

CORASSIN, Maria Luiza. (Org.) *Cinco Estudos sobre Tito Lívio*. São Paulo: LCTE Editora, 2104. 170 p. ISBN 978-85-85908-41-6

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All empires share a common paradox: their histories are often written only after their domination system has been established. The writing of Roman history is representative of that kind of paradox. Although one could blame the relentless action of time for the disappearance of the annalistic tradition, whose beginnings predate the Roman expansion, all the fundamental historical narratives about Rome were written after the third century B.C. Still, the most crucial works dealing with Rome's origins appeared only under the imperial government, beginning with Augustus. Among the writers of those important works, Titus Livy, with his book *Ab Urbe Condita*, is perhaps the greatest exponent of such paradox. A paradox that manifests itself in the Livian studies as several dichotomies, sometimes as apparent oppositions, but occasionally as a result of irreconcilable characterizations of the Paduan historian: a rhetorician or historian, a political or religious writer, an elite or plebs sympathizer, a republican or a supporter of Augustus' regime, etc.

That multiplicity of Livies resulted in a huge amount of studies abroad, which, however, has not been adequately matched by the Brazilian academic output (and regrettably, something similar can be said about the whole ensemble of Ancient Studies produced by Portuguese speaking scholars). There are few studies on Titus Livy and *Ab Urbe Condita* published in Brazil. Although, fortunately, there are some papers published on journals of Ancient History or Classical Studies and on collective works dealing with specific themes concerning Livy, and, as far as this reviewer was able to uncover, only one substantial book about Livy has been published in this country for the last ten years.²

In this context, the publishing of *Cinco estudos sobre Tito Lívio*, edited by Maria Luiza Corassin, is great news, because it starts to fix a big gap in

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² Still, Livy has to share the spotlight with Tacitus here, cf. Marques, Juliana Bastos. *Tradição e renovações da identidade romana em Tito Lívio e Tácito*. Rio de Janeiro: Apicuri-Faperj, 2013.

the studies on Antiquity made in Brazil. The book presents five chapters by individual authors, following a short introduction on Livy and his historical significance.

Moisés Antigueira's chapter "Poder e imagens antinômicas na narrativa de Tito Lívio: os retratos de Cincinato e Ápio Claudio no livro 3" deals with the *exempla*: one of the fundamental procedures employed by Livy to articulate the city's past with the political challenges of his own age. The author of the chapter analyses Livy's narrative about two characters from *Ab Urbe Condita's* Book 3: Lucius Quinctius Cincinnatus and Appius Claudius. The analysis of those historical agents follows the problematic of *imperium* and dictatorship, showing that Livy rendered Cincinnatus and Claudius respectively as historiographical illustrations of Roman citizens' virtues and vices. The first one is presented as austere and moderate, because when he was chosen as dictator in times of crisis, even though he had a conflictful relationship with the plebs, he did not use his powers in his own favor and did not try to extend the length of the magistracy. The second one, by his turn, represented for Livy the dangers that a non-virtuous individual could offer to the Republican institutions. Here, Antigueira analyses the episodes in which Appius Claudius, chosen as one of the members of the decemvirate, a magistracy created to put the laws of the Republic in the written form, first pretended to rule for the plebs, and then, with his own popularity set, strived to put an end to the alternation of power among citizens and to establish policies against the plebs. From the opposition drawn between these two individuals one would be able to remark Titus Livy's political moralism. He saw the character and the role of certain individuals as more decisive for the fate of the city than institutions and collectivities. Moreover, for Antigueira, the individuals' character and roles were useful for understanding the actions of Livy's peers in his own time and illuminating his support for Augustus's regime.

The second chapter by Lucia Cutro Sanches, "Crenças e práticas religiosas referentes à guerra nos livros 6-10 de Tito Lívio", describes and examines several Roman cultic and divinatory practices related to war found in Livy's historical narrative. She deals with ceremonies for opening and closing the seasons of war, for justifying and legitimizing a military conflict, for soldiers' oaths towards generals, as well as with rituals for peace treaties, for triumphs, for consecration of people and places and, finally, with divinatory practices such as auspices and omens. Sanches argues in favor of the hypothesis that the comprehensive descriptions of those institutions made by Livy worked as a religious subtext within his narrative, in which *pietas* justified victory and *impietas* defeat. One must

praise this chapter for the thoroughness with which it presents the theme. Nevertheless, Sanches could have gone a little deeper in some of the theoretical issues she raises but does not explore, as, for instance, the interaction of multiple cultural spheres (religious, political, and economic) in the military and war contexts and their relations with her Durkheimian reading of religious institutions as constitutive of the Roman communitarian cohesion.

The third chapter, “Tito Lívio e Cipião Africano: historiografia e retrato exemplares”, by Breno Battistin Sebastiani, examines two kinds of *exempla* that result from the rendering of Scipio by Livy: the ethic-pedagogical and the historiographical *exempla*. The first kind, defined by Livy in the main preface of his work, is the traditional procedure in which one employs past events and individuals as guides to virtuous or corrupted actions. The second kind, explained in the preface to Book 21, deals with Livy’s concerns about his own historiographical procedures and their possible future reproduction. Thus, on the one hand, Sebastiani analyses several episodes with Scipio and shows how they characterize the virtues of the Roman general (*virtus, clementia, iustitia, pietas*), displaying the first kind of *exemplum*. On the other hand, the wider context of the Livian narrative about the Punic Wars and the instances in which Scipio disrespects the Senate, interpreted as *exempla* of bad behavior, serve as illustration of the critical historiographical procedures of the Roman historian.

The fourth chapter, “Bacchanalia na República Romana”, by Maria Luiza Corassin, deals with Livy’s narrative about the *Senatus Consultum* against the *bacchanalia* in 136 B.C. Corassin investigates the *bacchanalia* episode using both historiographical and epigraphical evidence. On the one hand, she employs the epigraphical evidence about the *Senatus Consultum* to problematize the contexts in which the regulations and the prohibitions against the cult of Bacchus were enacted after 136. On the other hand, her analysis of the two versions of the political crisis caused by the *bacchanalia* presented by Livy also follows and questions several hypotheses that modern historiography offered to explain the Roman Senate’s behavior. In a short list: the excess of orgies encouraging homosexuality and adultery among citizens, a kind of religious resistance against Roman patriarchy, foreign religiosity opposing Roman cults, and Bacchus, Liber, and Dionysius as expression of a plebeian religiosity. Since in all those hypotheses the common element is the cult presenting some kind of threat to the Roman social order, it seems that Corassin argues that the senators were more worried with great collective action

out of their control, than with any particular motivations behind the cult of Bacchus or specific morality expressed by it.

In the last chapter, “Superstições e religiosidade na *Res Publica*: espaços de poder?”, Luís Felipe Silvério Lima addresses the place occupied by religious discourse in Livy’s historical narrative about the city of Rome. This chapter works as a counterpart (or as a counterpoint) to Lucia Sanches’s chapter, taking as its starting point Polybius’s and Finley’s comments about the Romans’ political use of popular superstitions, resulting in a brief but acute theoretical enquiry about how *Ab Urbe Condita* represents the relationships between power, religion and communal bonds in the city of Rome.

In conclusion, one last comment might be relevant. As expressed in the beginning of this review, a book like this one is filling a longtime gap among the publications on Roman antiquity in Brazil. Because of that, it would have been desirable a more detailed introduction, exploring with a wider perspective the themes, problematics and previous studies triggered by Livy’s work. Still, the five chapters assembled in *Cinco estudos sobre Tito Lívio* present multiple and diverse outlooks on the debates that *Ab Urbe Condita* inspired in Modern Historiography, at the same time resulting in a coherent ensemble of fine contributions to the Brazilian studies on Livy.