

## Book Review

# L’Etrusca disciplina au Ve siècle apr. J.-C. La divination dans le monde étrusco-italique

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Between 1985 and 1999, Dominique Briquel and Charles Guittard organized a series of conferences on “La Divination dans le monde étrusco-italique.” The proceedings were published between 1985 and 2005 as supplements to the journal *Caesarodunum*. The first three volumes dealt with specific topics (for example, different techniques of divination) and specialized questions (for instance, M. Hano, “*Haruspex et vates chez Tite-Live*,” in D. Briquel and C. Guittard, eds., *La divination dans le monde étrusco italique (III)*, *Caesarodunum* Supplement 56 [Tours 1986] 101–121). Beginning with the fourth volume (*Les écrivains du siècle d’Auguste et l’Etrusca disciplina. La divination dans le monde étrusco italique (IV)*, *Caesarodunum* Supplement 61 [Tours 1991]), the sources were organized chronologically by ancient authors, each discussed in a separate contribution. This gave readers a more neutral overview of the source material and better enabled them to draw their own conclusions about the ancient authors’ reliability. The series appeared to have come to a close with volume IX (D. Briquel and C. Guittard, eds., *L’Etrusca disciplina dans un monde en mutation. Les écrivains du IVe siècle, Table Ronde Clermont-Ferrand 1999*, *Caesarodunum* Supplement 67 [Tours 2005]). In the meantime, Briquel published his excellent book, *Chrétiens et haruspices. La religion étrusque, dernier rempart du paganisme Romain* (Paris 1997). However, that book alone could not serve as a substitute for the series and its focus on individual authors. The series ended with the fourth century, and thus did not get around to treating one of the authors cited by many scholars of Etruscan culture, namely Martianus Capella, who lived in the fifth century. His work *De nuptiis Philologiae et Mercurii* contained the only list of gods (I, 45–60), which was undoubtedly based

on the Etruscan division of the heavens into 16 houses, each correlated with one or more gods. It is impossible to miss the partial overlap with the Liver of Piacenza's outer rim, which is also divided into 16 sections. But it is also a bit mysterious, as Martianus clearly also refers to non-Etruscan beliefs. It would have been nice if the series had dedicated some space to his work.

And indeed, this gap is now filled by the tenth volume, under review here: *L'Étrusca disciplina au Ve siècle apr. J.-C.* After a short preface by Bruno Poulle, the first part ("Les derniers païens et *l'Étrusca disciplina*") begins with a chapter on Macrobius by one of the series' founders, Charles Guittard (13–26). Using a model followed by the other contributors, Guittard discusses first what is known about the author and then the passages relevant for the *Etrusca disciplina*: Macrobius mentioned an *ostentarium arborarium*, a list of *arbores infelices* that bring unhappiness, which draws on Tarquitiu Priscus (see *Les écrivains du siècle d'Auguste et l'Étrusca disciplina. La divination dans le monde étrusco italique (IV)*, *Caesardunum* Supplement 61 [Tours 1991] 37f.). He also came up with an *ostentarium Tuscum*, which claims that rams with a purple-red or saffron yellow coat and lambs with scarlet red wool should be seen as good omens. Modified fur colors are also listed as signs accompanying the birth of a boy and the return of the *Aurea Aetas* in Virgil's famous fourth eclogue (v. 42–45).

J.-Y. Guillaumin's contribution on Martianus Capella (27–44) does not repeat the complex debates of the Etruscologists concerning the connections between Martianus and the liver, which would have been out of place here. Instead, Guillaumin opts to demonstrate that Martianus—whose opus displays encyclopaedic knowledge—goes back to literature on the Etruscans in more passages. This shows that Martianus may have put together his division of gods into 16 houses on his own and did not necessarily entirely adapt it from another source. In Book II.142, he references the doctrine of the immortal *dii animales*, which can probably be traced back to the work of Cornelius Labeo. The doctrine states that the human souls (*animae humanae*) can be transformed through certain forms of sacrifice into *dii animales* (29–30). In Book II.157, Martianus refers to Tages, who, rising out of a plow furrow, showed the people "*ritum et extispicium*," almost certainly the rites contained in the *libri rituales* of the *Etrusca disciplina* as well as the art of hepatoscopy. He references an Etruscan "congress" of twelve gods and the *manubiae*, Jupiter's lightning bolts, which likely has something to do with the Etruscan interpretation of lightning. He also mentions the goddess Nortia and strange figures like Mantuana and Facundia. Concerning the latter, Guillaumin puts forth the interesting thesis that Facundia, Mercury's first wife, represents the old Roman-Etruscan worldview and thus the *Etrusca disciplina*, while Philologia represents the Greek/New Platonist worldview, which together constituted the last two bastions of pagan culture. All in all, the contribution does a good

job of demonstrating that Martianus had studied various aspects of Etruscan religion and had good second-hand (or maybe even third-hand) knowledge about the *Etrusca disciplina*. This makes his list of gods in the 16 houses seem more authentic.

M.-L. Haack's chapter (45–59) analyzes writings by Lactantius Placidus and Longinianus, some of whose writing is preserved in correspondence with Saint Augustine. Both authors were dealing with the nymph Vegoia and with Tages, whom they reference in connection with Orpheus, Hermes Trismegistos, Plato and Pythagoras. Haack uses an array of somewhat peculiar quotes to demonstrate that the source material hints at the beginnings of what might be called a post-ancient history of theology and philosophy. F. Guillaumont's contribution on the writings of Proclus and Ioannes Lydus (61–73) also deals with Tages.

I can only treat the more comprehensive second part—"Les dernières luttes des auteurs chrétiens"—in summary fashion here. Nevertheless, I would at least like to list the individual chapters: C. Cousin, "Deux écrits polémiques chrétiens: le *Carmen contra paganos* et les *Sermons* de Maxime de Turin" (77–87); D. Briquel, "*La Vie d'Ambroise* de Paulin de Milan" (89–92); J. Champeaux, "Des haruspices aux demons. *L'Etrusca disciplina* selon Augustin, *Cité de Dieu*" (93–112); E. Bucher, "Images des haruspices dans l'oeuvre de Saint Augustin" (113–25; the compilation of all references to *haruspices* outside *De Civitate Dei* is very useful, 122–25); D. Briquel, "Orose" (127–46); B. Pouille, "Les haruspices de Saint Jérôme" (147–55); D. Briquel, "Salvien" (157–59). All of the articles treat attacks against the *haruspices* and other soothsayers, whose services were still being sought out by many, including Christians. Their arts could not have had much to do with the *Etrusca disciplina*, which can hardly have contained anything about what animals one has to sacrifice to make sure one wins a poetry competition (something offered to the young Augustine, see 114). The sources generally reject soothsaying as charlatanism, and in those cases where they do not, they chalk it up to the doings of demons, which is to say ancient gods. Of course, in the end, it all leads to damnation. Where the sources reference the *Etrusca disciplina* when treating historical material, they are, unfortunately, plagued with misunderstandings and are thus not all that useful. For instance, while Sulla's *haruspex* would have certainly predicted that he would be victorious, the diviner would have hardly recommended that Sulla eat the *exta*—the guts—of the sacrifice, which were reserved for the gods in ancient sacrificial rituals and were burned (95). But even though these sources are not particularly helpful in reconstructing the *Etrusca disciplina*, they do help us understand why Etruria was called the "*genetrix et mater superstitionis*" ("creator and mother of all superstition" [Arnobius, *adversus nationes* 7.26]), and why almost everything associated with this superstition was ultimately forgotten.

Nevertheless, that these beliefs were not completely lost is thanks to sources collected in the third part, “Survivances poétiques et littéraires.” After the rise of Christianity, pagan ideas could be preserved under the auspices of poetry or “literary history.” Primary focus is placed on divination techniques, as discussed in the articles by C. Cousin, “Claudien, poète officiel païen au sein d’une court chrétienne” (163–67); É. Wolff, “*L’Etrusca disciplina* chez Dracontius” (185–88); É. Wolff, “*L’Etrusca disciplina* chez Fulgence le Mythographe” (which references Cornelius Labeo, 189–92); V. Zarini, “Une survivance de *L’Etrusca disciplina* vers 500 apr. J.C.? L’étrange témoignage de Corippe, Ioh. III, 79–155” (193–223). Particularly interesting are the *carmina* of Sidonius Apollinaris (D. Briquel, “Sidone Apollinaire,” 175–84), because they 1) contain the only (!) description of a bidental (*carmen* IX.193—the site of a lightning strike was fenced off and treading on it was prohibited) and 2) reference to a lot oracle in Caere (*sortes Caeritum*, see 180–82). Perhaps it could be mentioned here that the oracle of Tethys might possibly be located at Pyrgi (Promathion, mentioned in Plut. *Rom.* 2.4; see G. Colonna, “Il santuario di Pyrgi dalle origini mitistoriche agli altorilievi frontonali dei Sette e di Leucotea,” *Scienze dell’Antichità* 10 [2000] 251–336, at 272f.; A. Maggiani, “La divinazione in Etruria,” in *ThesCRA* III [2005] 51–78, at 69f. no. 138). For the *sors* from Arezzo (180), there is new literature with possible different interpretations (A. Maggiani, “La divinazione in Etruria,” in *ThesCRA* III [2005] 67 no. 130; A. Maggiani, “Mantica oracolare in Etruria: litobolia e sortilegio,” *Rivista di Archeologia* 18 [1994] 68–78, at 70f.). C. Sensal’s essay “Souvenirs d’Étrurie dans le *De redivit suo* de Rutilius Namatianus” (169–73) contains a praise of Etruria without reference to the *Etrusca disciplina*.

The fourth part of the volume is titled “Textes techniques: droit et exemples de grammairiens.” G. van Heems’ chapter, “*L’Etrusca disciplina* dans les sources juridiques des Ve et VIe siècles” (227–48), contains an overview of decrees issued against haruspices and other soothsayers. It also contains a useful appendix with selections from the Codex Theodosianus in both the original Latin and in French translation (240–47). The books of the *Etrusca disciplina* still preserved probably met their fate when the Sibylline Books were burned, even though we have no direct proof of this (235). G. Bonnet’s chapter “Les Étrusques et leur art dans la grammaire latine scolaire” (249–59) explains that grammarians had mostly lost any interest in the *Etrusca disciplina*, only discussing a couple of oddly formed words. Only a Greek, Dositheus, had a more profound insight, discussing two concepts used to describe the *ominalia*: *vitalis* and *saecularis*. Bonnet uses this insight to draw a connection to Censorinus’ detailed third-century exposition on the Etruscan doctrine of the *saecula*, showing that Dositheus probably took these concepts from Censorinus’ writing “*De die natali*” (254–58). The seventh volume of the series contains a paper on Censorinus by G. Freyburger (in D. Briquel and

C. Guittard, eds., *La divination dans le monde étrusque-italique: actes de la Table-Ronde de Paris, 24 et 25 octobre 1997. Les écrivains du troisième siècle et l'Etrusca disciplina*, Caesarodunum Supplement 66 [Tours 1999] 41–50). Thus, we know that Dositheus at least had some knowledge of literature on the *Etrusca disciplina*.

Aside from a few remarkable exceptions (Martianus Capella, Sidonius Apollinaris), the sources published here fail to give us much new information about the contents of the *Etrusca disciplina*. However, they do demonstrate that knowledge of the text was preserved well into the early Christian era and was lost only with the condemnation of pagan rites. Indeed, the questionable practices of the last haruspices were viewed as representative examples of these rites.

As all of the ancient authors discussed here can be researched independently of one another, this book and D. Briquel's above-mentioned study *Chrétiens et haruspices* complement each other very well. Specialists in late antique and early Christian literature might find some very interesting material in some of the more comprehensive, remarkably long contributions on works and authors whose texts contain little on the *Etrusca disciplina*.