

If the material is limited – with regard to the theme of ethnic mobility, so much studied and discussed in recent times – it is compensated by the author's methodological sharpness and wide knowledge of earlier literature, both linguistic and etruscological. Nevertheless, she can add rather little to our knowledge about mobility in archaic Central Italy, though clearly more to the onomastical studies – she considers that the existence of individual name gentilicia even in the earliest Etruscan inscriptions shows that the gentilicium system must be earlier than most scholars have thought. As thorough as the study on her material is, I would have liked her to discuss more deeply such questions as: when and how did an individual name gentilicium become hereditary? Was it chosen because an Etruscan formation was prohibited by a new-comer, or for some other reason?

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DAVID ENGELS: *Das römische Vorzeichenwesen (753–27 v. Chr.). Quellen, Terminologie, Kommentar, historische Entwicklung*. Potsdamer Altertumswissenschaftliche Beiträge 22. Franz Steiner Verlag, Stuttgart 2007. ISBN 978-3-515-09027-8. 877 pp. EUR 98.

The religious culture of prodigies in the Roman Republic has, undoubtedly parallel to a general growth of interest in ancient divination, attracted its share of recent attention (V. Rosenberger, *Gezähmte Götter. Das Prodigenwesen der römischen Republik*, Stuttgart 1998 and S.W. Rasmussen, *Public Portents in Republican Rome*, Roma 2003, to name the most prominent recent monographs). The present monograph of impressive scale by D. Engels (hereafter E.) begins by criticising the previous studies for operating with an excessively narrow and *a priori* definition of what constitutes a prodigy, and with incomplete lists of prodigies, based on a restricted number of sources. E. himself approaches his material with a general and open definition of what constitutes a prodigy (given on pp. 43–59), and sets out to map all (22) "historisch konkret verorteten Vorzeichen" between 753 and 27 BCE, between Aeneas and Augustus, connected with Roman history in ancient sources.

After thus explaining the frankly ambitious scope of his study, E. embarks on a consideration of the source material, beginning with the problems of the Pontifical record (pp. 60–86), and general questions on the transmission of information about prodigies in the extant texts. While J. Rüpke has argued for the beginning of reliable pontifical note-taking in 249 (J. Rüpke, *Fasti sacerdotum. Die Mitglieder der Priesterschaften und das sakrale Funktionspersonal römischer, griechischer, orientalischer und jüdisch-christlicher Kulte in der Stadt Rom von 300 v. Chr. bis 499 n. Chr. Teil 3: Beiträge zur Quellenkunde und Organisationsgeschichte; Bibliographie; Register*, Stuttgart 2005, e.g., 1490), E. argues that since we have records of prodigies, often attested to in more than one source, from long before this date, this information has to be based on some form of public or private record extending beyond the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BCE (p. 64). Having distanced himself from the *Annales maximi* debate (pp. 85–86), E. proposes that information on prodigies could be based on the senate archives, the archives of the pontifical colleges, or private archives (pp. 87–92). All of this is naturally plausible, even probable, but problematic as a judgement on the reliability of records on prodigies, as we ultimately lack sufficient information on the state of the survival of these archives at the point when their information first entered, say, the annalistic tradition,

as well as of the fortunes of this information in historiography before its adoption into texts that survive. The little of what can be known, however, is summed up by E., who proceeds to individually examine annalists and other authors as transmitters of reports on prodigies (pp. 93–258).

Following a brief discussion on the terminology of prodigies in antiquity and modern scholarship (pp. 259–282), the bulk of the book (pp. 283–723) is taken up by a chronological examination of each of the recorded prodigies themselves, numbered consecutively with a RVW (*römisches Vorzeichenwesen*) number, and accompanied by a historical commentary. Prodigies that cannot precisely be dated have been relegated to the end of the series. E. also compares the expiation of similar prodigies, producing fresh insight on individual cases (see, e.g., on the human sacrifices of 228, pp. 417). In his commentary, as elsewhere, E. shows a laudable command of the secondary sources. This section of the book should prove valuable to every student of Republican Rome interested in the meaning of individual prodigies.

The chronological commentary of reported prodigies is followed by a synthesis of the development of Roman observance of prodigies (pp. 724–797). E. traces an arc from the origins of these beliefs and practices through the flowering in the 3rd century and peak during the 2<sup>nd</sup> Punic War of public prodigies and their decline in favour of personal prodigies tied to individual leaders by the 1<sup>st</sup> century BCE. In his discussion on the Latin origins (divination from the flight of birds, entrails, and voices) of Roman belief in prodigies, and the Etruscan (divination from lightning, sophisticated "science" of entrails, and the detailed interpretation of signs) and Greek influences it received, Engels takes up the *libri Sibyllini*, and cautiously re-iterates the argument for their Etruscan origin (originally argued by R. Bloch, "Origines étrusques des Livres Sibyllins", in *Mélanges de philologie, de littérature et d'histoire anciennes offerts à Alfred Ernout*, Paris 1940, pp. 21–28), rehearsing the relevant discussions on this not implausible but (as even E. notes) problematic theory. In general E. distances himself equally from interpretations minimising or relativising Etruscan influence on Roman culture, as from those perhaps over-emphasising it, with mostly plausible results in identifying supposedly Etruscan influences on Roman divination. After the overthrow of the monarchy, E. sees a Italic-conservative turn in the Roman relationship to prodigies, although one could also ask to what extent our understanding of the state of affairs is dependent on how Livy and our other sources choose to depict it (e.g., A. Nice, *Divination and Roman Historiography*, Ph.D. Diss. Exeter, 1999). E. also observes that the use and meaning of prodigies in the culture of the early Republic was varied, and that the division in *prodigia publica*, to be acknowledged and expiated by the senate, and *prodigia privata*, was only developing from the 4<sup>th</sup> to the 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries (p. 749). E. follows the majority interpretation in seeing the Second Punic War as an extraordinary time of religious anxiety and the climax of the procuration of *prodigia publica*. After this, E. sees the beginning of a gradual decline in the importance of public prodigies, which he explains by the growing importance of Greek and Oriental cults to the populace and the spread of Greek philosophies critical of divination among the élites. Finally, from 133 BCE onwards the problems of the Republic and the rise of individual leaders brought a rise in the manipulation of prodigies for political purposes and the end of public prodigies in favour of personal prodigies connected with the fortunes of these leaders.

The final chapter of the volume (pp. 798–825) treats the psychohistory of Roman belief in prodigies, the usefulness of which is largely dependent on how much credibility the

reader is ready to accord to the theories of Freud and Jung. That the observation of prodigies could be used to justify the independent decisions of leaders in the face of the real authority of the senate and the imagined authority of the gods, through attribution of these choices to the will of the gods (p. 811–3), carries rather more explanatory power than E.'s attempt to explain belief in prodigies in terms of obsessive-compulsive behaviour caused by social neuroses stemming from strict patriarchy.

While this book is not without its problems, these are largely endemic to all investigations of older Roman history, and E. is conscious of this, transparent in his choices and preconceptions, and cautious in his conclusions. One final critical note concerns the omission of some items of literature mentioned in the footnotes from the bibliography. In conclusion, students of ancient religion should find the book comprehensive and impossible to bypass, and anyone interested in Republican Rome would do well to consult this on the prodigies he encounters.

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ARNOLD A. LELIS – WILLIAM A. PERCY – BEERT C. VERSTRAETE: *The Age of Marriage in Ancient Rome*. Studies in Classics, Vol. 26. The Edwin Mellen Press, Lewiston – Queenston – Lampeter 2003. ISBN 0-7734-6625-8, 0-88946-684-X (series). X, 146 pp. USD 99.95.

In this book, the authors want to reconsider some aspects regarding the age at first marriage for males and females in ancient Rome. It is fluently and intelligibly written and thus accessible for a wider interested readership. It does not seem to have many new insights, but it is useful as a further addition to the discussion of this difficult subject. From the literary evidence on the families of senatorial rank, the authors have attempted to compile a systematic database of Roman age at first marriage (for which they use the abbreviation AAFM), which is a useful piece of work indeed. Their data amply confirm the postulate that Roman AAFMs were generally early. This should not be a surprise.

As for the documentation gathered from epigraphic sources, the authors seem to resort to secondary information; at least they do not quote a single inscription (add, e. g., H.S., *Ep. Unt. in Rom und Umg. 16 Lucretiae [- l. E]pigone fecit [M]estrius Euty[ch]es coniugi cum qua vixi annis XXXXV. Tulit an. LII*). – One is astonished to find that the bibliography almost exclusively consists of items written in English (and Friedländer's classic *Sittengeschichte* has also been quoted in English, despite the fact that the last English edition is older than the last German one). Of missing references to literature written in languages other than English, it is worth mentioning M. Durry, "Le mariage des filles impubères à Rome", *CRAI* 1955, 84–90. I also missed E. Eyben, *Latomus* 1972, 677–697. – A few misprints: p. 91 nt. 1 Antti Arjava; p. 129 Carletti.

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