intrinsic logical links between events and affairs taking place during this period.

The dialectic approach allowed the authors to deduce reciprocal links between religious and public spheres of life in Ancient Rome and to define the level of interaction between the spheres mentioned above.

RESULTS

Being a religious college, the College of Pontiffs conducted a much bigger variety of tasks rather than the ones only related to spiritual life of the Roman people. One of the most important tasks was calendaring which was quite a significant task since all days in Ancient Rome were divided into holidays and non-holidays. Public holidays presupposed offering sacrifices, rest and public games while non-holidays were ordinary days, these were comitial days (*Dies comitalis*) appointed for the court to make their final decision, the days on which people might be summoned to appear before court, the days for military actions. A wrong choice of a day might undermine comitia and lead to cancellation of the decisions which were undesirable for the Senate. There existed several categories of days and it was important to take into account all the peculiarities of those days since not any day was suitable for offering sacrifice or holding an assembly. The pontifices were responsible for keeping tabs on these specific features.

They also specified the most significant days of a Roman month which were closely connected with moon phases, these were calends and nones. But the IIIrd century BC was marked by the intercalation rules, i.e. insertion of additional days to synchronize solar and lunar years. As it follows, in this case the role of pontifices was crucial since without them the Roman people couldn't identify the meaning of the day.

The College of Pontiffs played a specific role in the lives of particular citizens. Cicero mentions such a function of pontifices as keeping track of preserving

patrimonial and gentilitia sacred actions. Observing the performance of such sacred actions the pontifices worked out the system of rules of transition of sacred duties alongside with the inherited estate, so that the sacred actions didn't pass away with the death of the patriarch. However, the ancient Roman philosopher is quite critical about the pontifices' "policy" pursued in the society. He considers the confusion of pontifical and civil laws as inadmissible. Besides, the functions the College of Pontiffs performed included control of the transition of a person from one family into another. This process was called *adrogatio* (adoption of a Roman citizen) or *adoption* (adoption of a Roman citizen who was under the power of parents).

To do so it was necessary to get a special pontifical decree. As the College of Pontiffs had to watch over the traditions not to decrease the Pontifices had to run a substantial check of the adopted. They had to verify that the age of the adopted child and the adoptive parent should correspond to the aims of adoption, background and material position, they had also to inquire into the reasons for adoption (Shakhnina, 2016). Coming into another family the person rejected the ancestral relics and accepted the relics of the adoptive parents. Correspondingly, these were the pontifices who had to watch over the sacred actions which had been performed in the family of the adopted child so that they didn't disappear completely with his or her leaving the original family. Pontifices played the role of judges in comitia where the issue was heard and the decision was made. In the course of the adoption ceremony the participants made a vow which was formulated by the Supreme Pontiff.

Together with the arch-flamen the Supreme Pontiff took part in the consummation of marriage "between patricians". This sacred action was the oldest established, and it was obligatory for three elder flamines and the king of the sacred (*Rex sacrorum*). Pontifices entered into marriage according to this action. The standards of conduct were predetermined by the pontifical law. Thus, the basic function of pontifices was to maintain the patrimonial performance of divine services as the regulation of family law.

While establishing private cults pontifices could allocate a special day and a special place to perform divine services. They also carried out the consulting function. If pontifices allocated and approved of a particular day to carry out the service, those days were considered sacred like sacrifice. We can't be sure that pontifices had control over all private cults as there is not enough evidence to prove so. It's necessary to mention that a vast majority of rites were performed in public and in private, which presupposed a particular influence of priests, pontifices in particular, on the private cults as exemplary religious rites (Smorchkov, 2012). We may only evaluate the influence of the pontifices on private cults, but not control over them, since researchers haven't traced any specific references to their control in the resources. We can't also ascertain the total control of pontifices over Roman citizens since the College of Pontiffs obviously couldn't have an opportunity

to exercise it judging by the proportion of pontifices and the people. But non-interference in private cults lasted till there happened something that might become a dangerous threat to the well-being of the society. L.Kofanov gives an example from the history of Rome: in 490 BC the solemn procession at *Ludi Magni* was forced to be started again because of a slave who was preceding the procession being scourged on his dominus' order. The whole procession and the games were held one more time, and the citizen was punished. It might serve as a proof that sacred rites might depend on an individual man.

Every person was obliged to follow sacred prescriptions. It was forbidden to work on holidays as those days were devoted to serve gods, so the pontifices specified a particular list of work allowed to perform on those days. Violation of the rules was punished with a fine. It was forbidden not only to work but also to see somebody working – this was the case for pontifices, flamines and *rex sacrorum* also known as 'the king of the sacred' (Fakhrutdinova, 2016). It was regarded as desecrating the holiday. To avoid such a provoking situation bellmen were preceding pontifices and giving a warning to members of the community to stop working. Those who disobeyed were fined. The resources give evidence of atoning sacrifices which the violators had to bring.

Pontifices worked out the laws on trespassing the religious law and also the rules of atonement for transgression. Sacred violations were divided into intended and non-intended. An intended transgression was considered as inexpiable whereas a non-intended one might be atoned by offering a sacrifice which was held by pontifices. So we may conclude that the observance of sacred law was not controlled with the exception of those crimes which might threaten social interests. Thus, pontifices performed the consulting function on private cults. That was the method to carry out control over sacred duties of the citizens.

The College of Pontiffs dealt with the issues of burial of the deceased and preservation of tombs. The pontifical law required "to leave the hangees unburied" or there was a requirement for the murderer (in a non-intentional murder) to bring a ram as a sacrifice to the relatives of the killed person. A special resolution by the College of Pontiffs might forbid setting tombs on sacred or public land. But the decisions of pontifices were confirmed by secular authority, since those disobeying the College's will on the burial on public land were usually judged by the praetor.

The issue of recovery of old burial and carrying the corpse over to a new place was necessarily brought to pontifices. But aediles also could give the permission to bring the dead body into the tomb, and tribunes of the plebs (*tribunes plebis*) had the right to allow to carry the body over. That is why the College of Pontiffs wasn't an exceptional institution to solve this kind of issues, but rather more authoritative.

Besides, pontifices could forbid alienation of a grave. But this question was in power of the Senate which issued a prescript forbidding the defiling of tombs and

using them in any other way. Violations were strictly punished by fines, and a part of the money paid could be appointed to the College if the owner permitting. But it was a rare case.

Thus, the College of Pontiffs was endowed with special powers, other than religious rites: calendaring, preserving patrimonial sacred rites, approval of the will of the deceased at the Curiate Assemblies (*comitia curiata*), control over adrogation process, i.e. adoption and preserving patrimonial sacred rites. But the above mentioned functions alongside with the sacred ones were of advisory character. Pontifices acted as experts watching over the accuracy of ceremonies, gave recommendations and led the processes. They controlled over the most significant spheres of public life.

DISCUSSIONS

The problem discussed in this paper was treated in the framework of establishment of religious institutions and their functions in general. L. Kofanov (2001) studied the establishing process of the College, its functions and role in life of Rome of the imperial period and the period of the Republic. R. Turkan (2000) gave a detailed characteristic of the interaction of people and gods, and the importance of worshipping gods and accurate interpretation of signs by the Romans. A. Smorchkov (2007) gave the description of pontifices performing sacred rites at the plebeian assemblies and noted their significance. F. Santangelo (2011) made a thorough study of conclusion of “peace with gods”, people’s attitude to it and the role of the College in this. However, we haven’t found any researches devoted to the activity of the College of Pontiffs in public life of the Roman Republic.

CONCLUSION

Thus, in our investigation we single out the basic public functions of one of the most authoritative college of priests in Ancient Rome – the College of Pontiffs. We have defined the degree of the influence of the College on everyday life of Roman citizens. A unique characteristic of our investigation is that we have gathered and structured information about public life of Rome during the period of Republic. This allows us to not only investigate the activity of the College of Pontiffs during quite a long period of time, but also to trace how it influenced the people’s lifestyle and conduct, interpretation of signs, rendering the will of gods, making decisions, etc.

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