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***Pietas* as definition of Roman Identity in Livy and Tacitus.**

The Roman people was the most pious of all, or sometimes not. *Pietas*, the correct relationship with the gods, was one of the ultimate bonding marks of Roman identity, centered in the *urbs* itself. This is shown in a wealth of circumstances in Livy, although one of the most interesting characteristics of livian *pietas* is exactly the individual failure in acting their part towards the gods: *impietas* leads always ultimately to collective punishment and defeat. As the most important example of these situations, we will trace the symbolic role of the Capitol as the utmost place where both *pietas* and *impietas* are acted out. This has been indeed one relatively frequent reading of Livy, although less emphasized than his references about prodigies or the age-old issue on his own religious views. What we want to present is a comparative view with the writings of Tacitus, with a goal to understanding the differences in these two periods regarding historians' take on *pietas*, and *impietas*, as determiners of the Romans' definition of themselves. Tacitus stresses the constant break in the citizens' obligations towards and fear of the gods, both in the turbulent year of the *Histories* and the licenses of the emperors in the *Annals*. Nero and the disregard for the importance of the Capitol are the culminations of this *impietas*, but the role of the gods in recognising it and punishing the Romans is always delayed or non-existent. This also offers an interpretation on tacitean religious pessimism in the preface of the *Histories*, but mainly an aid to understand the mechanisms of *pietas* in the Roman society of the early Principate.