

= Terminus (god) =

In Roman religion , Terminus was the god who protected boundary markers ; his name was the Latin word for such a marker . Sacrifices were performed to sanctify each boundary stone , and landowners celebrated a festival called the " Terminalia " in Terminus ' honor each year on February 23 . The Temple of Jupiter Optimus Maximus on the Capitoline Hill was thought to have been built over a shrine to Terminus , and he was occasionally identified as an aspect of Jupiter under the name " Jupiter Terminalis " .

Ancient writers believed that the worship of Terminus had been introduced to Rome during the reign of the first king Romulus (traditionally 753 ? 717 BC) or his successor Numa (717 ? 673 BC) . Modern scholars have variously seen it as the survival of an early animistic reverence for the power inherent in the boundary marker , or as the Roman development of proto @-@ Indo @-@ European belief in a god concerned with the division of property .

= = Worship = =

The name of the god Terminus was the Latin word for a boundary stone , and his worship as recorded in the late Republic and Empire centred on this stone , with which the god could be identified . Siculus Flaccus , a writer on land surveying , records the ritual by which the stone was sanctified : the bones , ashes , and blood of a sacrificial victim , along with crops , honeycombs , and wine , were placed into a hole at a point where estates converged , and the stone was driven in on top . On February 23 annually , a festival called the Terminalia was celebrated in Terminus ' honor , involving practices which can be regarded as a reflection or " yearly renewal " of this foundational ritual . Neighboring families would garland their respective sides of the marker and make offerings to Terminus at an altar ? Ovid identifies these , again , as crops , honeycombs , and wine . The marker itself would be drenched in the blood of a sacrificed lamb or pig . There followed a communal feast and hymns in praise of Terminus .

These rites were practised by private landowners , but there were also related public ceremonies . Ovid refers to the sacrifice of a sheep on the day of the Terminalia at the sixth milestone from Rome along the Via Laurentina ; it is likely this was thought to have marked the boundary between the early Romans and their neighbors in Laurentum . Also , a stone or altar of Terminus was located in the Temple of Jupiter Optimus Maximus on Rome 's Capitoline Hill . Because of a belief that this stone had to be exposed to the sky , there was a small hole in the ceiling directly above it . On occasion Terminus ' association with Jupiter extended to regarding Terminus as an aspect of that god ; Dionysius of Halicarnassus refers to " Jupiter Terminalis " , and one inscription names a god " Juppiter Ter . "

There is some evidence that Terminus ' associations could extend from property boundaries to limits more generally . Under the Republican calendar , when the intercalary month Mercedonius was added to a year , it was placed after February 23 or February 24 , and some ancient writers believed that the Terminalia on February 23 had once been the end of the year . Diocletian 's decision in 303 AD to initiate his persecution of Christians on February 23 has been seen as an attempt at enlisting Terminus " to put a limit to the progress of Christianity " .

= = History = =

= = = Ancient views = = =

Ancient authors agreed that the worship of Terminus was of Sabine origin , ascribing its introduction to Rome either to Titus Tatius , the Sabine colleague of Rome 's founding king Romulus (traditional reign 753 ? 717 BC) , or to Romulus ' successor Numa Pompilius (717 ? 673 BC) . Those authors who gave the credit to Numa explained his motivation as the prevention of violent disputes over property . Plutarch further states that , in keeping with Terminus 's character as a guarantor of peace

, his earliest worship did not involve blood sacrifices .

The stone in the Capitoline Temple was believed to have been among the altars located on the Capitoline Hill before the Temple was built under Tarquinius Priscus (traditional reign 616 ? 579 BC) or Tarquinius Superbus (535 ? 510 BC) . When the augurs took the auspices to discover whether the god or goddess of each altar was content for it to be moved , Terminus refused permission , either alone or along with Juventas the goddess of youth . The stone was therefore included within the Capitoline Temple , and its immovability was regarded as a good omen for the permanence of the city 's boundaries .

= = = Modern views = = =

According to the dominant scholarly view during the late 19th and much of the 20th century , Roman religion was originally animistic , directed towards spirits associated with specific objects or activities which were only later perceived as gods with independent personal existence . Terminus , with his lack of mythology and his close association with a physical object , seemed a clear example of a deity who had developed little from such a stage .

This view of Terminus retains some recent adherents , but other scholars have argued from Indo @-@ European parallels that the personalised gods of Roman religion must have preceded the city 's foundation . Georges Dumézil regarded Jupiter , Juventas and Terminus as the Roman form of a proto @-@ Indo @-@ European triad , comparing the Roman deities respectively to the Vedic Mitra , Aryaman , and Bhaga . In this view the sovereign god (Jupiter / Mitra) was associated with two minor deities , one concerned with the entry of men into society (Juventas / Aryaman) and the other with the fair division of their goods (Terminus / Bhaga) .