

Foreign or Roman? Divination in Cicero's *De Divinatione*

Cicero's *De Divinatione*, the most extensive surviving work on Roman divination, is a philosophical dialogue between Cicero and Quintus, which discusses two approaches to divination, divided respectively into two books. Throughout *De Divinatione*, there is a clear tension in whether to distinguish between foreign and traditionally Roman divination practices or not. This paper will examine the role that philosophy and Roman identity play on whether to make this distinction.

In Book One, Quintus does not distinguish between foreign and traditional practices, but rather defends the credibility of divination according to Stoic philosophy. Stoic philosophy was “peculiarly fitted to the acceptance of divination” (Hankinson 1988, 130) and divination practices became evidence for the Stoic universal god (Denyer 1985). Quintus uses Stoic ideas to support the credibility of traditionally Roman divination practices such as the Sibylline Books (*De Div.* 1.43) and augury (*De Div.* 1.47). Quintus also treats astrology, a foreign practice, similarly (*De Div.* 1.91, 1.93).

In contrast, Cicero in Book Two does make a distinction between traditionally Roman and foreign divination practices. Using methods from Academic skepticism, Cicero argues that all divination is faulty. However, when discussing augury (*De Div.* 2.33, 2.35) Cicero argues that traditionally Roman practices are important to preserve for Roman institutions and identity. Foreign divination practices, such as astrology (*De Div.* 2.90, 2.99), do not serve this purpose and should be removed altogether. The divide between foreign and traditionally Roman practices is not always clear, as seen in the discussion of dreams by both Quintus (*De Div.* 1.23, 1.26) and Cicero (*De Div.* 2.59, 2.67).

While it may be tempting to take the views put forth in Book Two to be the author Cicero's own opinions on the subject, recent scholarship has argued for a more nuanced approach (Beard 1986; Schofield 1986). Regardless of Cicero's actual opinion concerning divination, the characters "Quintus" and "Cicero" provide a useful framework for introducing different philosophical thoughts on the topic. *De Divinatione* shows that the author Cicero's own relationship with divination is complex, as he was an augur and referenced divination in several of his other works (Riess 1933). The varied perspectives of foreign and traditionally Roman divination practices reveal the intricacies of the role of divination in philosophy and Roman society.

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