An Outline of Roman Divination as Illustrated in the First Decade of Livy's History

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AN OUTLINE OF ROMAN DIVINATION AS ILLUSTRATED

IN THE FIRST DECADE OF LIVY'S HISTORY

by

John Philip Carroll

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Arts
in Loyola University
1938
VITA

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Religious systems are always a point of interest among students of ancient ethnology because a knowledge of them is essential to a complete picture of ancient cultures as a whole. The religious systems of ancient peoples are interesting also because they hold a strange fascination and mystery for us of the Christian Era. And the topic is no less complicated than it is interesting. Even for as circumscribed a topic as I intend to outline in these pages —viz., Roman Divination, there is still need of adequate treatment despite centuries of research. William W. Fowler (X:311,n.37), who has written one of the best general treatments of Roman religion, makes note that the system of Roman divination is "......an extremely complicated subject." The topic of Roman divination was chosen as the subject of this thesis because an acquaintance with it, at least in outline form, is very helpful to an understanding of Roman culture. The bearing that the Roman divinatory system had on Roman politics is alone worthy of note, even when that system had degenerated to a mere formality and a meaningless observance of tradition. For example, the taking of auspices was so bound up with public life that
armies could be recalled from the field, the comitia could be disbanded, and elections postponed by the mere report of unfavorable omens.

Another point that makes the Roman divinatory system worthy of note is the fact that it had distinctive elements in it that were opposed to the divinatory systems of other cultures, and these elements reflected in principle to some degree the Roman character. I refer here to the very definiteness of the Roman system itself as reflective of the Roman penchant for order; to the reluctance of the Romans to show excessive curiosity in regard to future events as indicative of their belief of their proper relation to the deity—viz., one of strict contract (cf. p. 72); to the official disdain for the Etruscan haruspex (even though he was frequently consulted) as showing the original serious simplicity of the Romans in their dealings with the deity.

When we speak of Roman divination, we almost invariably refer to the Roman state system of augury. A distinction might be made between this and the divination of the family, which was something rather informal. Every family had a god as a patron for each single event of daily life—e.g., for plowing, harvest, rain, the hearth; for birth, marriage, death. These deities were
besought with prayers to assure success. Portents and prodigies were observed and interpreted by the individual. There was great variety and freedom in such practice. But in the state system all this was formalized: The chief magistrate was the only one who could take the auspices; the augurs alone had the job of interpreting omens, and everything had to follow according to the rules of the augural lore contained in the books of the augural college. This state system is the subject of the following pages, and the vagaries of individual or family practice (of which the state system is probably an outgrowth, however) will not be considered.

The choice of Livy as the main source of material illustrative of this topic is not without its disadvantages. First of all, Livy was not what we consider a scientific historian. Accuracy on many points was sacrificed due to his careless use of sources. His aim admittedly was a moral one. He wished to show in general outline the qualities that formed the character of the original hardy Romans, and this he did often by stories and fables. As Capes (I:56) notes, although he wrote about the most ancient times, "Livy was no antiquarian."
One must be very careful in using him as a source for the earliest days of Rome's history. It is a well known fault of his that he imposes on Romans of the days of the kings and early Republic, customs and rites known only to a later day (cf. p. 45, n.). However, in the matter of augury he could hardly be charged with allowing himself too much freedom. For his aim was to show the difference in such matters between the old and the new, to show the original character and sincerity of the old practices. His description of the taking of the auspices in the case of Romulus and Remus (cf. p. 8), for example, may be based on a legend, but at least we can suppose that the taking of auspices from birds was a favorite official practice. The same holds true in the case of the inauguration of Numa Pompilius by observation of the lightning flash. The point is the same as that which underlies the historian's attempt to depict the rugged character of the ancient Romans: Many of his famous characters, such as Scaevola and Coriolanus, may have been legendary, but the traits of character they showed were probably genuine (VI: 113). Thus, although there is much legend and play of imagination in Livy's work, especially in the first decade,
he still remains a fundamentally reliable source for such a thing as the augural practices of the ancient Romans. Fowler (X:208) has this to say of him: "Livy is the only historian who has presented for us in any substance the religious side of Rome's public life."

* * *

In this treatment of Roman divination an attempt was made to adhere solely to the first ten books of Livy. These books furnish material enough for illustration, containing evidence ranging from the very founding of the augural college (Liv.:I.xviii) to the days when the taking of auspices was no longer considered seriously and was looked on with disdain (Liv.:X.xl). However, occasionally I was compelled to make reference to a book later than the tenth for the sake of completely explaining a point.

Likewise, authors other than Livy—viz., Cicero, Pliny, etc., are referred to as confirmatory evidence.
CHAPTER II

AUGURIA IMPETRATIVA

A. Definition and importance

Roman divination consisted of two main divisions—viz., auguria impetrativa and auguria oblativa. The auguria impetrativa were signs or manifestations of the divine will specifically sought or solicited. Literally the term signifies augural signs received as direct result of a prayer: IMPETRATUM (impetrare) means "something obtained as a result of a prayer or wish." That is, the chief magistrate definitely wanted a favorable omen and besought the deity for it. The procedure was then carried out to see if the sign asked for was forthcoming.

The auguria oblativa, although not always signs haphazardly observed, were not specifically sought. That is, often 'a' sign was sought, as in the case of the feeding of the sacred chickens, but here a favorable sign was not specifically sought. The magistrate set up the conditions attendant on a proper observation and then noted the result—favorable or unfavorable. Auguria impetrativa were usually taken, at least originally, through the observation of birds. Hence the process was called auspicium, a contracted form of avispicium ("looking at the
birds"). So general was this practice of taking signs from birds that the word *auspicium* became almost generic for any manifestation, or interpretation thereof, of the will of the gods.

In the early days of Rome consultation of *auspicia* in all important public events (and private: Pliny, *HN*. X.21) was the habitual, nay indispensable procedure. In public affairs taking the auspices was almost tantamount to official authority, and the phrase *auspicium imperiumque* completed the designation of the range of official power (XXVIII:823). The reason for this is that the public magistrate was responsible for the divine sanction for acts within his jurisdiction. The right of initiating an undertaking bore the responsibility of getting this sanction. Livy (*Liv*: I.xxxvi.6) shows the importance of the auspices:

*Auguriis certe sacerdotioque augurium
tantus honos accessit ut nihil belli
domique postea nisi auspicato geretur,
concilia populi, exercitus vocati,
summa rerum, ubi aves non admisissent
dirimerentur.*

(*Liv*: VI.xli)

*Auspiciis hanc urbem conditam esse,
auspiciis bello ac pace domi militiaeque
omni geri, quis est qui ignorat?*
In alignment with Livy, Cicero (Cic:De Div.I.xxviii) records:

Nihil fere quondam majoris rei nisi auspico ne privatim quidem geregatur......Itaque sinistra dum non exquirimus, in dira et in vitiose incurrimus.

The taking of auspices from birds dates from the very earliest days of Rome according to Livy.

When the two legendary chiefs, Romulus and Remus, sought the kingship of the new city, they first of all had recourse to the birds (Liv:I.vi.4-vii.2):

Quoniam gemini essent nec aetatis verecundia discrimen facere posset, ut dii, quorum tutelae ea loca essent, auguriis legerent, qui nomen novae urbi daret, qui conditam imperio regeret, Palatium Romulus, Remus Aventinum ad inaugurandum templa capiunt. Priori Remo augurium venisse fertur, sex vultures, jamque nuntiato augurio cum duplex numerus Romulo se ostendisset, utrumque regem sua multitudine consalutaverat: tempore illi praeccepto, ut hi numero avium regnum trahebant.

When Tarquinius Priscus, in a crisis with the Sabines, sought to add to the number of centuries already enrolled by Romulus, he was frustrated by the augur Attus Naevius, who said that the birds refused their
approval (Liv:I.xxxvi):

Auguriis certe sacerdotioque augurum tantus honos accessit ut nihil...... summa rerum, ubi aves non admisissent dirimerentur.

In this instance also stress is laid on the importance of taking the auspices, for, when Tarquinius Friscus sought to cast disparagement on the procedure by challenging the augur, the latter took the challenge and with certainty and dispatch clove a whetstone with a razor (Liv:I.xxxvi.4):

Cum ille augurio rem expertus perfecto futuram dixisset, "Atqui hoc animo agitavi," inquit, "te novacula cotem discissurum; cape haec et perage quod aves tuae fieri posse portendunt." Tum illum haud cunctanter discídisse cotem ferunt.

We might note here too one of the first examples of how augury could intervene to frustrate a political action. This practice became more and more prevalent in the later Republic, when augury became merely a form with no real religious spirit behind it.

Later, when Tarquinius Superbus was preparing to undertake the great public project of dedicating a temple to Jupiter on the Capitol, the birds were again
consulted. They gave assent to the rescinding of all the existing temples on the Capitoline except that of Terminus. This was interpreted as prophetic of the stability of the Roman state (Liv:I.lv.3-5):

Nam cum omnium sacellorum......
exaurationes admittent aves, in
Termini fano non addixere; idque omen
auguriumque ita acceptum est, non
motam Termini sedem unumque eum
deorum non evocatum sacratis sibi
finibus firma stabiliaque cuncta
portendere.

Again when the Plebeians were fighting for land justice and Rome was at war with Veii and there was a general unrest heightened by prodigies, recourse to auspices was had before anything could be decided. Through the auspicium the gods gave the reason for the unrest -viz., failure of the Romans to observe the rites of religion. This was taken as so sure and definite that the Vestal Oppia was summarily punished as the culprit (Liv:II.xlii.10,11):

Accessere ad aegras jam omnium mentes
prodigia caelestia, prope cotidianas
in urbe agrisque ostentantia minas;
motique ita numinis causam nullam aliam
vates caneant publice privatimque
nunc extis nunc per aves consulti, quam
haud rite sacra fieri. Qui terrores
tandem eo evasere ut Oppia virgo Vestalis
damnata incesti poenas dedit.
B. Method

As to the method of taking the auspices, there is copious evidence in classic Latin authors, and Livy lends his share. First of all, who were allowed to take the auspices? .... Apparently this right belonged to the body of Roman patricians in general. Livy (Liv:VI.xli) alludes to this. In a speech reflecting patrician haughtiness Appius Claudius says:

"Quid de religionibus atque auspiciis, quae propria deorum immortalium contemptio atque injuria est, loquar?.... Penes quos igitur sunt auspicii more majorum? Nempe penes patres; nam plebeius quidem magistratus nullus auspicato creatur; nobis adeo propria sunt auspicia ut non solum quos populus creat patricios magistratus non aliter quam auspicato creat, sed nos quoque ipsi sine suffragio populi auspicato interregem prodamus et privatim auspicia habeamus, quae isti ne in magistratibus quidem habent. Quid igitur aliud quam tollit ex civitate auspicia qui plebeios consules creando a patribus, qui soli ea habere possunt, auxert?"

Naturally enough, then, the patricians directed this power to their chief magistrate or "Rex", and hence the correlation of power, _auspicium imperiumque_, mentioned above. The "Rex", of course, in later days was the consul.

Besides the chief magistrate there were what
were known as augurs (1). These men were to see that the ceremony of the taking of the auspices went off right and to interpret whatever signs were sent. To all appearances they performed and interpreted the auspicium, but the right of augury - i.e., the first and original right of spectio (cf. p.16 & note) remained with the chief magistrate (XXVIII:823; X:301). According to

(1)

Lest any confusion arise on the position of the chief magistrate, who was also the Pontifex Maximus, let me note this:

From the earliest days of the organized city-state of Rome the chief magistrate — at first the king, later the consul — was also the head of religion. The sacra of the state were in his care. He was the Pontifex Maximus. As such he was the head of the Collegium Pontificum, which was the official religious board consisting of three, nine, and later fifteen members. The work of this Collegium was much wider in scope than that of the Collegium Augurale.

With the end of the kingly period much of the formal work of sacrificial ritual passed to the specially appointed Rex Sacrorum; but under the Pontifices much ritualistic work was still carried on concerning the state and concerning family life: They dictated the votum for temples, for games; they catalogued the deities to be officially recognized (Liv:IV.xxvii); they had the entire charge of the calendar with its religious festivals; they kept the archives of the state; they supervised the sacra of individual families; they supervised marriage and burial.

The Collegium Augurale, instituted under Numa (Liv:I.xviii.6) had nothing to do with the worship of deities, but was merely concerned with interpreting omens. Everything had to be reduced to system for the Romans, and that was the task of the augurs within the province of divination (XI:833; XV:330-332).
Livy (Liv:I.xxxvi.3) the famous Attus Naevius was augur for the sceptical Tarquinius Priscus, and it was his task to see that the ceremony was properly performed and to interpret the sign.

When Numa insisted that the gods should be consulted, he did not do it alone but was aided by an augur, as Livy says (Liv:I.xviii.6):

Inde ab augure cui deinde honoris ergo publicum id perpetuumque sacerdotium fuit, deductus in arcem.....

In taking the auguria impetrativa from birds the procedure was similar to that employed in taking the auguria from lightning (as will be described later):

Auguria impetrativa could be taken only within designated spaces (1).

(1) "The person who had the auspicia, i.e., originally the "Rex", like the later magistrate, had to watch for signs from heaven; in order to do so he marked out a templum, a rectangular space (templum majus) by noting certain objects, trees, or what not, beyond which, whether he looked at earth or sky, he need take no notice of what he saw. The spot where he took up his position for this purpose was itself a rectangular space (templum minus). The usual place was the Arx, where the auguraculum, on which the magistrate taking the auspices pitched his tent (tabernaculum), looking to the east, with the north as his left or lucky side." (X:302).
The kinds of *aves* considered in *auguria impertrativa* were few in number. With some kinds of birds the *auspicia* were determined by their flight. Such birds were called *alites*, and included birds of prey, like the eagle, hawk, and osprey (XIV:art. "AUSPICIIUM").

With other kinds of birds the *auspicia* were taken from their sounds. Such were called *oscines*, and included the raven, crow, and owl (Festus:193; Cic:De Div.I.120). Livy refers to this in the words of Appius Claudius (Liv:VI.xli), who bemoans the loss of respect for the divine will among the Romans:

"Quid enim esse.............si ocecinerit."

When the divine consent was sought for some act and was vouchsafed, the technical term of acceptance was "admittunt aves" or "addicunt aves":

\[(Liv:I.xxxvi.6)\]
\begin{verbatim}
ubi aves non admisissent........
\end{verbatim}

\[(Liv:I.lv.3,4)\]
\begin{verbatim}
Nam cum omnium sacellorum........
exaugurationes admitterent aves, in
Termini fano non addixere;........
\end{verbatim}

However, sometimes the sign sought was not forthcoming, and the auspices miscarried by interruption (Pliny:
Livy records such an interruption in the year 310 B.C. Papirius, the new dictator, had named G. Junius Bubulcus to be his master of horse; and when he advocated a law confirming the authority, the matter was stopped because the ill-fated ward Faucia had the first vote (Liv.IX.xxxviii.15,16):

Papirius Cn. Junium Bubulcum magistrum equitum dixit; atque ei legem curiatim de imperio ferenti triste omen diem diffidit, quod Faucia curia fuit principium, duabus insignis cladibus, captae urbis, et Caudinae pacis, quod utroque anno ejusdem curiae fuerat principium.

When such an interruption occurred the auspices had to be repeated, and this could not take place until the following day (Liv:IX.xxxix):

Dictator postero die auspiciis repetitis pertulit legem;........

(*)NOTE:
There are other types of divining from birds besides consulting the alites and oscines. Such types were, for example, observation of entrails, observation of strange actions of birds. These, however, are not to be classed under auguria impetrativa but rather are examples of auguria oblativa (X:302). Through such media the divinity, though not specifically solicited, sent signs of approval or disapproval of some undertaking already provisionally sanctioned (XXVIII: 823). A further and more detailed description of these will be contained in a later chapter.
the authority and leadership of the chief magistrate in this matter in the person of Numa (Liv: I.xviii.6):

De se(Numa) quoque deos consuli jussit.

Then the augur comes in as helper and interpreter. He leads the sovereign to the citadel:

Ab augure ............... deductus in arcem.

(Consuls later went to the Capitol) and here sat him on a stone elevation (solida sella) facing the south:

ad meridiem versus consedit.

Here the augur took his seat on Numa's left side with head covered:

Augur ad laevam ejus capite velato sedem cepit

and holding in his hand the well known staff, the *lituus*:

*dextra manu baculum sine nodo aduncum tenens,*
*quem lituurn appellarunt.*

Next, facing the east, he marked off along the heavens a line from east to west, calling the south "right" and the north "left", and a landmark as far off from himself as he could see:
Inde ubi prospectu in urbe agrumque capto deos precatus regiones ab oriente ad occasum determinavit, dextra ad meridiem partes laevas ad septentrionem esse dixit; signum contra, quoad longissime conspectum oculi ferebant, animo finivit.

Then he made his prayer, specifying the sign he so desired to appear within those limits:

"Jupiter, pater, si est fas hunc Numam Pom-pilium, cujus ego caput teneo, regem Romae esse, ut tu signa nobis certa adclarassis inter eos fines quos feci." Tum peregit verbis auspicia quae mitti vellet. Quibus missis declaratus rex Numa de templo ascendit.

C. Strictness of Roman Augural Method

The whole Roman system of divination was marked by formalism and strict officiousness. Based on the contract relation between gods and men, it admitted of no arbitrary and haphazard procedures. What happens to anyone who would neglect the prescribed form is well illustrated by Livy (Liv:I.xxxi.6) in the case of Tullus Hostilius when the latter's base spirit drove him to seek consolation in ritual:

Ipsum regem tradunt volventem commentarios Numae, cum ibi quaedam occulta sollemnia sacrificia Iovi Elicio facta invenisset,
operatum iis sacris se abdidisse; sed non rite initum aut curatum id sacram esse, nec solum nullam ei oblatam caelestium speciem, sed ira Iovis sollicitati prava religione fulmine ictum cum domo conflagrases.

Least of all could cheating or falsity of any kind be condoned. When the chicken-keeper, in honest hope and expectation of victory over the Samnites, falsified the report of the manner of the feeding of the sacred chickens to the leader Papirius he felt the wrath of the offended deity in the guise of a random javelin (Liv: X.xl, xli):

Dux militum, miles ducis ardorem (belli in Samnites) spectabat. Is ardor omnium etiam ad eos qui auspicio intererant pervenit; nam cum pulli non pascerentur, pullarius auspicii mentiri ausus tripudium solistimum consuli nuntiavit. Consul laetus auspicium egregium esse et dei auctoribus rem gesturos pronuntiat signumque pugnae proponit...

.......

Dum his intentus imperator erat altercatio inter pullarios orta de auspicio ejus diei exauditaque ab equitibus Romanis, qui rem haud spernendam rati Spurio Papirio, fratris filio consulis, ambigi de auspicio renuntiaverunt. Iuvenis ante doctrinam deos spernetem natus rem inquisitam, ne quid in contemptum deferret, ad consulem detulit. Cui illi: "Tu quidem macte virtute diligentiaque esto! Ceterum qui auspicio adest si quid falsi nuntiat, in semet ipsum religionem recept: mihi quidem tripudium nuntiatum; populo Romano exercitui qui egregium auspiciium est." Centurionibus deinde imperavit uti pullarios inter prima signa constituerent.
Priusquam clamor tolleretur concurreturque, emisso tenerere pilo ictus pullarius ante signa cecidit. Quod ubi consuli nuntiatum est, "Di in proelio sunt", inquit; "habet poenam noxium caput."
CHAPTER III

AUGURIA OBLATIVA

As already briefly noted, there was another division of Roman divination - that of auguria oblativa, i.e., signs offered or given: OBLATUM (ob ferre) means literally "anything brought, offered, or presented." This was a vast field and included all unsolicited signs from the gods. It included those unsolicited signs which were a part of the augural system and which demanded a definite mode of procedure; it included the great mass of portents and prodigies; it included signs of all sorts which seemed in any way unusual. The accidental nature of the latter classes left them open for addition and adulteration and at the mercy or caprice of the individual concerned at any one time in their interpretation. Such private interpretation did take place, and in the days of the late Republic and Empire almost everyone seems to have found occasion, in some national crisis or at other important times, to report that he had seen or heard some sign from heaven. Originally this whole matter of observing signs (auguria oblativa) was limited to the precinct of the augural college,
as was the matter of interpreting the **auguria imperatativa**. (1)

When a consultation had been completed and reported favorable (impetrativa), there was still a possibility of the disapproval and interference of the divinity by some subsequent sign. These signs were not definitely solicited of the gods. Nor were they, on the other hand, always and purely accidental. The point is that, if a sign appeared, it was merely observed to be favorable or unfavorable by the augur who had set up the proper conditions for the divinatory act. In the case of the **auguria imperatativa** a definite and favorable sign was prayed for and expected. If it was not forthcoming, it could be again solicited at another time. Moreover, when unsolicited signs appeared, the recognition of them was very often at the discretion of the magistrate concerned. If

(1) However, lest it be supposed that divination was practiced only among magistrates and members of the augural college, let me remark that concurrent with state divination there was in very early times widespread practice of the individual noticing and interpreting **signa**—e.g., especially, sounds and actions of birds, dogs, &c. Such is common to the peasantry of all nations. Cicero (Cic:DeDiv: I.xxviii) says that nothing was carried on "nisi auspicato, ne privatim quidem." A certain Nigidius Figulus wrote a book entitled "De Augurio Privato".

But the formalization of divination at Rome tended in some way to discredit private practice and to put the brand of 'non-genuine' on many of them. Also the observation and interpretation of the actions of farm animals and phenomena of nature, which among the people of the fields was natural enough, became meaningless in the city (X:299).
that person wished to recognize the omen, the proper term was "accipio omen". (l). (Cic: De Div. I. ciii). In recording the tale about Hercules Livy alludes to this practice (Liv: I. vii. 11):

Dextra Hercules data accipere
se omen impleturumque fata ara
condita ac dicata ait.

And again in the case of Camillus (Liv: V. lv. 2):

Qua voce audita et senatus accipere
se omen excuria egressus conclamant.

A. Demanding Formal Procedure

That these auguria oblativa implied, in some types, not merely observation of some accidental phenomena of nature we know from the fact that there were definite procedures and rules of observing and interpreting the signs that were sent. In the system of

(1) But the power of not accepting omens or accepting them came into abuse; so that in later days a magistrate under law might not refuse an unfavorable sign.
the augurs there were distinguished five main varieties of *signa* (XXVIII:323). These were: *signa* a) *ex caelo*, b) *ex avibus*, c) *ex tripudiis*, d) *ex quadrupediis*, e) *ex diris*.

I. Tripudium solistimum

Here again -viz., in the *signa ex tripudiis*, birds were involved, or more specifically, chickens. This developed into a *signum militare*, or augury taken when the army was on the march. Livy gives a good example of the taking of auspices from the sacred chickens as a field augury (Liv:X.xl.5,6):

Dum his (bello in Samnites)
intentus imperator erat, altercatio
inter pullarios orta de auspicio
ejus diei......

It being evidently impractical for a general on the march to await the lengthy and often uncertain conditions prerequisite to the taking of the auspices from the observance of birds or lightning, the taking of auspices from the feeding of the sacred chickens took prominence as the universal procedure in the army. The sacred chickens (pulli) were a part of the retinue. In such case the observation was taken from
the eating of the birds — not that they ate, but how they ate. The practice was to feed them grain, and, if from the greediness or hunger of the fowl any kernels fell from their beaks, the sign was unfavorable. Livy (Liv:xli.8) makes direct reference to this:

"Quid enim esse si pulli non pascantur..?"

The term ex tripudiis has its origin in the words ter and pudiare (pes) — i.e., "to strike thrice with the feet". Cicero (Cic:De Div.II.lxxii) gives an inkling of the manner of taking the auspices ex tripudiis in the following words:

"Quintus Fabi, te mihi in auspicio esse volo." Respondet, "Audivi". Hic apud majores nostros adhibebatur peritus, nunc quilibet. Peritum autem esse necesse est eum, qui, silentium quid sit, intellegat; id enim silentium dicimus in auspiciis, quod omni vitio caret. Hoc intellegere perfecti auguris est. Illi autem, qui in auspicium adhibetur, cum ita imperavit is qui auspicatur, "Dicito, si silentium esset videbitur," nec

(1) "Tripudium — the rebounding of corn &c. being thrown to chickens, by which soothsayers made their divination. 'Per urbem ire canentes carmina cum tripudiis, solemnique saltatu jussit' (Liv:I.xx)." (cf. XXIX, "TRIPUDIUM"; XIV:art. AUGUR).
nec suspicit nec circumspicit; statim respondet, 'silentium esse videri'. Tum ille: 'Dicito si pascentur.' 'Pascuntur.' .... Quae pascantur necne quid reperit? Nihil ad auspicia; sed quia, cum pascantur, ncesse est aliquid ex ore cadere et terram pavire - 'terripavium' prima, post 'terripudium' dictum est; hoc quidem jam 'tripudium' dicitur. Cum igitur offa cecidit ex ore pulli, tum auspicianti tripudium solistimum nuntiatur.'

The usual time for taking the auspices ex tripudiis was in the dead of night. This was probably to insure conditions free from disturbance, and an atmosphere was provided in keeping with the mysterious character of the act itself. Livy records two cases of this:

(Liv:X.xl.2) Tertia vigilia noctis, jam relatis litteris a collega, Papirius silentio surgit et pullarium in auspicium mittit.


This gradual change to the importance of the tripudium for augury together with the fact that
very often the chicken-keeper himself (pullarius), rather than the chief magistrate in the field, had complete charge of such auspices was indicative of the general loss of importance that augury suffered.

2. Entrails

Entrails of birds were also consulted for signa. Such a practice of divining from observance of the entrails of a victim show the influence of the Etruscan augural rites, with, however, some basis in indigenous Roman religious practice. Its use as an auspicium militare arose from the need of some sort of augury in the field to get divine sanction for any move. Since the pro-consul and pro-praetor had no right of augury of their own, the secondary right of extispicium became important in campaigns where the chief magistrate was absent. Cicero (Cic: De Div.I.xcv) says of it:

Omitto nostros, qui nihil in bello sine extis agunt, nihil sine auspiciis domi.....

During the war with Veii, recorded by Livy, recourse was had by the Romans to this method of
consulting entrails. The historian (Liv:II.xlii.10,11) says:

Sed ad bella externa prope super-
erant vires, abutebanturque iis
inter semet ipsos certando. Access-
sere ad aegras jam omnium mentes
prodigia caelestia, prope cotidianas
in urbe agrisque, ostentantia minas;
motique ita numinis causam nullam
aliam vates canebant publice priva-
timque nunc extis nunc per aves con-
sulti, quam haud rite sacra fieri.

Again the inspection of entrails was used to lend weight to the portentous dreams of two Roman consuls. The interpretations were found to coincide (Liv:VIII.vi.12):

Hos ubi nocturnos visus inter se con-
sules contulerunt, placuit averruncan-
dae deum irae victimas caedi; simul
ut, si extis eadem quae in somnio visa
fuerant portenderentur, alter uter
consulum fata impleret. Ubi responsa
haruspicum insidenti jam animo tacitae
religioni congruerunt.

This practice of consultation of entrails was an Etruscan innovation, and will be further dis-
cussed later.
B. Portents and Prodigies

Besides the observance of entrails and the feeding of the sacred chickens, which was practiced in the field rather than elsewhere (signum militare), observance of the general flight of birds, their sounds and actions, was taken and given interpretation. These observances are not to be confused with the practice in the case of the alites and oscines of the augurium imperatūrum, where a definite favorable sign was solicited.

1. Strange actions of animals

In 293 B.C., when Papirius was leading the Romans against the Samnites, his courage, as well as that of the army, was bolstered by the cry of a raven (Liv:X.xl.5-11):

Ante consul em haec dicentem corvus voce clara occinuit; quo laetus augurio consul, adfirmans nunquam humanis rebus magis præsentes inter-fuisse deos, signa canere et clamor-em tolli jussit.

The raven again plays an important and auspicious part by its flight and strange action during the war generated by Camillus against the Gauls. On this occasion in the single combat between a hero
from the Roman camp and one from the camp of the Gauls a raven suddenly appeared and took his part in the fray (Liv:VII.xxvi.3-5):

Minus insigne certamen humanum numine interposito deorum factum; namque conserenti jam manum Romano corvus repente in galea consedit, in hostem versus. Quod primo ut augurium caelo missum laetus accipit tribunus, precatus deinde, si divus si diva esset qui sibi praepetem misisset, volens propitius adesset. Dictu mirabile, tenuit non solum ales captam semel sedem, sed quotienscumque certamen initum est, levans se alis os oculosque hostis rostro et unguibus appetit, donec territum prodigii talis visu oculisque simul ac mente turbatum Valerius obtruncat; corvus ex conspectu elatus orientem petit.

Pliny records that the presence of the raven sometimes, as here, betokened divine good will (Plin: HN.X.xv).

However, the presence of the raven in the divinations of most cultures generally betokened ill favor (XXVII:367).

The case of Lucumo the Etruscan is also a famous one: While sitting in his car en route to Rome from Etruria an eagle descended on him and acted in manner strange (Liv:I.xxxiv.8,9):
Ad Janiculum forte ventum erat.  
Ibi ei carpento sedenti cum uxore aquila suspensis demissa leniter alis pillem aufert, superque carpentum cum magno clangore volitans, rursus velut ministerio divinitus missa capiti apte reponit; inde sublimis abiit.

There was little doubt that this was an omen of divine good will from the words of interpretation voiced by Lucumo's wife and by the fact of his later career.

This case is also a good example of the extreme nicety of Etruscan interpretation of such omens (Liv:ibid.): Great things could be expected:

Excelsa et alta sperare complexa virum jubet.

because:

eam alitem, ea regione caeli, et ejus dei nuntiam venisse, circa summum culmen hominis auspiciun fecisse, levasse humano superpositum capiti decus, ut divinitus eidem redderet.

Birds were not the only animals used as media through which the will of the gods was made evident. All and every sort of animal might be the source of an ominous message. Thus in the case of Tarquin, when he was engaged in extending his public works project,
a snake's appearance in the palace was interpreted as an omen (Liv:I.lvi.4):

Haec agenti portentum terrible visum: anguis ex columna lignea elapsus cum terrorem fugamque in regia fecisset.

And well might it be a cause of foreboding to the king ("anxiis implevit curis"); for it indicated his great unpopularity and was vindicated shortly after in his overthrow and the end of kingly rule at Rome.

In B.C. 295, when the Samnites and Gauls were warring, the ordinary forest scene of a wolf chasing a hind was given the importance of a special omen of victory (Liv:X.xxvii.8-10):

Cum instructae acies starent, cerva fugiens lupum e montibus exacta per campos inter duas acies decurrit; inde diversae ferae, cerva ad Gallos, lupus ad Romanos cursum deflexit. Lupo data inter ordines via; cervam Galli confixere. Tum ex antesignanis Romanus miles "Illac fugam", inquit, "et caedes vertit, ubi sacram Dianae feram jacentem videtis; hinc victor Martius lupus, integer et intactus, gentis nos Martiae et conditoris nostri admonuit.*

This case has all the appearance of a psychological
coup characteristic of the practical Romans, who employed everything at hand to advantage.

When the Terentilian law was taken up in 459 B.C. and there was trouble over the consuls for that year, an ox was heard to speak (Liv:III.x.6):

Anno deinde inequenti lex Terentilia ab toto relata collegio novos addressa consules est; erant consules P. Volumnius, Servius Sulpicius .............. Bovem locutam, cui rei priore anno fides non fuerat, creditum.

On the same occasion a flock of birds was seen to perform in a strange way (Liv:ibid.):

Inter alia prodigia et carne pluit quem imbrem ingens numerus avium intervolitando rapuisse fertur.

Such prodigies were often concomitant with a political or social crisis. The anxiety of plebians and patricians was at a pitch, and the patricians strove through the terror of reported prodigies to settle the spirit of the plebians (as well as by other means -viz., intentionally instigating war). Very solemnly the Sybilline books were consulted (Liv:III.x.7):

Litri per duumviro sacrorum aditi;
and the answer was given, a hint to the plebians:

...... inter cetera monitum ut seditionibus abstineretur.

In 457 B.C., when the Roman army was warring in Central Italy and internal strife was rampant, the Capitol was declared to be purified on account of the unnatural sequence of action of wolves and dogs (Livy: III.xxix.8,9):

Extremo anno agitatum de lege ab tribunis est; sed quia duo exercitus aberrant, ne quid ferretur ad populum patres tenuere; plebes vicit ut quintum eosdem tribunos crearet. Lupos visos in Capitolio ferunt a canibus fugatos; ob id prodigium lustratum Capitolium esse.

2. Natural phenomena

Natural phenomena are never without their effects on human nature. This is especially true of primitive peoples who have not had the enlightenment of scientific explanation to dispel this dread of the elements. Such phenomena bore meaningful import among the early Romans, as Livy attests. Some of these phenomena were normal enough, but if they happened to occur at a time of national crisis, they were treated as signa.
a) Earthquakes

Earthquakes, startling in themselves and dreadful, were always ominous. In 433 B.C. at Rome the spread of a disease was given the rank of a portent from the fact that other prodigies, and especially an earthquake, happened contemporaneously (Liv:IV:xxi.5):

Ceterum magis vis morbi ingravescentur curae erat terroresque ac prodigia, maxime quod crebris motibus terrae ruere in agris nuntiabantur tecta.

At another time a chasm, reputedly the work of an earthquake, was a direct act of the gods and could only be satisfied by the heroic self sacrifice of one Martius Curtius (Liv:VII.vi.1-5):

Eodem anno, seu motu terrae seu qua vi alia, forum medium ferme specu vasto conlapsum in immensam altitudinem dicitur; neque eam voragine coniectu terrae, cum pro se quisque gereret, expleri potuisse, priusquam Romanus posset; id enim illi loco dicandum vates canebant, si rem publicam Romanum perpetuam esse vellent. Tum M. Curtium, juvenem bello egregium, castigasse ferunt dubitantes an ullum magis Romanum bonum quam arma
This story of Curtius's behavior is most probably a legend, just as Livy calls it (fabula), and indeed it is handed down apparently only as the basis for the naming of the Curtian Lake. But we may suppose the possibility of such a cleft in the earth as well as the terror it occasioned.

c) Floods.

Whatever thing at all threatened the peace of life in a violent way was portentous. In this regard floods were hardly of less importance than earthquakes. In 398 B.C. during the siege of Veii, among other unnamed portents, the one which was the cause of universal worry and dread to the Romans was the overflow of the Alban Lake. The ominous aspect was increased by the failure of the Romans to notice any normal reason for the flood (Liv:V.xv.1,2):
Prodigia interim multa nuntiari, .... 

in unum omnium curae versae sunt, quod lacus in Albano nemore sine ullis caelestibus aquis causave qua alia quae rem miraculo eximeret, in altitudinem insolitam crevit.

c) Lightning and Thunder

Lightning and thunderbolts, of course, are spectacular weapons of the rulers of the universe. In our treatment of auguria impetrativa the fulmen sinistrum, we found, was a highly favorable sign (Cic: De Div. II.lxxiv). As a freely given sign, however, (augurium oblativum) lightning was fraught with terror. Cicero notes in his De Divinatione (Cic: De Div.II.xliii):

Jove tonante fulgurante comitia populi hatere nefas

Livy (Liv: I.xxxi.6) records that when Tullus Hostilius, in his feverish conversion to religious practice, undertook, but improperly, a rite to Jupiter Elicius, he was struck dead by that god's own personal weapon - a thunderbolt:

nec solum nullam ei oblatam caelestium speciem, sed ira Iovis sollicitati prava religione fulmine ictum cum domo conflagrasse.
The resentment of heaven was likewise manifested on another occasion by a storm with dreadful noise, which took place when the Latins under the abusive Annius were appealing to the Romans in reference to violated treaties (Liv:VIII.vi.1-3):

\[ \text{Here again the truth of the story is in doubt according to Livy's own words (Liv:ibid.):} \]

\[ \text{But at least it shows that the wrath of Jupiter usually was expected to show itself in the thunderbolt. This belief held also among the Greeks (Iliad:VII.478-81).} \]

\[ \text{Again lightning was used as a weapon for chastising the Romans, when during their conflict with the Samnites in 295 B.C. many of Appius Claudius's} \]
army were reported to have been struck by lightning
(Liv: X.xxxi.8-10):

Felix annus bellicis rebus, pestilentia gravis prodigiisque sollicitus; nam... in exercitu Appi
Claudii plerisque fulminibus ictos nuntiatum est.

Lightning or thunder, being the especial weapon of Jupiter, might be expected to occur as a prodigy where a violent reversal of human action was demanded by that deity. This was brought out when the Romans were at war with the Aequi in 470 B.C. Very evidently it was not proper for them to attack the Aequian camp on one particular day, for the moment they did they were repulsed by a clap of thunder and hail. Upon their retreat the sky cleared almost miraculously. They accepted the repulsion as nothing short of prodigious (Liv: II.lxii.2,3):

Eodem anno Valerius consul cum exercitu in Aequos profectus cum hostem ad proelium elicere non posset, castra oppugnare est adortus. Prohibuit foeda tempestas cum grandine ac tonitribus caelo dejecta. Admirationem deinde auxit signo receptui dato adeo tranquilla serenitas reddita ut velut numine aliquo defensa castra oppugnare iterum religio fuerit.
d) Pestilence

Pestilence or disease was recognized as one of the great foes of humankind, and at least on one occasion became the tool by which the gods struck a blow for justice. In the bickerings between the Roman patricians and plebeians in 384 B.C., the gods sent a pestilence, which had no apparent natural cause, as a punishment for the execution of Manlius on the Capitol -- the very man who had a short time before saved that home of the gods from the Gauls and who died apparently the champion of the plebeians (Liv: VI.xxx.15,16):

Pestilentia etiam brevi consecuta nullis occurrentibus tantae cladis causis ex Manliano supplicio magnae partis videri orta: violatum Capitolium esse sanguine servatoris nec dis cordi fuisse poenam ejus oblatam prope oculis suis, a quo sua templo erepta e manibus hostium essent.

3. Unnatural phenomena

Unnatural phenomena, or nature acting out of order, were reported rather frequently.
a) Unusual Showers

Unnatural showers were noticed at several times and seem to have evidenced heaven's displeasure
at the internal religious state of Rome, usually following a wave of prosperity: In the very early days of Rome's existence, after king Tullus had defeated the Sabines in battle and while the Romans were in comparative contentment and peace, a surprising rain of stones was recorded as having taken place on the Alban Mount. When Roman envoys reported this at home, a nine-day celebration was held and established as a regular custom after such a prodigy (Liv:I.xxxi.1-6):

Devictis Sabinis cum in magna
  gloria magnisque opibus regnum
  Tulli ac tota res Romana esset,
  nuntiatum regi patribusque est
in monte Albano lapidibus pluvisse.
  Quod cum credi vix posset, missis
  ad id visendum prodigium, in con­
spectu haud aliter quam cum gran­
dinem venti glomeratam in terras
  agunt, crebri cecidere caelo lapides.

In fulfillment of a vow made in combat against the Aurunci and Latins in 345 B.C., a temple was dedicated to Moneta. But the dedication was followed by a shower of stones showing divine displeasure, and a dictator was appointed to establish definite days of worship (Liv:VII.xxviii.6,7):

Anno postquam vota erat aedes
  Monetae dedicatur C. Marcio
Rutulo tertium Tito Manlio
Torquato iterum consulibus.
Prodigium extemplo dedicatio-
nem secutum, simile vetusto
montis Albani prodigio; namque
et lapidibus pluit et nox inter-
diu visa intendi; librisque in-
spectis cum plena religione ci-
vitas esset........(1).

Just what the cause of the divine displeasure
was is not mentioned; but here again we have a re-
flexion of the practice of the Roman patricians of
turning a prodigy to use as a means of confirming
their disparagement of the plebeians - in this case the
consul G. Marcius Rutulus. At any rate, Livy records
that they appointed a dictator for the religious emer-
gency (Liv:ibid.):

Senatui placuit dictatoarem feri-
arum constituendarum causa dici.

And after supplication was made there was an interreg-
um which terminated in a complete patrician consul-
ship -- the latter probably not by accident (Liv:VII.
xxviii.9,10):

(1)
The usual meaning given to "religione" here
is the extension, "foreboding of divine displeasure."
Et res haud ulla insigni ad memoriam causa ad interregnum redit; ex interregno, ut id actum videri posset, ambo patricii consules creati sunt.

In the year 295 B.C. success in war with the Samnites was accompanied by a shower of earth, among other vexatious prodigies (Liv:X.xxxi.8-10):

Felix annus bellicis rebus, pestilentia gravis prodigiisque sollicitus; nam et terra multifarim pluvisse........nuntiatum est.

The "terra multifarim pluvisse" sounds like a reference to a mere dust storm, which of course could be looked on as prodigious if it were of any length or importance.

In 461 B.C. during the great disturbance over the Terentilian Law, a strange shower of flesh was reported to have been seen and seems like the others to have been interpreted as a warning of religious carelessness, for the duumvirs immediately consulted the books for sacred rites (Liv:III.x.6):

Inter alia prodigia et carne pluit, quem imbrem ingens numerus avium intervolitando rapuisse fertur; quod intercidit, sparsum ita jacuisse per aliquot dies, ut nihil odor mutaret.
Unusual Fires; Light and Darkness

Unusual fires or displays of light or darkness were always looked on as portending something, usually evil. In a class by itself is the strange un-consuming flame reported in the case of Servius Tullius as a proof that he was divinely fated to rule (Liv:I.xxxix.1,2):


Another example of this sort is the case of Lavinia, reported in Vergil, Aen. vii.

In times of disaster one of the usual phenomena was that of apparent fire in the sky. This was reported twice in the troublous times around 460 B.C. Once, in 460, after the army under Postumius had returned to Rome, the sky was reported as apparently on fire. Again in 459 B.C., when agitation about the Tarentilian Law was at a height, it was noted that the sky was on fire, as well as other wonders (Liv: III.v.14):
Ut Romam reditum est, justitium remissum. Caelum visum est ardere plurimo igni, portentaque alia aut obversata oculis aut venas exterritis ostentavere species. His avertendis terroribus in triduum feriae indictae, per quas omnia delubra pacem deum exposcentium virorum mulierumque turba implebantur. (1).

In that same year the sky again was reported to be on fire (Liv:III.x.6):  

Eo anno caelum ardere visum.

These lights may have been nothing more than what we know as the Aurora Borealis. The Aurora is recorded as a disastrous sign among most primitive peoples (XXVII:367). Pliny (Plin:HN.II.27) holds the same view, even though he attributes it to a natural cause.

Here again, also, does the prodigy seem strangely coincidental with patrician unrest. After the prodigy the duumvirs announced that as a remedy the Romans should refrain from factional strife.

(1)

The festivals here mentioned seem to be an anachronism of the historian. Such festivals of supplication appear to have been of Greek origin as the 'lectisternia' and of somewhat later date in Rome than 460 B.C. (XIV:art. SUPPLICATIO).
In 345 B.C. at the dedication of the temple of Moneta an unusual curtain of darkness was reported and thought to forebode divine displeasure (Livy: VII:xxviii.6,7):

Prodigium extemplo dedicationem secutum.............et nox interdiu visa intendi.

4. Psychical and Physiological Phenomena

a) Extraordinary Creatures

Outstanding physiological and psychical phenomena were also looked upon as portentous. Animals often, from the conditions of their birth or from other circumstances, were thought to show the hand of the gods. At the time of the reign of Servius Tullius there was reported the presence of one heifer on the farm of a certain Sabine farmer, which was of extraordinary size and beauty. This was definitely regarded as a prodigy according to Livy (Livy: I.xlv.4-6):

Bos in Sabinis nata cuidam patri familias dicitur miranda magnitudine ac specie; fixa per multas aetates cornua in vestibulo templi Dianae monumentum ei fuere miraculo. Habita, ut erat, res prodigii loco est.
Again in the days of Tarquinius Superbus, when that ruler was dedicating a temple to Jupiter on the Capitoline, a human head was said to have been found by the excavators of the temple (Liv:I.lv.6):

\[ \text{secutum aliud magnitudinem imperii portendens prodigium est; caput humanum integra facie aperientibus fundamenta templi dicitur aparuisse. Quae visa species haud perambages arcem eam imperii caputque rerum fore portendebat, idque ita cecinere vates.} \]

b) Dreams and Apparitions

Dreams and apparitions, of course, from their very nature were looked upon as supernatural. Dreams seem to have been an accepted medium through which the gods would recall men from some violation or deflection of worship. In the days of Coriolanus a certain plebeian, as related at length by Livy (Liv:II.xxxvi.2-8), was addressed by Jupiter himself in a dream. The god said that the leading dancer at the games had not been to his liking. When the man failed to report this through fear, the divine wrath was borne out by severe punishment. His son was taken, and he himself
laid low with illness:

Haud ita multo post Tito Latinio, de plebe homini, somnium fuit; visus Jupiter dicere sibi ludis praesultatorem displicuisse; nisi magnifice instauraruntur ei ludi, periculum urbi fore; iret, ea consulibus nuntiaret. Quamquam haud sane liber erat religione animus, verecundia tamen majestatis magistratum timorque vicit, ne in ora hominum pro ludibrio abiret. Magno illi ea cunctatio stetit; filium namque intra paucos dies amissit. Cujus repentinae cladis ne causa dubia esset, aegro animi eadem illa in somnis observata species visa est rogitare, satum magnam spreti numinis haberet mercedem; majorem instare, ni eat propere ac nuntiet consulibus; jam præsentiur res erat. Cunctantem tamen ac prolatentem ingens vis morbi adorta est debilitate subita. Tunc enimvero deorum ira admonuit. Fessus igitur molis præteritis instanibusque consilio propinquorum adhibito cum visa atque audita et observatum totiens somno Jovem, minas irasque caelestes repræsentatas casibus suis exposuisset consensu inde haud dubio omnium qui aderant in forum ad consules lectica deferetur. Inde in curiam jussu consulum delatus eadem illa cum patribus ingenti omnium admiratione enarrasset, ecce aliud miraculum. Qui captus omnibus membris delatus in curiam esset, eum functum officio pedibus suis domum reddie traditum memoriae est.

Again in 339 B.C., in an important battle with the Latins, the same apparition appeared to both consuls while asleep in camp -- a superhuman figure, who told
them that victory would ensue for that general's
nation who would offer himself and a legion of the
enemy in battle as a sacrifice to the Dii Manes (Liv:
VIII.vi.9-11):

Ibi in quiete utrique consuli eadem
dicitur visa species viri majoris
quam pro humano habitu augustioris-
que, dicentis ex una acie impera-
torem, ex altera exercitum Deis
Manibus Matrique Terrae deberi,
utrius exercitus imperator legiones
hostium superque eas se devovisset,
ejus populi partisque victoriam fore.

d) Voices

Probably the most direct form of prodigy of all,
because most specific, was that of supernatural voices.
They often were reported in connection with some cri-
tical event. When the newly formed Roman Republic was
warring on the Tarquins and their following from Veii,
and both armies were deadlock, a voice, presumably
that of Silvanus, was reported to be heard from the
Arisian forest. The text of the message was that the
Romans had lost one man less than the Etruscans and so
must be given the decision (Liv:II.vii.2,3):
Adiciunt miracula huic pugnae:
silentio proximae noctis ex
silva Arsis ingentem editam vocem;
Silvani vocem eam creditam; haec
dicta: uno plus Tuscorum cecidisse
in acie; vincere bello Romanum. Ita
certe inde abiere Romani ut victores,
Etrusci pro victis.

At another time, in 391 B.C., just prior to
the great sack of Rome by the Gauls, a plebeian named
Marcus Caedicius declared that he had heard a voice
in the Nova Via bidding him tell the magistrates
that the Gauls were coming. Unfortunately the
portent was neglected (Liv:V.xxxii.6,7):

Eodem anno Marcus Caedicius de
plebe nuntiavit tribunis se in
Nova Via, ubi nunc sacellum est
supra aedem Vestae, vocem noctis
silenti audisse clariorem humana,
quae magistratibus dici juberet
Gallos adventare. Id, ut fit....
..... spretum.

What happened is now history.

In 377 B.C., during a campaign of the Romans
against the Latins, the temple of Mater Matuta was
the sole building of Satricium that was not razed --
and that because an awesome voice repulsed the un-
scrupulous soldiery, threatening terrible retribution if the temple were fired (Liv:VI.xxxiii.4,5):

nec aliud tectum (Satricum) ejus superfuit urbis, cum faces pariter sacris profanisque inicerent, quam Matris Matutae templum; inde eos nec sua religio nec verecundia deum arcuisse dicitur sed vox horrenda adita templo cum tristibus minis, ni nefandos ignes procul delubris amovissent.

Accompanying the rain of stones on the Alban Mount, reported from very early times, there was presented to the Roman envoys the sound of a mighty voice issuing from the mountain grove warning the Albans to celebrate sacrifices forsaken through neglect or in preference for the worship of another nation (Romans) (Liv:I.xxxi.2-6):

.....missis ad id visendum prodigium......... Visi etiam audire vocem ingentem ex summi cacuminis luco, ut patrio ritu sacra Albani facerent, quae velut dis quoque simul cum patria relictis oblivioni dederant, et aut Romana sacra susceperant aut fortunae, ut fit obirati cultum reliquerant deum. Romanis quoque ab eodem prodigio novendiale sacram publice suscepturn est, seu voce caelesti ex Albano monte missa -- nam id quoque traditur.
Here again is reference made to the *supplicatio*, and again does Livy's chronology seem to be awry. He is apparently "writing it into" the practices of the Romans of very early days (cf. P.45).

5. Accidental Occurrences

Accidental occurrences were often looked on as ominous. This was sometimes due to the fact that they agreed substantially with some notion already in the minds of the Roman people.

In 390 B.C., after the destruction of Rome by the Gauls, many Romans wanted to change the site of their capitol and suggested moving to Veii. The senators, seeing the implications of such a move and being desirous of starting all over again at Rome, seized on an accident to confirm their suggestion. They said it was a meaningful omen when close by the curia a centurion cried out to his standard bearers to fix their ensigns and prepare to pitch camp (Liv:V.IV.1,2):

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... centurio in comitio ex-clamavit: "Signifer, statue signum; hic manebumus opime." Qua voce
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The Romans chose to recognize it as a divine warning of the fall of Rome and of the fall of Camillus himself when that leader, some years before the Gallic invasion, stumbled and fell on his way from prayer (Liv:V.xxi.16):

Convertentem se inter hanc veneratio

tionem traditur memoriae prolapsum cecidisse; idque omen pertinuisse postea eventu rem conjectantibus visum ad damnitionem ipsus Camilli, captae deinde urbis Romanae, quod post paucos accidit annos cladem.

The portentous character of some accidents was heightened by the unusual character of the accidents themselves: That the Tiber should back up and flood the circus at the very time when games were being held there to appease the gods and to secure removal of a current pestilence (363 B.C.) was taken as a rejection by the gods of the appeal (Liv:VII.iii.1,2):

nec tamen ludorum primum initium procurandis religionibus datum aut
The strange circumstance of the natural deaths of the entire Potitii family -- twelve branches of thirty individuals with their offspring -- after they had entrusted their hereditary rites to public servants was taken as a warning to men not to violate the established routine of religion. The later blindness of Appius Claudius, advocate of their sinful action, was also not without meaning (Liv: IX.xxix.9-11):

As natural as the fall of Annius appeared when he was leaving the Roman temple flushed and nervous
CHAPTER IV.

INFLUENCE OF GREEK AND ETRUSCAN DIVINATION ON ROMAN SYSTEM

There is undoubtedly in Roman divination much that is distinctly original to the Roman culture; there is also much that shows the influence of other classical cultures, especially ancient Etruria and Greece.

First of all, it is a true but striking fact that the ancient people of Rome were not inclined to employ divination to foretell future events. Augury was performed to obtain the sanction of the gods for some intended undertaking, and to "recognize the warnings proceeding from the gods." (XI:822).

There was a true Italic method of foretelling the future — viz., by what was known as sortes or lots — "small rods or plates bearing inscriptions and strung together (serere)" (XI:821). Cicero (Cic:DeDiv:II.85) describes the method used in divining from sortes.

Drawing from lots of one kind or another was prevalent all over Italy and from earliest days even down to the Empire. Officially, however, the practice of
foretelling the future by means of these sortes was not well received in the city of Rome. In 241 B.C. the Roman Senate prohibited the consul Quintus Lutatius Cerco from consulting the famous sortes at Praeneste (XI:822). Cicero, himself an augur at one time, records (Cic:DeDiv.II.87):

Quis enim magistratus aut quis vir inlustrior utitur sortibus?

Such disparagement of the native Italic sortes in official circles at Rome is the result of the view taken there of divination in general, which has just been cited above — viz., that Roman augury was not performed to foretell the future. Again Cicero the augur (Cic:De Div.II.70):

Non enim sumus ii nos augures, qui avium reliquorumve signorum observatione futura dicamus.

Apparently the ancient Italians had little recourse to dreams or dream oracles. To attempt to obtain knowledge of the future by means of the trance or divine infusion was not an original method of divination. The practice of incubation (1) in temples

(1) "sleeping in a sanctuary where oracular responses were sought through dreams" (cf. INCUBARE — Harper's Dictionary of Class. Lit. & Ant.).
or elsewhere was not Roman but distinctly Greek (XIII:128-131). One may, of course, find scattered references in Latin literature that would seem to point to the existence of such practices on Roman soil (XI:821)(1). But often these lines of inscription are misunderstood. They apparently do not signify real Roman practice but a practice brought to Rome and connected with the worship of alien deities - e.g., Asklepios, Isis, Mithra.

We cannot suppose, however, that the Romans were any less natural than other people in that they recognized dreams and even saw some significance in them. That the ancient Romans thought that occasionally they could even be the media of communication between gods and man we could assume. Livy records two cases of the divine will manifest through dreams. In one instance the historian goes into a lengthy description of how Jupiter made manifest his disapproval of some detail of procedure at the public games through a dream to one Titus Latinius (Liv:II.xxxvi.4-8).

And again two consuls in the field were said to have

(1) Verg.:Aen.VII.81 ff.
Ovid:Fasti IV.649 ff.
Plaut.:Curcul. 266
received in sleep the same apparition telling the conditions of victory in the war with the Latins (Livy: VIII. vi).

Still this is not to admit that the dream or dream oracle was considered a serious part of the formal religious practice of the ancient Romans as it was with the Greeks.

Likewise the gnomic oracle as a means of foretelling the future was not found among the practices of the ancient Romans. As W.W. Fowler states (X: 297):

There are, indeed, ancient traces of a prophetic art at Rome, but as the historian of divination (Cicero) has well observed, they are all connected not with human beings but with divinities.

In proof of this Fowler refers to the ancient deity Carmenta who "may very probably represent some dim tradition of a numen at whose shrine women might gain some knowledge as to their fortunes in childbirth, just as outside Rome, at Franeeste and Antium, Fortuna seems to have had this gift in historical times." (X: 197). Livy himself refers to the divinity of Carmenta in speaking of the religious character of Numa
(Liv: I. vii. 8): 

... venerabilis vir miraculo literarum rei novae inter rudes artium homines, venerabilior divinitate credita Carmentae matris,quam fatilloquam ante Sibyllae in Italiam adventum miratae eae gentes fuerant.

Actually what was construed as an oracle among the ancient Romans was not at all the oracle of the Greeks. It was not a prophecy coming from some "frantic" or inspired human being about the occurrence and outcome of future events, as we find recorded of the Etruscans (Liv: V. xv. 10): 

Itaque quae tum cecinerit divino spiritu instinctus (vates), ea se nec ut indicia sint revocare.

Concerning "possession" as the source of oracles, Fowler (X: 310. n. 12) states: "In the so called Italian oracles there is no question of it." The Romans had no oracle fixed at some popular shrine, or the center of any definite ritual. The chief feature of Greek divination was the marked importance of definitely established oracular shrines, especially of Zeus at
Dodona, and of Apollo at Delphi. Roman oracles may be classed under the single and very general term of "voices" or "sounds" of nature, which, of course, were subject to interpretation, as being the direct voice of some god. Thus Livy (Liv: I.xxxi.3) tells that when, after prosperity and peace had returned to Rome with the defeat of the Sabines, envoys were sent to inquire into a rain of stones on the Alban Mount, a voice was heard coming from the Mount:

Visi etiam audire vocem ingentem
ex summi cacuminis luco, ut patrio
ritu sacra Albani facerent, quae
velut dis quoque simul cum patria
relictis oblivioni dederant, ...

Here we may notice that reference to any future events is not found, but merely the disapproval of the gods over some neglect. And the "voice" is not that of any "teller of oracles."

Again during the war between Rome and Veii, the god Silvanus (presumably) voiced his decision from the forest (Liv: II.vii.3). Here, too, what passes as a good example of the Roman oracle is far different from the human learned oracle of the Greeks.

The case is the same in other examples that Livy
gives us: The oracle issues from some deity who in the case is not bothered with divining the future: The Latins were kept from razing the temple of Mater Matuta by the warning of an awe-inspiring voice (Liv: xxxiii.5). Just before the sack of Rome by the Gauls a certain Marcus Caedicius said he had heard a voice "more than human" bidding him tell the magistrates that the Gauls were coming (Liv: V.xxxii.6-8).

As close as we come to references of any human oracles among the Romans is in the case of the Carmina Marciana. These were certain verses of prophetic nature attributed to one Cneius Marcius (cf. Liv: XXV.xii). They were even brought into official recognition in 212 B.C. (XI:821). However, a close checkup proved them to be simply sentences from the Greek Sibylline records in Latin, and their existence does not establish Marcius as a prophet.

As for the Sibylline oracles themselves, we should note that they were introduced early into Rome and had their interpreters in the persons of the decemviri sacris faciundis. These were originally not oracles but sentences (καθένας) specifying sacrifices, supplications, and such, by
which danger and divine wrath could be averted (XI:826).

The Roman system of divination was, then, essentially different from that of the Greeks. The Romans sought in their practice some sign of the approval or disapproval of the deity on some undertaking. The Greeks through divination wanted zealously to learn the future. They were imbued with ".....the craze for knowledge of the future." The Romans learned what they sought primarily in things around them; the Greeks learned the future directly by the voice of the gods speaking through the prophetess inspired or possessed in a dream.

Yet in the observance of promiscuous phenomena of nature -- the field of portents and prodigies --, a much less systematized and official part of the divinatory art, similarities between the two cultures are very understandable. People of whatever nation or age will usually take cognizance of such happenings and attach to them an ominous meaning. Often the aspect of the phenomenon itself needs no explanation. For example, earthquakes and floods are seen as harmful omens by everyone.
But beyond this a certain diffusion of belief between different cultures can sometimes be noted. Resemblances are often too close to be purely arbitrary. In one case, at least, does the belief of the ancient Romans in this matter of prodigies resemble the doctrine of the Greek philosopher Empedocles, who believed that different parts of animals had separate origins (XVII:365). Arms, heads, eyes, etc. sprang up apart from bodies; heads of one species sprang up supported by the trunk of another species, etc. Among the Romans the occurrence of prodigious births was strange and full of foreboding. Livy (Liv:XXVII.xxxvii; XXXI.xii) tells of several such births: a lamb with a pig's head; a pig with a human head; a horse with five feet. Elsewhere in Roman literature are recorded beings quite as strange (cf: Lucret:V.837; Plin:HN.VII.ii; VII.iii).

The Roman state system of augury did not easily survive the influence of the Etruscans as it did that of the Greeks. To any student of the history of Rome the interweb of the fortunes of these two nations is obvious and important. Several of the kings of
early Rome were Etruscans -viz., the Tarquins. And it was right back in the very early days of Etruscan kingship and domination that the influence of the Etruscans on Roman religious life began. The Etruscans seem always to have been masters of religion and divination. Religious practice and ritual formed a great part of their culture. (1). With them religion was an important profession. The early period of Etruscan superiority at Rome (X:237,239,245,258) would, of course, explain the possibility of the inroad of religious belief and practice (VII:379), for the years covered by Livy's first decade. During the Hannibalic Wars also we know that there was another great influx of Etruscan customs. As the years went by the disciplina auguralis at Rome was superseded to a great extent by the Etruscan art, and also as a result became finally corrupt and meaningless and a tool of unscrupulous state leaders (X:307,346,347,391). The augural college became a part of political life: The augurs were public men and they secularized their power of interpretation. "They could declare a magistrate 'vitio creatus' whether they had been present at the taking

(1)"Accepisse id augurium laeta dicitur Tanaquil, perita, ut vulgo Etrusi, caelestium prodigiorum mulier"(L:I.xxxiv).
Thus the practice of divining from lightning was Etruscan in origin. This was the method used when, as Livy (Liv:I.xviii.6) describes, the augur took Numa up on a stony promontory to seek a sign approving that monarch's sovereignty. In this passage lightning is not specifically mentioned as the sign sought for, but the very technical description of the division of the heavens would hardly seem necessary for any observation of the flight and song of birds (X:303 & n.).

Extispicium, or observance of entrails, was also originally and essentially an Etruscan procedure, (1) although early used as supplementary to divinatory rites among early Italic peoples (Liv:XXII.xvi). The historian also records that during the war with Veii in 480 B.C., recourse was had to the observation of entrails (Liv:II.xlii.10):

nunc extis nunc per aves consulti.

The influence and importance of the haruspex grew apace at Rome and in the later Republic the haruspicatio

(1) It is a fact that observance of the entrails of a sacrificial victim was resorted to in original Roman practice to see if the animal was suitable. And also if the animal were found unsuitable it constituted a signum oblativum (Liv:xli.15). Such extispicium never assumed in original Roman divinatory art the importance that it did among the Etruscans and later at Rome through their influence (XXVIII:824,825).
was taken before all important events to give a knowledge—often in detail—of their outcome (Livy: XXVII.xv).

And also the influence of the Etruscan diviners made itself felt in the matter of portents and prodigies. The Etruscan treatment of such phenomena far overlapped the Roman practice. Here again the habit of reading the outcome of future events from these prodigies was contrary to the original Roman view, which has already been described merely as a sign that all was not well between heaven and earth. Livy (Livy:XLII.xx.1) records a case wherein the haruspex, from observation of a prodigium of lightning, does not stop at an interpretation that tells merely the consent of the deity for an action but precisely describes the aspect of future events.

But the fine and ingenious point to which the Etruscans had reduced the art of divination was not respected by the Roman mind. Although in the days of the later Republic haruspicatio was taken before all important undertakings, it was pretty much of a mere formality. There seemed to be no real religious
spirit in it. It had refined the original *jus divinum* to a legal formula, thereby killing the real sentiment. The *haruspices* were never admitted officially to the Roman *collegium augurale*, probably more because of this overformalization of divinatory ritual than from any general disdain based on their foreign origin. For any particular occasion, if the *haruspex* were wanting, the Romans hired one from Etruria, where a definite training school was established to supply men learned in divinatory lore. Livy records an example of this (Liv:V.xv.1,2):

... et quia hostitus Etruscis, per quos ea procurarent, haruspices non erant.

And again,

...... idque ita ceccinere vates, quique in urbe erant quosque ad eam rem consultiadam ex Etruria acciverant.

Such recourse to foreign methods of divination was not an uncommon thing for the Romans, but it was more an expression of superstition than one of original religious feeling. This was the case during
times of national crisis when the Romans sought consolation in the strange procedures and prophecies of different cults. Livy records the case of the young Tarquinii who went to consult the oracle at Delphi (Liv:I.lvi.4-6): Tarquin was so perturbed at the strange sight of a snake gliding out of a pillar and was so nervous about his tenure of kingship that he finally had recourse to the Delphic oracle:

... hoc velut domestico exterritus (Tarquinius) visu Delphos... mittere statuit.

The same nervous trepidation also prompted the legation sent to Delphi, when the rising flood of the Alban Lake threatened destruction (Liv:V.xv.4):

... in unum omnium curae versae sunt, quod lacus in Albano nemore sine ullis caelastibus aquis causae qua alia quae rem miraculo eximeret, in altitudinem insolitam crevit. Quidnam eo di protenderent prodigio missi sciscitatum oratores ad Delphicum oraculum.
CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

Such, in outline, is the system of divination practiced officially and publicly among the ancient Romans. That it was a highly formalized system, and originally at least an expression of the *jus divinum* or true religious spirit of the Roman people we can hardly doubt. Only as such is a study of it worth while.

Several points are outstanding in this system as distinctly Roman: In recapitulation of the examples presented, we can note, as already referred to, that there was little freedom evidenced in the taking of auspices. One finds little reference from the days of the kings and the early Republic to any wandering prophets and soothsayers. Public divination was under state rule and surveillance. There was always a definite mode of procedure. This adherence to exactness in divinatory rite came, we may suppose, as a result of the underlying Roman belief about man's relation with the gods—*viz.*, that of contract. Man's
duty was to seek the *pax deorum* by certain definite procedures, usually laid down in the books of the *pontifices*. There seemed to be little, if any, spirit of love as the basis. It was give and take: Let man respect the sovereignty of the gods, admit their superiority, build temples to them, respect the signs generally recognized as sent by them, and the gods could be expected to do their part. Here again the practical legal spirit of the Romans showed itself. Ritual was all important, as are the terms of any contract, and must be adhered to in all dealings with the gods. The augural books contained the method to be used in all cases of divining. We have seen what happened to those poor unfortunates Tullus Hostilius (Liv:I.xxxi.6), who performed an augural ceremony improperly, and the careless chicken-keeper, who falsified his report to the Roman commander (Liv:X.xli).

Another characteristic distinctive of Roman divinatory practice is one already alluded to i.e., a reluctance for seeking into the unborn future. Such divining of the future was common in other ancient nations, notably Greece. The question might be raised:
"Is not all divination inquiring into the future in one way or another?" .... Apparently not with the ancient Romans, at least originally. In their augury they sought merely the sanction of the deity for some action at hand. Their duty was always to be in harmony with the gods. If they obtained evidence of such approval they rested content, not worried about things in the offing. It is a fact that what is recorded as the only original Italic method of foretelling the future -viz., the sortes, was looked on with disrespect by the heads of the Roman state religion (cf. p.57).

In times of crisis, of course, people will do things to console their spirits, will seize on any device to satisfy their bewilderment and trepidation. The Romans on several occasions had recourse to the Greek oracle at Delphi, as noted above (cf. Liv:V.xv; I.lvi), and to the prognostication of Etruscan soothsayers. In such cases the spirit of superstition apparently overcame their stolid Roman dignity and traditional feeling in this matter. And outside the pale of formalized state religion it is probable that the common people had full recourse to the practices
of other nations at all times, especially during the
days of the later Republic and Empire, when practi-
tioners of various eastern cults found their way to
Rome. Cato the Elder apparently felt it necessary
to insert in his work De Agri Cultura, V.iv:

haruspicem augurem hariolum Chaldaeum
ne quem consulisse velit.

And Cicero in his De Divinatione, I.cxxxii:

Nunc illa testabor, non me sortilegos
neque eos, qui quaestus causa hariolentur,
ne psychomantia quidem, quibus Appius,
amicus tuus, uti solebat, agnoscere:
'Non habeo denique nauci Marsum augurem;
non vicanos haruspices, non de circo as-
trologos;
non Isiacos conjectores, non interpretæs
somnium';
non enim sunt ei aut scientia aut arte divini.

Even Ennius had his to say on this matter, and is
quoted by Cicero (Cic:DeDiv.I.cxxxii):

"sed superstitiosi vates impudentesque
harioli
aut inertes aut insani aut quibus aegestas
imperat,
qui sibi semitam non sapiunt, alteri mon-
strant viam;
quibus divitiæ pollicentur, ab iis drachmam
ipsi petunt.
de his divitiis sibi deducant drachmam reddant
cetera."
In the days of empire, if we may believe Pliny, people had recourse to soothsayers in time of sickness (Plin:Ep.II.xx.2 ff). From Juvenal we learn that soothsayers were consulted about the possibilities of marriage (Juv:Sat.VI.588).

The most prominent ones practiced in such art were the Chaldaei and mathematici, the latter referred to by Tacitus (Tac:Hist.I.xxii):

\[
genus\ hominum\ potentibus\ infidum,\ sperantibus\ fallax,\ quod\ in\ civitate\ nostra\ et\ vetabitur\ semper\ et\ retinebitur.\]

And such practices even penetrated to the home circles of the emperors, where seemingly every new doctrine, every type of superstitious totem or charm was cultivated (cf. XXVI).

More pertinent to our work, Livy records examples of the great disciplina Etrusca. From his history citations have been made to prove that the Romans officially employed Etruscan soothsayers and diviners. He shows the growing use of the practice of observing entrails, of foretelling a detailed future from a mere prodigy -- both distinctive features of the disciplina Etrusca. His work illustrates in a general
way the complete history of divination among the Romans, and the spirit that prompted its practice -- from a spirit of religious fear and obligation as shown especially in the awesomeness of the incident of Attus Naevius cleaving the whetstone for a proud and sceptical king (Liv:I.xxxvi.4), to the carelessness of the chicken-keeper (Liv:V.xl) which showed the disdain of later generations for the augural art.

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