

It was the accumulation of empirical observations over a long period of time, the work of generations of augurs, that had led to the establishment of *ars divinationis*.⁹ This is the *summus labor* to which Minucius refers. In the passage under discussion *collecta* has the sense of both “collected” and “explained, codified”:¹⁰ “those famous Roman auspices and auguries, which were collected and explained with such great labor, and which on your evidence were neglected with remorseful consequences and observed with success.”¹¹

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quod Etruscorum declarant et haruspici et fulgurales et rituales libri, vestri etiam augurales, alia autem subito ex tempore coniectura explicantur, ut apud Homerum Calchas, qui ex passerum numero belli Troiani annos auguratus est.” For the concept of *observatio* and the distinction between *ratio* and the empirical observation, see also *De div.* 1. 5, 1. 12, 1. 25, 1. 36, 1. 109, 1. 127; P. Regell, *De augurum publicorum libris* (Diss. Vratislaviae, 1878), pp. 3–7; J. Linderski, “The Augural Law,” forthcoming in *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt*, pt. 2.16.3.

9. See Cic. *De div.* 1. 12 “observata sunt haec [i.e., *signa ex avibus*] tempore inmenso et in significatione eventus animadversa et notata. Nihil est autem quod non longinquitas temporum excipiente memoria prodendis monumentis efficere atque adsequi possit,” 2. 146 “observatio diuturna . . . notandis rebus fecit artem,” *De nat. deor.* 2. 166 “multa praeterea ostentis, multa exis admoneamur, multisque rebus aliis quas diuturnus usus ita notavit ut artem divinationis efficeret.”

10. The case for this meaning of *colligo* in Minucius Felix is strengthened by the occurrence of the word in an augural context in Servius *auctus* and Ammianus Marcellinus. The former, on *Aen.* 4. 453, tells us that “dira . . . duplici modo colligitur, aut ex signis, aut quocumque modo et quacumque ex parte” (cf. *Aen.* 3. 246, 5. 7). The *signa ex divis* formed one of the five categories into which the augurs divided the divinatory signs (Festus [Paulus] 316, 317 L.). A *dirum signum* was explained (*colligitur*) either *ex signis* or “quocumque modo et quacumque ex parte,” i.e., either on the basis of the list of *dira signa* contained in the augural books or according to the situation by means of *ratio* and *coniectura*. We have here the old Ciceronian distinction between the *veteres* and *novae res*. For this interpretation, see Linderski, “The Augural Law.” Amm. Marc. 21. 1. 9 argues that “auguria et auspicia non volucrum arbitrio futura nescientium colliguntur [i.e., the auguries and auspices are not effected and understood according to the will of the birds] . . . sed volatus avium dirigit deus, ut rostrum sonans aut praetervolans pinna, turbido meatu vel leni, futura praemonstret.” Cf. Cic. *De div.* 1. 12 and 1. 120 with Pease, “*De divinatione*,” pp. 74–77, 313–23. On the other hand, at *De div.* 2. 67 “atque etiam a te Flaminiana ostenta collecta sunt,” *colligo* has rather the simple sense of “collect, adduce”: “you have also adduced the Flaminian portents,” i.e., in order to show that “C. Flaminius consul iterum neglexit signa rerum futurarum magna cum clade rei publicae” (*De div.* 1. 77).

11. I should like to thank Prof. A. Michels for kindly reading a draft of this note.

MINUCIUS FELIX OCTAVIUS 26. 1

In regard to Minucius Felix *Octavius* 26.1, Professor Linderski is certainly right to protest against the persistent tendency of translators to render the first part of this passage by some variant of “And now I come to those Roman auspices and auguries which you [Caecilius] have collected with extreme pains. . . .”¹ Neither the syntax nor the logic of the sentence permits us to assume that Minucius wished to say that Caecilius had made a supreme effort to collect auguries and auspices.

1. The version of R. Wallis in A. Roberts and J. Donaldson, *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 4 (Buffalo, 1885), p. 189. As Linderski indicates, this error in translation is not of recent vintage; and already in the German translation of M. Lichtwer (Berlin, 1763), p. 85, we find “Denn ich komme nunmehr auf jene Römische Vogeldeutung und Wahrsageren, die du mit grösser Mühe gesammelt und versichert hast.”

Linderski has performed a further good service by elucidating the significance of *colligo* in Stoic terminology. However, reservations are possible about his own translation of "iam enim venio ad illa auspicia et auguria Romana, quae summo labore collecta testatus es² et paenitenter ommissa et observata feliciter." Specifically, it might be argued that by taking *collecta* in the sense of "collected and explained" Linderski misconstrues the sense of this passage in the *Octavius*.

For matters lexicological, Linderski refers us to the *Oxford Latin Dictionary*. As in so many other instances, the *OLD* entry "colligo" is markedly and disappointingly inferior to the superb article, by Wulff, in the *Thesaurus Linguae Latinae*. Minucius Felix, of course, falls outside the scope of the *OLD* and its limited purview of the Latin language. Wulff, however, does mention *Octavius* 26. 1, citing it in connection with an instructive passage from Ammianus Marcellinus (30. 5. 17).³ Ammianus is writing of Valentinian's campaign in Illyricum. While at Savaria, the emperor went to some effort to obtain an omen which would vouchsafe a speedy return to Gaul: "item cum ab urbe praedicta tenderet ad procinctum, per portam voluit unde introiit exire, ut omen colligeret, quod cito remeabit ad Gallias." In this instance, *colligo* means neither "to deduce, to infer" nor "to collect, to accumulate over time." The sense is simply "to obtain, to acquire, to get." Valentinian wanted to go out by the same gate through which he had entered "in order to get a favorable omen." This is surely how we should understand *colligo* at another point in Ammianus (21. 1. 9), a passage cited by Linderski (n. 10): "auguria et auspicia non volucrum arbitrio futura nescientium colliguntur . . . sed volatus avium dirigit deus, ut rostrum sonans aut praetervolans pinna . . . futura praemonstret." Linderski's suggested translation, "the auguries and auspices are not effected and understood according to the will of the birds," is forced and misleading. Ammianus' point is quite simply that we do not get omens from the birds themselves but from god, who directs the flight of the birds in such a way that future events may be foretold. Rolfe properly renders the sense of *colliguntur* in this passage by translating "auguries and auspices are not gained from the will of the fowls of the air."⁴ A passage in Rufinus affords a further example of this use of *colligo* with *auspicia* in the sense of "to get or to receive an omen."⁵

In these passages from Ammianus and Rufinus, *colligo* does not imply "collecting over a period of time" nor is there any suggestion of "explanation or codification." *Colligo* is rather used in that sense, well attested in classical writers,

2. Editors have almost unanimously adopted Gelenius' correction *es*, but it should be noted that *testatus est* is the reading of Parisinus Latinus 1661, the manuscript on which the text of the *Octavius* essentially rests. In his Budé edition (Paris, 1964), the best available text, J. Beaujeu reads *testatus es[te]*. In more recent contributions to the text of Minucius, neither B. Kytzler, "Notae Minucianae," *Traditio* 22 (1966): 419–35, nor K. Abel, "Minucius Felix: Octavius: Das Textproblem," *RhM* 110 (1967): 248–83, discusses this passage.

3. *TLL*, III, col. 1617, line 67.

4. *Ammianus Marcellinus*, vol. 2, trans. J. Rolfe (London and Cambridge, Mass., 1940), p. 95.

5. The passage occurs in Rufinus' translation of Origen *In num. hom.* 17. 2, ed. W. Baehrens in *GCS* 30 (Leipzig, 1921), p. 156: "Denique 'non abiit' inquit 'ex more in occursum auspiciis' [*Numbers* 24:1]; non enim more sibi solito, stultis et inanibus sensibus rapietur in animalibus mutis et pecudibus Dei considerans voluntatem, sicut hi, qui ex istis talibus auspicia colligunt, sed agnoscet etiam ipse quia neque de bobus cura est Deo, similiter neque de ovibus neque de avibus alisque animalibus, sed si qua de his scripta sunt, propter homines intelliget scripta."

of "to get hold of a simple object, especially one lost or sought for."⁶ *Colligo* is used as properly with *auspicia* as it is with *vestigia*. One looks for and gets hold of a trail,⁷ similarly one seeks, receives, and thus gets hold of an omen. With this understanding of *colligo*, we turn again to *Octavius* 26. 1 and find a far more straightforward translation of this passage: "For I come to those well-known Roman auspices and auguries which are gotten by supreme effort and which, according to you, bring grief when neglected and blessings when observed."

Linderski's note raises a further exegetical problem. It is difficult to follow his suggestion that *summo labore* is a solemn reference by Minucius to "the accumulation of empirical observations over a long period of time, the work of generations of augurs, that led to the establishment of *ars divinationis*." Given the general tone of the *Octavius*, this is perhaps overly portentous. An ironic sense would be more in keeping with Minucius' attitude toward Roman religion. This is made clear by the context in which Minucius refers to the *summus labor* by which *auspicia et auguria Romana* are obtained. Our passage, 26. 1, is preceded by a witheringly sarcastic diatribe against Roman religion, in which Minucius heaps scorn upon the view that the Romans won their empire more through piety than valor.⁸ Doubtlessly, sneers Minucius, it was this celebrated Roman justice which was so auspiciously present at the inauguration of the Roman state by a gang of criminals, who began their empire in fratricide and rape and who pursued it in piracy (25. 1–6). According to Minucius, it is not piety but unpunished sacrilege which is the source of Rome's imperial greatness (25. 7). Does anyone seriously believe that Rome has achieved success through the intervention of such "gods" as Cloacina, Pallor, Pavor, Febris, and the divine prostitutes Acca Larentia and Flora (25. 8–10)? It is not these diseased demons but the true God who has granted imperial dominion to Rome. It was this same God who, long before Rome, bestowed empire upon Assyrians, Medes, Persians, Greeks, and Egyptians (25. 12). Furthermore, Minucius wishes to point out, the Assyrians and these other imperialists managed to rule over powerful and long-enduring empires without the benefit of advice from "chickens cooped up in a cage, by whose appetite or lack thereof state policy is guided" (25. 12). Since our passage on the Roman auspices follows directly upon this sneering reference to chickens and since the two passages are carefully linked by the use of *enim*, it would seem clear that *summus labor* is to be taken ironically. *Summus* and *labor* provide Minucius with an effective play on words to underscore the absurdity of consulting the supreme deities and guiding the supreme destinies of a nation by the debased and slothful practice of casting grain before chickens.

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6. So defined in the third section of the *OLD* entry "colligo" (p. 351).

7. Cf. Lucan 4. 443; Sil. Ital. 12. 462.

8. In his commentary on the *Octavius* (New York, 1974), pp. 302–3, G. Clarke points out aspects of the irony in this chapter. H. von Geisau, s.v. "M. Minucius Felix," *RE* Suppl. 11 (1968): 980–81, comments on Minucius' use of irony. More recent stylistic discussions of the *Octavius* include M. Hoffmann, *Der Dialog bei den christlichen Schriftstellern der ersten vier Jahrhunderte* (Berlin, 1966), pp. 28–39; C. Becker, *Der "Octavius" des Minucius Felix* (Munich, 1967); J. O'Connor, "The Conflict of Rhetoric in the *Octavius* of Minucius Felix," *Classical Folia* 30 (1976): 165–73.