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**WOMEN AND WEASELS:
A MEDICO-RELIGIOUS APPROACH TO MATERNITY
IN A REPUBLICAN CITY OF LAZIO**

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Abstract: Medicine and magico-religious practices went hand in hand in Greco-Roman societies, because they attached enormous importance to divine manifestations. Insofar as the gods were present everywhere and in all circumstances, it was necessary to scrupulously respect the rituals which were practised in their honour. Without these rituals, peace with the gods could be disrupted. In the town of Palestrina (Lazio), a votive deposit was unearthed near the foundations of a sanctuary. It contained several effigies of Juno as well as eight very original little statuettes with the breasts of a woman but the body of a weasel. In addition, there were also weasel's bones and metal keys. Even though it seems logical to think that the religious complex and these offerings were evoted to the goddess, it is more difficult, however, to understand the link between Juno and the different offerings. Why were they placed there and by whom?

Keywords: Lazio, Palestrina (Praeneste), Juno, women weasels' effigies, weasels, Roman religion.

Despite the undeniable progress in medical knowledge, medicine and magico-religious practices went hand in hand in Greco-Roman societies, because they attached enormous importance to divine manifestations. Indeed, in the life of an individual, gods were present everywhere, in all circumstances and at all times. So it was necessary to scrupulously respect the rituals which were practiced in their honor. Without these rituals peace with the gods could be disrupted, and humans would risk the worst evils. Illnesses of any kind could be seen as one of them, which explains why a more popular medicine, influenced by magic, was practiced at the same time as scientific medicine.

During the research I carried out as part of my PhD thesis, which focused on female religious practices in the sanctuaries of southern Etruria and Lazio (Italy)¹, I could see that many of them combined magic and medicine. Women mainly sought the survival of their family members and their community as well

¹ Thibaut 2015.

as their own salvation. That's why they had to use all the means that were available to them. Among them is a curiosity that will be the subject of particular attention in this article.

In the town of Palestrina, a votive deposit was unearthed near the foundations of a sanctuary. It contained effigies of Juno as well as eight very original little statuettes with the bust of a woman but the body of a weasel. In addition, archaeologists also found weasel's bones and metal keys. If it seems logical to think that the religious complex and these offerings were devolved to the goddess, it is more difficult, however, to understand the link between her and these different presents. Why were they placed there? Who could be motivated to do so?

The aim of the following pages is to study the purpose of this deposit and the medico-religious practices that accompanied it through several different perspectives. The study will then progress in two stages. The first will consist in presenting the city of Praeneste and the characteristics of its tutelary divinity, because the two seem to have a close link with Juno. In the second part, I will analyze the personality of the goddess as well as the offerings found through the prism of her personality and to relate them to popular beliefs. These maintained that the pregnant women who did not pray enough would be transformed into a weasel, thus never being able to give birth. Conversely, medicinal prescriptions recommended the drool of this animal for helping with the delivery. Finally, the keys were recognized to open or close the uterus as much as you want. In short, this article will attempt to highlight the rituals performed and associated with the medicine practiced in one of the Palestrina sites to promote all stages of motherhood. The phenomenon discussed in this paper deals with this set of issues.

I. An imposing city, an important goddess

Before detailing and understanding what justifies the presence of this curiosity, it is important to remind in outlines the history of the city where it was discovered as well as that of its tutelary goddess.

I.1. A religious site with a courotrophic characteristic

The modern city of Palestrina settled on the ancient city of Praeneste, located in the Lazio region, about 37 km east of Rome (fig. 1). According to the classical tradition, the city was founded by a mythical hero whose name and origins vary in different written testimonies (Cato., *Origines*, fr. 59; Plut., *Mor.* 316b; Serv.,

A. VII 678; Verg., A. VII 678)². However, the city is better known for the ruins of the sanctuary of its tutelary deity, Fortuna Primigenia, the remains of which could have been systematically excavated after the bombings of 1944. These destroyed part of the city of Palestrina, but, at the same time, exposed the terraces superimposed of the sanctuary. Researches, which continue still today, have shown that until the city was reduced to a simple Roman colony in 82 AD, the construction of the sanctuary continued from terrace to terrace. Indeed, after having submitted to Rome in 338 BC, the city developed an important phase of construction in which the embellishment of the sanctuary has been dated³.

The entire sacred area had the dimensions of a city since it occupied almost the entire surface of the current Palestrina. It consisted of two sanctuaries surmounted by a tholos (fig. 2). While this is not the subject of my contribution, it is still interesting in many ways. Indeed, the lower sanctuary included a cave which had been fitted out and transformed to artificially create stalactites there. It thus echoed the natural cave located opposite the lower forum of the city⁴. In the collective imagination of ancient Greece⁵, taken up during the Roman Republic and then in the imperial era (Plut., *Mor.* VI 495F–496A), the flow of water allowed by an irrigation system consisting of channels, whether natural, like springs or caves, or artificial, like fountains, recalled the blood vessels of the female body allowing the circulation or, *a contrario*, the retention of menstrual blood, for the purpose of procreating, but also to breastfeed⁶. Doctors from the Hippocratic Collection and Aristotle (*Gen. an.* 739b, 20–5) actually thought that the same veins connected the womb and the breasts⁷. As a result, it is possible that the udder shape of the stalactites and the milky appearance of the water extending below them⁸ gave rise to a popular belief in a divine and therapeutic form that could be revered by pregnant women and by women hoping to one day give

² The city of Praeneste boasted of descending from Caeculus, which would constitute the counterpart of Romulus in Rome: Schmitz 1880.

³ Champeaux 1986, 26–30.

⁴ Champeaux 1982, 30, note 36; 123 and 127.

⁵ Auberge 2001, 137.

⁶ For Hippocratic Doctors, milk was a body fluid that resulted from the cohesion of food residues and blood: Arist. *Gen. an.* II 4, 739b20; IV 8, 777a7–8; Hippoc., *Epid.* II 3, 17. “Il nourrit l’enfant dans l’utérus au moyen des veines pendant la grossesse, puis remonté au niveau des seins en fin de période, il se convertit en lait blanc par un processus de coction grâce à la chaleur du cœur et continue à alimenter le nourrisson après la naissance”: Papaikonomou 2019, 38; Bodiou 2017, 27–42.

⁷ Jaeggi 2019b, 354.

⁸ Jaeggi indicated that the milky appearance of water can be explained chemically or by a specific constitution of the air. On this, see Jaeggi 2019a, 38.

birth or who had just done so⁹. This figure seems to be the goddess to whom this place of worship was dedicated, Fortuna Primigenia.

I.2. A Courotrophic goddess

A passage from Cicero (*Div.* II 86) succinctly describes the statue of the goddess existing in the sanctuary of Jupiter at Praeneste: *Is est hodie locus, saeptus religiose propter Iouis Pueri, qui lactens cum Iunone Fortunae in gremio sedens mammam adpetens castissime colitur a matribus*¹⁰. Here, Fortuna clearly appears as a courotrophic deity to whom the mothers worshiped. But an in-depth study carried out by S. Jaeggi on a relief that represents a bottle and was carved on a Palestrina fountain as well as the same scholar's subsequent work on the tutelary goddess of the city made it possible to better understand the personality of Fortuna. She concluded that it was a “déesse originelle, symbolisée par la terre, source de toute création”¹¹, which explains why its epiclesis refers to a divinity protecting the different stages of life¹². In a city where Fortuna was the main goddess, was courotrophy merely a peculiarity of the tutelary goddess of Praeneste? Alternatively, did this practice extend to the whole city and was it therefore an aspect of the characteristic traits of the other gods who were honored there?

II. Juno, women and weasels

Among the other deities honored at Praeneste, Juno seemed to have had an important place since she was recognized within the city's pantheon, as evidenced in particular by Ovid's *Fasti* (VI 62) and Macrobe's *Saturnalia* (II 12, 30). Furthermore, another piece of evidence comes from the various cists found in the ancient city on which Juno appeared and to which the month of *Iunis* was dedicated (Fest. 92 6 L).

⁹ Baggieri 2000, 16.

¹⁰ Cic., *Div.* II 86: “This place is today a consecrated enclosure, near the sanctuary of Jupiter as a child, who, represented as an infant, seated with Juno on the lap of Fortune and seeking the breast, receives a very chaste worship from mothers” (trad. J. Kany-Turpin, Paris, Flammarion, 2004).

¹¹ Jaeggi 2019a, 41.

¹² The researcher who has worked the most on Fortuna Primigenia, J. Champeaux, has come to the conclusion that the goddess was associated with premarital, marital and birth-related stages. According to Champeaux (1982, 287), during the rites, clothes were offered to the goddess.

II.1. A singular deity

In addition to her presence with Fortuna Primigenia in the aforementioned statue, the goddess appears to have indeed occupied at least two places of worship. Even though we do not know the plan of the first one, some ruins were discovered near the church of Santa Lucia, between St. Rocc-via-Pius XII and Arcioni. The sanctuary, however, occupied a not inconsiderable position, as it was located along a road that led to the Temple of Jupiter, meaning that it was to play a part in the worship of Fortuna Primigenia. Furthermore, there is an inscription, dated from the 2nd century BC which proves that Juno was honored there and who were some of her dedicators: *Iunone reg(ina) / matrona / Pisaure(n)se(s) / dono ded(e)-ro(n)t*¹³. The matrons mentioned came from Pisaurum, a town now known as Pesaro in the province of the same name, and Urbino (Marches) in central Italy. Even though we ignore why these women came to Praeneste, it seems logical to think that it must have been important since they traveled more than 360 km in order to make a present to Juno.

F. Glinister believes that they must have been officially sent by their city in order to require Fortuna's help to make it sustainable. It indeed establishes a relationship between the dedication dated from the 2nd century BC and the founding of the Roman colony in 184 BC¹⁴. Thus, these women would have come to Praeneste in order to promote understanding between the local population and the settlers¹⁵. However, it is hard to imagine these dedicators making such a long journey to get to Praeneste, no matter how famous it was, in order to worship Fortuna when the gift was intended for Juno. Also, it seems enough to honor this goddess in Pisaurum, especially if it was a question of creating a cohesion between its inhabitants. The theory put forward by F. Glinister is therefore very interesting, but it is based on too little evidence to be certain of the role played by female religious practices in colonization. On the other hand, this example could demonstrate that women were very active and integrated in their city. Anyway, not far from this place of worship, among the offerings which had been deposited there, a votive mark revealed two statuettes of women breastfeeding¹⁶. Juno may therefore also have attracted women for reasons related to the well-being of their families and their communities¹⁷.

¹³ *CIL* I², 378: “the matrons of Pisaurum donated to Juno *Regina*”. On this, see Pérez 2011, 89.

¹⁴ Liv. XXXIX 44.

¹⁵ Glinister 2006, 103; Glinister 2009, 121.

¹⁶ Pensabene 2001.

¹⁷ The main function of the female body was to give new members to a family which would later fulfill their role in the community to which they belonged. So much so that women had the mission of perpetuating their lineage as well as their society.

II.2. Juno and the site of Piazzale della Liberazione

The importance of Juno is also evidenced in a different archaeological site. It is the subject of this article. In 2002, substructures probably belonging to a sanctuary were unearthed under the Piazzale della Liberazione of Praeneste. Furthermore, not far away, along the current Corso Pierluigi (fig. 3), a votive deposit that has been dated to the 2nd century BC based on its pottery was also found. Since this is a deposit of obliteration (i.e. the closure of the cult area), archaeologists have argued that the place of worship was probably abandoned during this period¹⁸. The study of the contents of this deposit made possible to identify the divinity who was worshiped in these places as well as the cult practices carried out on its honour. Among the offerings recovered, there it was a small bronze statuette representing a woman dressed in a long chiton with an *apotygma* attached to the arm. While her left hand seems to hold an unidentified object, her right hand is holding a sacrificial bowl. The iconography therefore reminds the types of monumental statues of the Hera Barberini or the Juno Farnese¹⁹. Therefore, the sanctuary was probably dedicated to that same goddess.

Could it be that Juno gained importance in Praeneste from the moment when the city has become fully Roman and considerably improved? Did she have this same consideration before? Who could this Juno be and who were the faithful who came to honor her and for what purpose? We can reach an answer by analyzing the various offerings found in the votive deposit, among which is the curiosity I mentioned in my introduction.

II. 3. Weasels for a Juno *Lucina*?

As it is well known, one of the main characteristics of this Roman goddess is to be the divinity of marriage, since she accompanied the young people until they took their place in the community thanks to the hymen²⁰. However, if we take into account the importance of the courtothropy that seemed to reign in Praeneste

¹⁸ Tedeschi 2012, 319–320.

¹⁹ Tedeschi 2012, 322.

²⁰ Obviously, a community needed new generations to be able to survive. But these new generations would not be considered “useful” to it until they had reached their sexual maturity. Only then, young men could become competent warriors to save the community while young women could marry to give new generations to the community. That’s why, in the third book of Ovid’ *Fasti*, Juno Lucina was honoured by married and pregnant women, during the Matronalia, a festival that was held in March (D.H., 4, 15, 5; Plin., HN XVI, 235; Varr., L. l. V, 67–69 et Cic., ND II, 68).

and the examples of offerings dedicated to the first Juno mentioned above, it is possible that this second Juno is also attached to the female world.

The votive deposit found under Piazzale della Liberazione consisted of four curious terracotta statuettes (fig. 4), which constitute an *unicum*. They represent veiled women draped in a himation which covers their bodies completely. Their right arms are folded on the chest, with their right hand placed on the left shoulder as many votive deposits found in central Italy²¹. Nevertheless, their body has the shape of an inverted handle with small additions of soil in the place of arms and knees. The researchers who studied this case came with a very original interpretation to which I subscribe. But, before presenting this theory, it is necessary to analyze the rest of the ex-voto which were found together with these statuettes.

Interestingly, among other things, two terracotta representations of a womb as well as fragments of iron keys were also found. It is possible that all of them were associated to each other, since ancient doctors perceived the matrix as a container capable of sucking up male semen and retaining it, as a medical cupping vessel would do (*De antiqua medicina* XXII), an inverted vase (Arsit., *Gen. an.*; Sor., *Gyn.* I 4) or an octopus, as described by the second century AD Greek doctor, Soranos of Ephesus (I 4, 69–71). In his own words: “[...] ἐπὶ δὲ τῶν ἀποκεκηκιδῶν τυλωδέστερον γίνεται ὡς κεφαλὴ πολύποδος, ἢ ἄκρω βρόγχου (καθὼς φησὶν Ἡρόφιλος) ὅμοιον [...]”²². The aspiration and then the retention of the male semen would allow its mixing with the female semen from which would result the creation of a foetus (Arist., *Gen. an.* II 4, 739 a–b). It was still necessary that the uterus was properly closed, otherwise it could let escape the seeds and the maternal blood that served as food for the foetus. This could cause abortion or make the future child a weakened being, disabled, and therefore useless for the community: “ἔστιν ὅτε τὰ τέκνα λεπτὰ καὶ ἀνθενέα γίνεται, ἐκ πατρὸς καὶ μητρὸς παχέων τε καὶ ἰσχυρῶν ἐόντων· κῆν μὲν πολλῶν ἤδη γενομένων τῶν παιδίων τοιοῦτον γένηται, δῆλον ὅτι ἐν τῆσι μήτρῃσι ἐνόσησε τὸ ἔμβρυον, καὶ ἀπὸ τῆς μητρὸς τι τῆς αὐξῆς αὐτοῦ ἔξω παρήει, τῶν μητρέων χανουσέων μᾶλλον, καὶ διὰ τοῦτο ἀνθενές ἐγένετο”²³. But things could get even worse, leading to a second conception, provoking serious damage to the first foetus and causing a miscarriage for the second (Arist., *Hist. an.* VII 4, 585a; Hippoc., *Sup.*; Hippoc.,

²¹ Pensabene 2001, 291–305.

²² Sor., *Gyn.* I 4, 69–71: “[...] but in women who have had children, it becomes relatively callous, like the head of an octopus, and recalls – to speak like Herophilus – the top of the trachea” (trad. P. Burguière, D. Gourevitch, Y. Malinas, Paris, Les Belles Lettres, 1988).

²³ Hippoc., *Gen.* IX 1: “This also happens: sometimes children are born thin and weak from large, strong parents. If it is such after many other (normal) births, it is clear that the foetus was sick in the womb and that part of what was intended for its growth escaped from the mother, because of the matrix too gaping” (trad. R. Joly, Paris, Les Belles Lettres, 1970).

Diaet. I 31)²⁴. Doctors in different periods of antiquity, however, did not agree on the number of months that a gestation should last and that is not my purpose. They agreed, however, that a prematurely born child may not have all of his/her abilities.

Perhaps as an echo of these fears and to avoid them to happen, these terracotta offerings were discovered in the votive deposit, in the same way as the pieces of keys²⁵. Even if they are only fragments, three other copies are known in central Italy²⁶ which are better preserved and, given their size, it seems unthinkable that these keys were used in everyday life. In addition, it was still customary for Roman women in the 4th century AD to offer some as votive offerings to promote parturition: “*clauim mulieribus consuetudo erat donare ob significadam partus facilitatem*” (Fest., 39–56). The votive gift of keys could therefore be perceived as a pictorial means of closing the uterus. Thus, keys can not only guarantee the opening necessary for the penetration of sperm but also its closure to retain it and allow the conception as well as the good progress of gestation by avoiding any premature opening leading to a miscarriage (Hippoc., *Gen.* IX 1). When the pregnancy came to an end, keys will help opening again the neck of the organ (Galen., *Nat. Fac.* II 3)²⁷. Keys could have been filed, like the two representations of uterus, for a conception to take place, for it to be completed, or to thank Juno if the birth had gone well.

The association between the different offerings seems to be confirmed thanks to gems produced between the 2nd and 3rd centuries AD, on the obverse of which is visible a suction cup closed by a key of three, five or seven teeth, and on the reverse, magic formulas in Greek like “make contract” or “stay still, uterus”²⁸ (figs. 5 a–d). The scene is usually surrounded by the body of a snake that bites its own tail, the *ouroboros*. The serpent creates a magic, closed, protected space, which reinforces the idea of control of the orifice suggested by the key²⁹. Sexual stones act on sexuality and human procreation which they regulate. Their value was apotropaic. They therefore had to be made with a mineral known to be conjunctive, the most popular stones being red in order to imitate the blood whose

²⁴ Dasen 2005, 32–35.

²⁵ Tedeschi 2007, 205.

²⁶ The first was discovered at Tuffilo, about 25 km from Agnone; another key was found in the major temple of Vignale in Falerii Veteres and the third was unearthed in the Pozzarello shrine in Bolsena.

²⁷ Gourevitch 1995, 2093.

²⁸ Ducaté-Paarmann 2003, 226.

²⁹ Dasen 2015, 60.

flow they had to control (such as jasper³⁰), or ferric (such as haematite or magnetite), which could favor conception by attracting and retaining male semen³¹, but also by accelerating childbirth (Diosc., V 142). To be effective, most of them were carried around the neck, waist, belly, kidneys or thigh (Diosc., V 142; Hippoc., *Steril.* 243 (in pessary); Belleau, *Love and New Exchanges* XVI 3; *The stone of Aymant ou calamite*, 249–50)³². Others were mounted in a ring, while others will be rubbed or ingested in pulverized form (Damig. I 6–8 [aetite]; IX 6–9 [haematite])³³.

In short, as long as Juno was known to accompany a young girl to her married state and help her in her tasks, the various offerings would therefore correspond to the duty of conceiving and protecting the foetus until delivery. This affinity between the goddess and the offerings is well known in the Greek world, as indicated by the play *Women in Thesmophoria* in which, Aristophanes, describes Hera as the keeper of the keys to marriage (κλῆιδας γάμου; Aristoph., *Thesm.*, 973–976). Also among the Romans, since in the *Indigitamenta*, there is a mention of a Juno *Fluonia*, which was to allow the rules to be retained after conception and thus ensure the closure of the womb³⁴. In general, the link with parturition was worth to the goddess to be named Juno *Lucina*, because she brought to light (*lux* in Latin) the foetus, that is to say that she helped in their birth.

If she was a bearer of hope, pregnant women could also fear her and want to offer these votive offerings to protect themselves, because the goddess could also not allow childbirth and cause the death of the mother and the child in layers. It is in this case that we must understand, in my opinion, the offering of the curious little statuettes (figs. 4a and b). A. Tedeschi, who studied the site, equated their position with that taken by a weasel when it scans the horizon (fig. 6). This interpretation is also due to the fact that the bones of this small carnivore were also found in the votive deposit³⁵. Consequently, these statuettes could assimilate women to these small animals.

³⁰ Dasen 2014, 216; Dasen, Nagy 2019, 429–431.

³¹ “L’image de l’utérus-ventouse médicale gravée sur de l’hématite renvoie à la présence d’Asclépios et à la puissance génératrice d’Ouranos émasculé dont le sang a produit le minéral” (*Lapidaire orphique* XXI 658–663): Bonnard, Dasen, Wilgaux 2015, 189; Dasen 2015, 37–41.

³² Dasen 2002, 5.

³³ Gaillard-Seux 1998, 80–82.

³⁴ Even if the words compiled in the *Indigitamenta* must be taken with caution because they were made by Latin Christian authors, therefore, after the period covered by this study, they can reflect the mentalities of the societies which they have taken the inspiration from: Aubert 2004, 193–195.

³⁵ Tedeschi 2007, 205; Tedeschi 2012, 323.

In addition, the association with a weasel is fully realized if one understands Juno as being Juno *Lucina* and the fear that she could inspire. Perhaps these statuettes were supposed to ward off this fear, recalling the misfortune of the person who had helped Alcmene give birth after his hard work by tricking the goddess *Lucina*. Thus, these representations would reflect the need for pregnant women to be in turn seconded in this difficult role. In his *Metamorphoses*, Ovid refers to a woman transformed into a weasel during the birth of Hercules. After suffering terribly for six days and seven nights, Alcmene, pregnant by Jupiter and on not to give life, begs the goddess of births, *Lucina*, to come and help her. In this situation, Juno, mad with jealousy at the idea that a mortal would give birth to the fruit of a union with her divine husband, asked *Lucina* to delay the delivery. For this, the goddess seated on her altar in front of the house where Alcmene lived, crossing her legs and her fingers while pronouncing incantations. Her performance suspended Alcmene's delivery. At this moment intervened Galanthis, one of the servants of Alcmene, who took advantage of *Lucina* making her believe that the young woman had given birth, forcing the goddess to stop her incantations which allowed the pregnant to give life to Hercules. In order to take revenge, *Lucina* changed the liar into a weasel:

“Numine decepto risisse Galanthis fama est;
 Ridentem prensamque ipsis dea saeva capillis
 Traxit et e terra corpus releuare uolentem
 Arcuit inque pedes mutauit brachia primos.
 Strenuitas antiqua manet nec terga colorem
 Amisere suum ; forma est diuersa priori.
 Quae quia mendaci parientam iuuerat ore,
 Ore parit ; nostrarque domos, ut et ante, frequentat”³⁶.

Perhaps these statuettes were supposed to ward off this fear of pregnant women who remembered the difficult birth of Alcmene. In any case, it seems clear that the weasel is linked to childbirth, because it was believed that taking a decoction based on secretions of the matrix of a weasel flowing through its vulva, could facilitate difficult deliveries (Plin., *Nat.* XXX 124).

Thus, the presence of this small animal in the votive deposit near a place of worship where Juno was undoubtedly honored suggests that the worship of the latter was related to motherhood and its consequences. It is possible that, at the

³⁶ Ov., *Met.* IX, 316–323: “Seeing that she had deceived the goddess, Galanthis laughed; she still laughed that the cruel goddess had already seized her and was dragging her by her beautiful hair; as she tried to get up from the ground, Lucine stopped her and made her arms from the front feet. It retains its old promptitude; his back has not lost its color; but it has changed form. Because her mouth had rescued a woman who was about to give birth by a lie, she gave birth by mouth; as in the past, she frequents our homes” (trad. G. Lafaye, Paris, Les Belles Lettres, 1955).

end of a rite that did not reach us, perhaps similar to that practiced during the *Matronalia* (Var., *L.* V 74; Ov., *Fast.* III, 167–234; Plut., *Vit. Rom.* XXI 1; Serv., *A.* VIII 638) in honor of Juno *Lucina*, carried out by married women (pregnant or not), attended the sacrifice of weasels and offered small statuettes in order to guard against the dangers of childbirth. It is very likely that the faithful were well aware that Juno had freedom to choose to help the pregnant woman and her infant or, on the contrary, to compromise their survival.

It seems, in the end, that the courtois at Praeneste is a character trait adopted, at least, by its most important deities. However, they do not seem to intervene during the same stages of life. Indeed, while Fortuna Primigenia could be more solicited by women for breastfeeding and thus the growth of their child, Juno, who we can call *Lucina*, seemed to accompany expectant mothers until they gave birth. The votive deposit found not far from the sacred area dedicated to the goddess contained small statuettes which depicted half woman, half weasel. This *unicum* perfectly demonstrates that pregnant women were aware of the risks of pregnancy for them and their babies, as it recalls the myth of Galanthis and the fear that Juno might inspire. So, in order to protect themselves and put all the chances on their side, the women no doubt used the advice of doctors, but also more popular practices as evidenced by the rituals performed for Juno.

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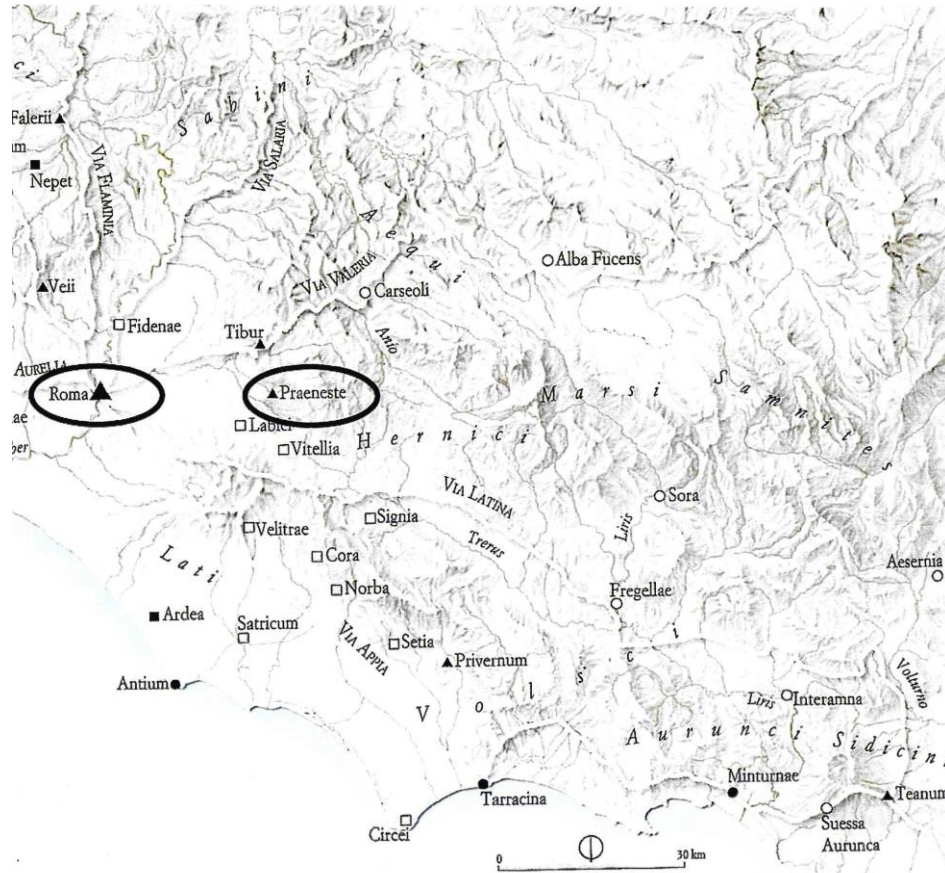


Fig. 1: Map of Lazio with localization of Praeneste. In: Coarelli 2011, fig. 2, 95.

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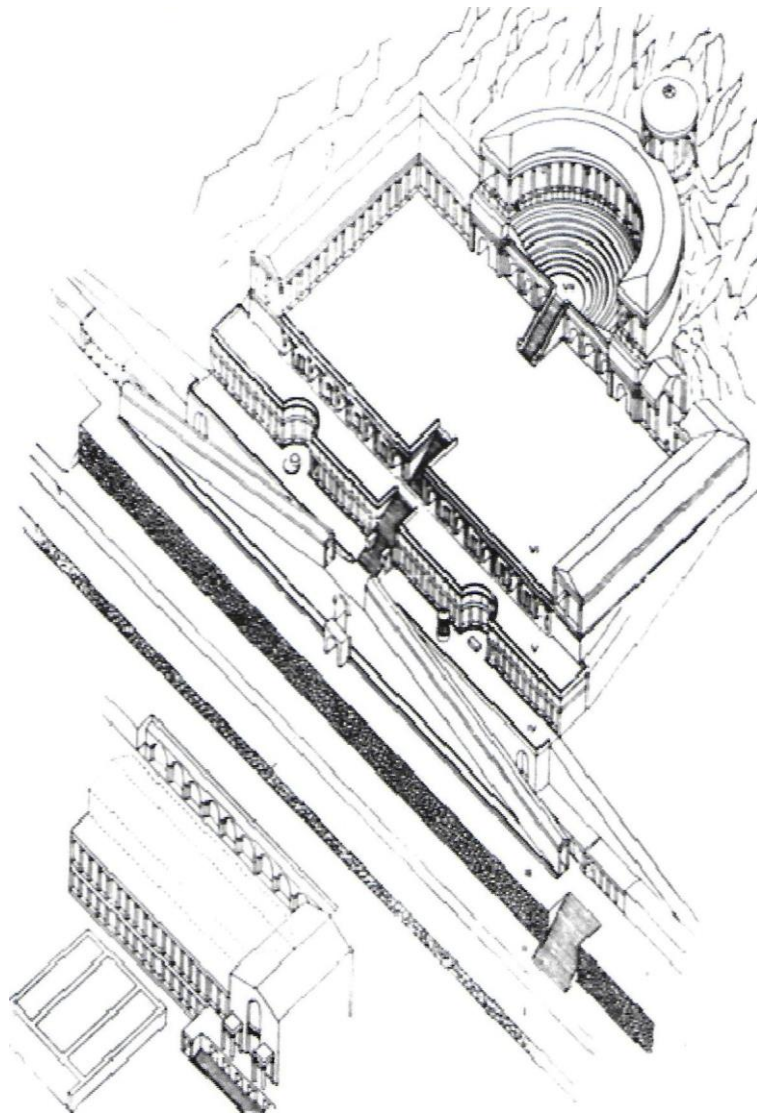


Fig. 2: Fortuna Primigenia's sanctuary with the tholos.
In: Champeaux 1982, pl. III.

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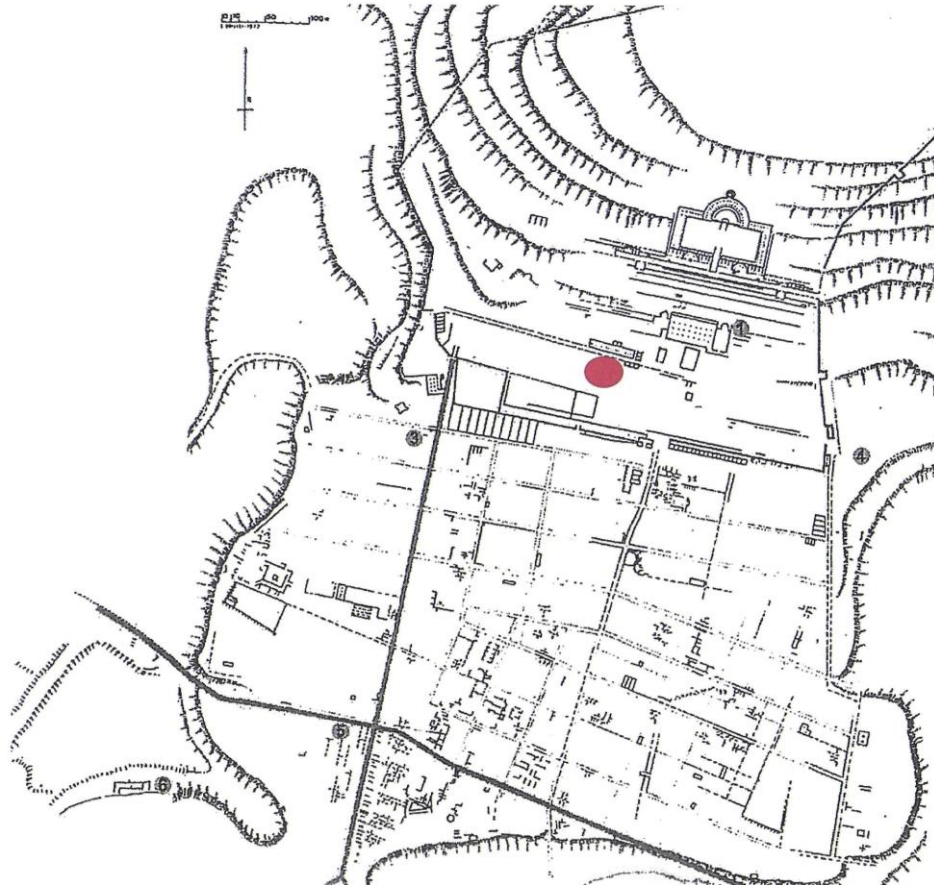


Fig. 3: Localization of the sanctuary-Piazzale della Liberazione.
In: Tedeshi 2012, fig. 3, 314.

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Fig. 4a and 4b: Statuettes representing women with a weasel's lower body.
In: Fazio 2015, fig 7–8, 127.



Fig. 5a: Magical gem: Pregnant woman, uterus with key (A), octopus-like uterus (B) (black haematite). 3rd c. AD. In: Magical Gems Database (CBd) [<http://classics.mfab.hu/talismans/>]. N° inv. G 1986, 5–1, 32, The British Museum. Photo: Christopher A. Faraone.



Fig. 5b: Magical gem: Ouroboros enclosing naked woman (A) womb, scarab-octopus (B) (red jasper). 3rd c. AD. In: Magical Gems Database (CBd) [<http://classics.mfab.hu/talismans/>]. N° inv. G 389 (EA 56389), The British Museum. Photo: Christopher A. Faraone.

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Fig. 5c: Magical gem in post-antique gold mount: Ouroboros enclosing uterus (A) ορωριουθ (B) (black haematite). In: *Magical Gems Database (CBd)* [<http://classics.mfab.hu/talismans/>]. Private Coll./Wagner-Boardman 2003, 580. Photo: Magdalena Depowska.



Fig. 5d: Magical gem: Uterus with key (A) ορωριουθ (B) (black haematite). In: *Magical Gems Database (CBd)* [<http://classics.mfab.hu/talismans/>]. N° inv. 78773, Roma, Museo Nazionale Romano. Photo: Attilio Mastrocinque.

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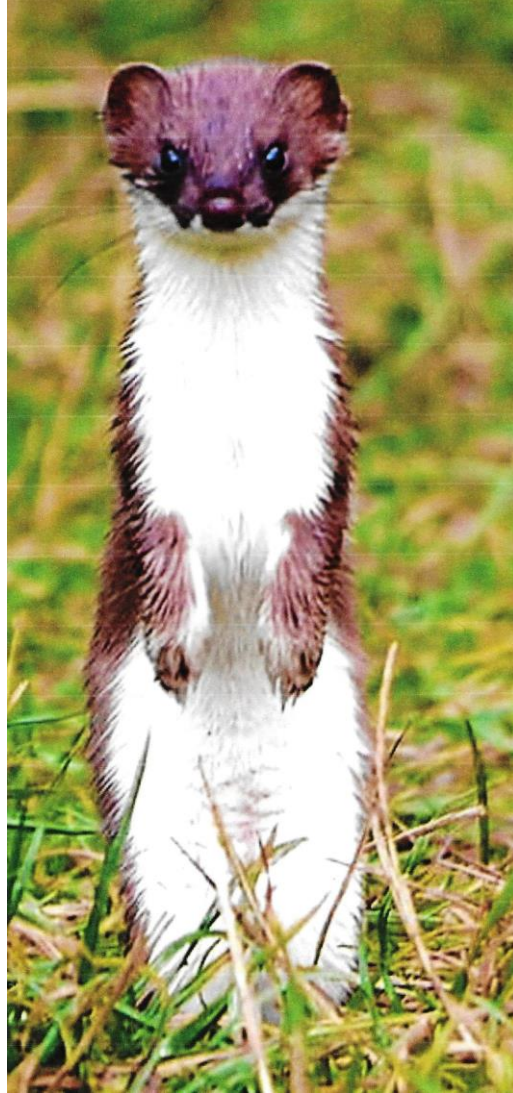


Fig. 6: Weasel scanning the horizon.

In: <http://animauxdelumiere.over-blog.com/2017/03/la-belette-de-lumiere.html>.