Before Hannibal’s victories at Lake Trasimene and Cannae, the decemwiri consulted the libri Sibyllini three times in 218/7 B.C.E.1 Unfavorable prodigies prompted two of the three consultations. The decemwiri in charge of the books ordered purifications, sacrifices, lectisternia, monetary gifts to various deities,2 and a new festival for Saturn.3 After the Trasimene debacle, Q. Fabius Maximus began his second dictatorship with a senatorial meeting. According to Livy’s account, the dictator declared that Flaminius’ mistake, which led to the defeat, did not arise from “temerity and lack of experience as from neglect of traditional ceremonies, especially the taking of auspices.”4 He urged that the Sibylline Books be consulted, as Livy notes, “a rare measure unless unnatural events of the most dreadful kind were brought to the Senate’s notice.”5 Thus, Livy’s Fabius emerges as a second Camillus6 and the Roman through the actions of the Senate as the religiosisissa gens whose city was founded auspicio augurioque. There was a reciprocal mechanism at work that connected the divine and the human sphere. Prescribed rituals guaranteed the pax deorum and along reciprocal lines the pax hominum. Along these linear patterns of cause and effect, it hardly surprises that the decemwiri reported

1 Livy 21.62.6, 22.9.8–10, 22.36.6–9, and pl. Fab.Max.2.
2 40 pounds of gold to the temple of Juno at Lanuvium (Livy 21.62.8) and a 50-pound gold thunderbolt to Jupiter as well as gifts of silver to Juno and Minerva (Livy 22.1.17). Livy does not disclose the contents of the list of “appropriate formulae drawn from the libri Sibyllini” before the battle of Cannae (22.36.9). We only learn that “legates from Paestum brought some golden plates to Rome. They received thanks but just as with the Neapolitans, the Romans did not accept the gold.” Besides sacrifices and purification rituals, which aimed to alleviate stress and, in essence, to bind the community together, the Roman state collected additional monetary sources when necessary.
4 22.9.7.
5 Ibid.
6 This comparison clearly reveals itself 22.14.9.
that "the offerings to Mars had been incorrectly performed, and must, therefore, be performed afresh and on a greater scale." At this occasion, the introduction of the Sicilian Venus Erycina and Mens occurred.

The Romans appropriated and integrated into their pantheon with Venus Erycina, from an area of strategic importance to them, a deity of considerable age and, therefore, religious importance. In the case of Erycina the area had been part of the imperium since the First Punic War, while Asia Minor was not. The latter had been, however, an important power broker in Greek (Macedonian) affairs ever since Philip V got himself involved in the Carthaginian-Roman conflict. Asia Minor also could be eyed as an eventual lucrative addition to an ever-growing empire especially in 205 B.C.E. when the Macedonian War ended and Hannibal had ceased to be a menacing antagonist. During the Second Punic War, in a time of great anxieties, we see Rome redefine its religion. This brought a Greek veneer and resulted in the increased introduction of literary competitions.

As if Hannibal's victories were not enough, two Vestal Virgins committed sexual offenses (stupri compertae), for which one was put to death. The other, escaping the fate of being buried alive, committed suicide. Q. Fabius Pictor was dispatched to Delphi to consult the most prestigious Greek oracle in the Mediterranean world. He returned with an answer. G. Dumézil calls this "an important moment in the development of the Roman cult of Apollo." Apollo, we remember, features prominently in connection with "performing arts."

7 See n. 4 above.

10 Livy 23.11.2–3.