Crucial changes in Roman state religion were always matters of special public importance and were staged as spectacular highlights in urban civic life. Their presentation in the form of extensive ceremonies and the impressive display of social and political order commonly surpassed the regular events of the religious calendar with their established processions, sacrifices and feasts. The introduction of a new state god thus unleashed enormous energies and caused exceptional expenses. This was already true in Republican times, when foreign gods imported or ritually transferred from their homes (deductio) from abroad for the res publica’s well-being and military success were received with elaborate adventus ceremonies before they were accommodated in costly new temples.\footnote{Rüpke (1990) 162ff.; Beard, North, Price (1998) 69f., 80–89.} It was no less true under the Principate when the death of a Roman emperor who then was voted divus by the Senate, and thus destined to become a new state god, triggered, in the context of an imperial funeral, a complex series of many days’ day-long rituals participated in by all groups of society. The ritual\footnote{Although the concept of ritual deserves a thorough theoretical assessment and has indeed unleashed an enormous amount of scholarly debate, I think I can dispense with an attempt to offer a detailed discussion here. My argument covers neither history of religion nor cultural or social anthropology nor ethnology or other fields as such, but is confined to history of religious policy in antiquity. Still, I find the publications of Jonathan Smith, a historian of religion, helpful in particular his classic article: Smith (1988) and his book: Smith (1987). In addition, a useful introduction into the wide field of ritual theory is offered by Dücker (2006). See also Bell (1992). A collaborative venture to apply aspects of ritual theory to the analysis of the world of antiquity has been edited by Stavrianopolou (2006).} of divinisation and apotheosis found its climax in the burning of an enormous pyre containing the emperor’s corpse or effigy which eventually released the emperor’s soul, embodied in an eagle, into heaven.\footnote{On the process of deification in Rome see—besides the excellent collection of evidence by Buraselis et al. (2004)—Price (1987); Gradel (2002) 261–320; Zanker (2004). It may be added that deification came also to be commonly extended to empresses, and sometimes to a dynast’s sons.}
This funerary pyre, the *rogus*, was a monumental structure adorned with incredibly lavish decoration (works of art, luxurious textiles, gold, ivory, enormous amounts of precious fragrance etc.) We would know little of the pyres’ sheer scale and breathtaking extravagance—and the enormous logistical preparations for them—if we did not have detailed reports of two imperial funerals, of Pertinax and of Septimius Severus. The ephemeral architecture of the gigantic pyre, the spectacle of the inferno burning it to the ground, and the rituals connected with the epiphany of a new Roman god or goddess were engraved into the memory of contemporaries and descendants: they were commemorated by poets, and represented on monuments, especially on a rich series of coins, which allowed the ritual and the event to live on for generations. We see that the funeral procession and the transformation of an emperor—or of an empress—into a *divus* or a *diva* were staged with utmost care and all imaginable effort. The erection of temples for the various *divi*, and religious public calendars of the death anniversaries, show us that these rites of *divinatio* in the empire’s capital constituted the main additions to the Roman state pantheon during the Principate.

Much less, on the other hand, is known of the disappearance or elimination of cults. Although we know of various measures to suppress individual, mostly foreign cults (like the Bacchanalian and, not the least, the Christian one) that were perceived as socially disintegrative or subversive or as imperiling traditional Roman religion (like the Manichaeans, according to Diocletian in his edict AD 297), the only case where one faces, in the long run, a fairly systematic, long-term effort by the Roman state to repress, eliminate and virtually ‘bury’ a previously well-established religious tradition or rather group of traditions is the one that tried to put an end to those cults which were bundled up and termed ‘pagan’ by their later Christian enemies. Many of them former state cults, these sacred traditions with their processions, sacrifices, precincts and shrines, became, after the Constantinian revolution of the early fourth century, first at least increasingly obsolete, then marginalized or abandoned, and later, under varying circumstances, liquidated and broken up. The question is how far this religious policy and, in several cases, prominent process of public closure or destruction of ancient cults and popular cult sites were

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5 D’Ambra (2010); Schulten (1979); Lische (2005).
6 Buraselis et al. (2004).
7 *Mosaicarum et Romanarum Legum Collatio* 15, 3 (*FIRA* II 580f.). See, most recently, Mosig-Walburg (2009) 168–176 with an extensive discussion of this text.