**Michael Lee’s Roman Culture Outline**

**Sources**

Johnston’s Private Life of the Romans

Adkin’s and Adkin’s Handbook to Life in Ancient Rome

Heichelheim and Yeo’s A History of the Roman People

Yang’s Outline of Roman History

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**The Family**

The Roman **familia** is the set of people who is subject to the authority of the same Head of the House (**paterfamilias**). The head of such a family is always independent (**sui juris**) and all others were dependent (**alieno juri subjecti**)

The authority of the pater familias over his wife was called **manus**, over his descendants **patria potestas**, over his chattels **dominica potestas**, over his slaves **dominium**, over his fellow freedman by contract **manicipium**. He could free his sons from his potestas by a formal procedure called **emancipatio**. The marriage of a son did not make him a paterfamilias nor relieve him from the patria potestas. Legitimate children always followed the father, while an illegitimate child was from the moment of birth in himself or herself an independent family.

Emancipation was not very common and it usually happened that the household was dissolved only by the death of the Head. A son under age or an unmarried daughter was put under the care of a guardian **tutor**, selected from the same gens, usually an older brother.

A **gens** consists of people who derived their descent through males from a common ancestor. Membership in the gens was proved by the possession of the **nomen**, the second of the three name that every citizen of the republic regularly had.

Members of a gens died without leaving natural heirs; it succeeded to such property as he did not dispose of by will and administered it for the common good of all its members. Such members are called **gentiles** and were bound to take part in the religious services of the gens, the **sacra gentilicia**. Familia was often applied to certain branches of a gens whose members had the same **cognomen**, the last of the three names.

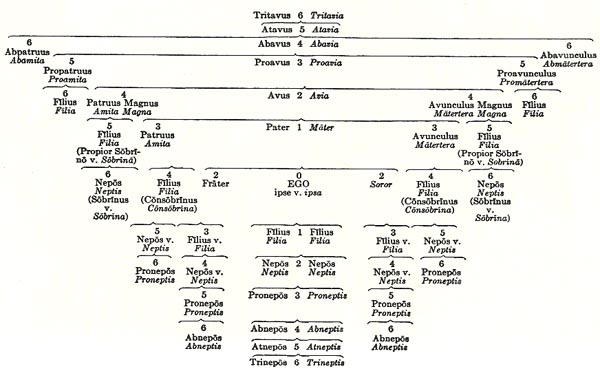
All persons who could trace their descent through males to a common ancestor were called **agnati**, and this **agnatio** was the closest tie of relationship known to the Romans. The wife was excluded. As was a son who had been emancipated.

All persons who could trace their descent through both males and females to a common ancestor were called cognate, and this cognatio did not form an organic body in the state as the agnates but February 22nd commemorated the tie of blood (**cara cognatio**). Public opinion discouraged the marriage of cognates within the sixth (later fourth) degree, and persons within this degree were said to have the **jus osculi**.

Persons connected by marriage only were called adfines. The adfinitas is summarized in the diagrams below.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Gener – son in law | Privignus – step son | Filius – son |
| Nurus – daughter in law | Privigna – step daughter | Filia – daughter |
| Socer – father in law | Ritricus – step father | Pater – father |
| Socrus – mother in law | Noverca – step mother | Mater – mother |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Avunculus – maternal uncle | Patruus – paternal uncle |
| Matertera – maternal aunt | Amita – paternal aunt |
| Consobrinus – maternal cousin | Patruelis – paternal cousin |



The Romans believed that the souls of men had an existence apart from the body, but not in a separate spirit land. They conceived of the soul as a spirit hovering around its burial and requiring for its peace and happiness offerings of food and drink.

A curse was believed to rest upon the childless man. Marriage was a religious duty, entered into only with the approval of the gods ascertained by the auspices. The paterfamilias was the priest of the household and those subject to his potestas assisted in the prayers and offerings, the **sacra familiaria**.

The more often kind of adoption was called **adoptio** in which a **filius familias** is adopted by a pater familias. The less often is called **adrogatio** in which a paterfamilias is adopted by another paterfamilias and was a matter of state, sanctioned by the pontifices and the comitia curiata.

Other names for the paterfamilias’ authority over his descendants, the patria potestas are **patria majestas**, **patrium ius**, and **imperium paternum**. This authority allowed the paterfamilias total control of his descendants.

King Romulus was said to have ordained that all sons should be reared and also all firstborn daughters, and no child should be put to death until its third year, unless it was deformed. King Numa was said to have forbidden the sale into slavery of son who had married with the consent of his father. Custom obliged the paterfamilias to call a council of relatives and friends, the **judicium domesticum**.

It was customary for the paterfamilias to assign to his children property, **peculia** (“cattle of their own”), for them to manage for their own benefit. There was no greater offense against public morals than to prove untrue to the trust of the paterfamilias. This offense is called **patrimonium profundere**.

The patria potestas could extinguished in the following ways:

1. Death of the paterfamilias
2. Emancipation of the son or daughter
3. Loss of citizenship by either father or son
4. If the son became a **flamen dialis** or the daughter a **virgo vestalis**
5. If either father or child was adopted by a third party
6. If the daughter passed by formal marriage (**in manum**)
7. If the son became a public magistrate (only suspended for term of office)

By the oldest and most solemn form of marriage the wife was separated entirely from her father’s family and passed into her husband’s power or hand (**conventio in manum**). Her paterfamilias furnished a dowry (**dos**). The wife was **in loco filiae**, and on the husband’s death took a daughter’s share in his estate.

**The Roman Name**

The **nomen** was to mark the clan (gens), the **cognomen** to mark the family, and the **praenomen** to mark the individual. The order was thus: praenomen, nomen, cognomen.

Children, slaves, and intimate friends addressed the citizen by his praenomen only. Ordinary acquaintances used the cognomen with the praenomen prefixed for emphatic address.

A list of Praenomen

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| A | Aulus | M | Marcus | Sex. | Sextus |
| C | Gaius or Caius | M’ | Manius@ | Sp. | Spurius |
| Cn+ | Gnaeus or Cnaeus | P | Publius | T. | Titus |
| K | Kaeso | Q | Quintus | Ti. | Tiberius |
| L | Lucius% | Ser. | Servius^ |  |  |

+ Gnaeus is also found as Gnaivos, Naevos, Naeus, Gneus.

% The origin of Lucius is born in the day

@ The origin of Manius is born in the morning

^ Servius is also found as Sergius or Serguius

Praenomen used by specific families

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Aemilii | Gaius, Gnaeus, Lucius, Manius, AMrcus, Quintus, Tiberius, **Mamercus(MAM)** |
| Claudii | Gaius, Decimus, Lucius, Publius, Tiberius, Quintus, **Appius** |
| Cornelii | Aulus, Gnaeus, Lucius, Marcus, Publius, Servius, Tiberius |
| Julii | Gaius, Lucius, Sextus, **Vopiscus** |
| Claudii Scipiones | Gnaeus, Lucius, Publius |

A son was given his name on the 9th day after his birth, the **dies lustricus**. For girls, it was the eight days. **Pupus/pupa** refers to unnamed children. The period of time in which a child is unnamed is called **primordia**.

The praenomen was written in full when it was used by itself or when it belonged to person of the lower classes of society.

Surname Terminations

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| -acus | Gallic origin |
| -na | Etruscan origin |
| -(i)enus | Umbrian or Picene origin |
| -anus or -ensis | Name of the town from which the family originated  Adoption |
| -ius | Imitation of older and more aristocratic use |

The cognomen originated from the nickname of some ancestor. An **agnomen** is an additional cognomen given for a notable achievement or nickname also called **cognomen ex virtute**.

Girls are named after their father’s nomen and the order of their birth so a girl named Cornelia Secunda means that her father’s nomen is Cornelius and she was the second girl born.

In the early days of the republic, a slave was called **puer** and attached would be the genitive of his/her master and this soon corrupted to (Master’s name in genitive) + **por**. When slaves became numerous and this system no sufficed, they would have individual names, denoting nationality or in mockery. When a slave passed from master to master, he took the nomen of the new master and added to it the cognomen of his former master + anus.

When a foreigner was given the right of citizenship he would retain his original name as a cognomen and added a praenomen of his fancy and the nomen of the person to whom he owed his citizenship. This accounts for the occurrence of **Julius in Gaul, Pompeius in Spain, and Cornelius in Sicily**.

**Marriage and the Position of Women**

The only form of marriage known to the patricians was the stately religious ceremony called **confarreatio**. With the direct consent of the gods, with the pontifices celebrating the solemn rites, in the presence of the representatives of his gens, the patrician took his wife from her father’s family into his own to be a **materfamilias**. The wife passed **in manum viri** and such a marriage was said to be **cum conventione uxoris in manum viri**. The confarreatio required 10 witnesses.

The plebeian form of marriage was called **usus** and consisted essentially of the living together of the man and woman as a husband and wife for a year. The wife might remain a member of father’s family and retain such property as he allowed her by merely absenting herself from her husband for the space of three days (**trinoctium**) each year. This marriage is said to be **sine conventione in manum** and the husband had no control over her property. If she did not, the marriage was **cum conventione in manum**.

Another plebeian form of marriage was the **coemptio** and was a factitious sale by which the bride’s tutor or paterfamilias transferred her to the groom **causa matrimonii.** The coemptio required 5 witnesses.

Remember, **Servius Tullus** made the plebeians citizens and legalized their form of marriage but it did not legalize intermarriage. Intermarriage was not **iustae nuptiae** and the plebeian wife was taken **in matrimonium** but at best was an **uxor**, never a **materfamilias**.

Some priestly offices could be filled only by persons whose parents had been married by the confarreate ceremony: **flamines majores** and **reges sacrorum**.

**Justae nuptiae** (legal marriage between Roman citizens) could only be contracted when the following conditions were met.

1. Consent of both parties be given (Proxy by paterfamilias)
2. Both parties be **puberes**; no marriage between children!
3. Man and woman both be unmarried

The children produced by Justae nuptiae were **justi liberi** and were by birth **cives optimo jure** (possessed of all civil rights). However, if one spouse was not a citizen it was still called **justae nuptiae** and the children would have the citizen status of the father and if foreign, were called **peregrine**, foreigners. If both parties were without the **jus conubii** (right of marriage given to **socii**) the marriage would be called **nuptiae iniustae** or **matrimonium iniustum**.

Betrothal was not necessary and did not carry any legal significance and was called **sponsalia**. **Spondeo** was the word of choice for the sponsalia and the maiden was henceforth **sponsa**. A cancellation could be made through an intermediary (**nuntius**) and the cancellation itself was called **repudium renutiare**.

The act of personal union of Roman couples was the **dextrarum iunctio**, the joining of right hands.

The unlucky days of marriage were the Kal**e**nds, **Nones**, **Ides**, and the days following each of them. As was all of May and the first half of June on account of the **Argean offerings** and the **Lemuria** in May and the **dies religiosi** of Vesta in June. Days deemed unlucky on account of the opening of the entranceway to the underworld were 8/24, 10/05, 11/08.

On the eve of her wedding day, the bride dedicated to the **Lares** of her father’s house her **bulla** and the **toga praetexta**. For the sake of omen, she put on before going to sleep her wedding dress, the **tunica recta** or **tunica regilla**. The wedding dress would be fastened around the waist with a band of wool ties in the knot of Hercules, **nodus Herculeanus**. Hercules was the guardian of wedded life. Only the husband was privileged to untie this knot. Over the wedding dress, the flame colored bridal veil was worn (**flammeum**). **Nubere** “to veil” is the regular word for marry.

The bridal hair arrangement consisted of six locks braided and kept in position by ribbons (**vittae**) divided by spears.

The wedding began in the **atrium**.

The confarreate ceremony began with the dextrarum junctio, brought together by the pronuba, a matron married to her first husband. The two joined hands in the presence of 10 representatives of the ten gentes of the curia. The words spoken by the bride are: Quando tu **Gajus**, ego **Gaja**.

An offering of a cake of spelt, the **farreum libum** was made to Jupiter by the **Pontifex Maximus** and the **Flamen Dialis**. A prayer was recited by the Flamen to **Juno**, **Tellus, Picumnus**, and **Pilumnus**, the country and fruit deities. The utensils necessary for the offering were carried in a covered basket (**cumerus**) by a boy called Camillus whose parents must be alive at the time (**patrimus et matrimus**). Then the guests would use the word **feliciter** to congratulate the couple.

The coemptio ceremony began with the fictitious sale of the bride, carried out in the presence of no less than five witnesses. A coin would be laid on the scales held by a **libripens** (scale holder). Then followed the dextrarum junctio and the words of consent. Originally the groom would ask the bride: **An sibi mater familias esse vellet** and she would ask him: **An sibi pater familias esse vellet**.

The first wedding feast (**cena nuptialis**) lasted until evening. This feast would be concluded by the distribution of the wedding cake (**mustaceum**) which was made of meal steeped in must, served on bay leaves.

After the cena nuptialis, the bride would be taken to her husband’s house, this ceremony was called **deductio**. When all were in front of the house, the marriage hymn (**hymenaeus**) was sung. During the hymn, the bride would be placed in the arms of her mother and the groom would forcibly take her (**Rape of Sabine**?). The bride then took her place in the procession attended by three boys (**patrimi et matrimi**), two would walk by her side, holding a hand, and the other carried in front of her the wedding torch of white thorn, the **spina alba**.

During the march, the **Versus Fescennini** would be sung. The crowd would shout **Talassius**, again reminiscent of the Sabine Rape. The bride would drop one coin for the **Lares compitales (crossroad spirits)**. One she gave to the groom, symbolic of her dowry. The last to the Lares of her groom’s house.

When they would reach the house, the bride would the door posts with bands of wool and anointed the door with oil and fat. She then say: **Ubi tu Gaius, ego Gaia**.

The bride would be placed by the **pronuba** on the **lectus genialis**, the wedding bed in the **Atrium**. On the next day, she was given in her new home the second wedding feast (**repotia**).

She would now be dressed in the respected and dignified **stola matronalis**, the matron’s dress. On the first of March, **Matronalia** would be celebrated for wives and mothers. For the rich, a eulogy would be delivered for her on the rostra.