

WHAT THE SIBYL SAID: FRONTINUS *AQ.* 7. 5*

The Roman Senate in 144 B.C. instructed the urban praetor, Q. Marcius Rex, to repair the conduits of Rome's two existing aqueducts, the Appia and the Anio (later called the Anio Vetus), and to put an end to illegal use of their water by private citizens. Urban growth now demanded a more copious water supply, and so the Senate further instructed Marcius to secure additional water for the city. Money was appropriated for this work, and Marcius' praetorship was prorogued for 143. At this point the decemviri objected to a plan for bringing water to the Capitol. The issue was debated in the Senate in 143, and again in 140; but on both occasions Marcius' *gratia* prevailed, and water reached the Capitol in a new aqueduct which Marcius himself had built. A statue of Marcius was erected in later times on the Capitol, behind the temple of Jupiter, to commemorate this grand achievement.¹ An everlasting glory was in fact to be his in the name of the aqueduct whose waters earned poets' praises.

Our main source for Marcius' activities in 144–143 and for the controversy surrounding his eventual success in bringing water to the Capitol is chapter 7 of Frontinus' treatise *De aquaeductu urbis Romae*,² and scholars return to this crucial text in seeking to understand some of the details of this episode in the history of Republican Rome. M. G. Morgan has recently reviewed the circumstances in which the Aqua Marcia was introduced to the city. His study provides a coherent reconstruction of the social and economic forces which shaped the political events of the late 140s. But he has failed, I think, adequately to explain the puzzle of alternative traditions which Frontinus reports, and thus he is unable to make Frontinus' account square with a precious (but unfortunately damaged) bit of independent evidence in the Oxyrhynchus Epitome of Livy.³

The account in Frontinus runs as follows:

eo tempore decemviri, dum aliis ex causis libros Sibyllinos inspicunt, invenisse dicuntur non esse <fas> aquam Marciam seu potius Anionem – de hoc enim constantius traditur – in Capitolium perducī; deque ea re in senatu M. Lepido pro collegio⁴ verba faciente actum Appio Claudio Q. Caecilio consulibus; ea(n)demque post annum tertium a Lucio Lentulo retractatam C. Laelio Q. Servilio consulibus; sed utroque tempore vicisse gratiam Marcii Regis; atque ita in Capitolium esse aquam perductam.

One blemish in the transmitted text has persistently complicated attempts at interpreting this passage. Renaissance MSS – all derived from the Monte Cassino codex – have *sed* for *seu*, and editors as late as Bücheler (1858) accepted this reading and emended *perducī* to *perducendam* or *perducendum*. In Bücheler's text (*non esse*

* For constructive criticisms of an earlier draft of this paper I am much indebted to Professors E. S. Gruen and C. E. Murgia.

¹ The statue is mentioned in a military diploma of A.D. 64 (*CIL* III p. 864 = xvi 5). The legend AQVA MR (or MARC) proudly appears on denarii struck by L. Marcius Philippus c. 56 B.C.: see M. H. Crawford, *Roman Republican Coinage* (Cambridge, 1974), i. 448, no. 425. Marcian propaganda underlies the laudatory statements in Pliny (*N.H.* 31. 41, 36. 121).

² The most recent edition is that of C. Kunderewicz (Leipzig, 1973). I am currently preparing a critical edition and commentary; for preliminary remarks see *BICS* 25 (1978), 101–5.

³ 'The Introduction of the Aqua Marcia into Rome, 144–140 B.C.', *Philologus* 122 (1978), 25–58. The present paper deals mainly with points raised in Morgan's appendix (pp. 54–8).

⁴ I shall argue elsewhere the palaeographical justification for Pighius' *collegio*. Münzer made clever use of the transmitted *collega* (*Römische Adelsparteien und Adelsfamilien* [Stuttgart, 1920], pp. 238–41), accepted by M. Stuart (*AJA* 49 [1945], 243 n. 77) and T. R. S. Broughton (*Magistrates of the Roman Republic* [New York, 1951], i. 473 n. 1), but see Morgan p. 41.

aquam Marciam sed potius Anionem...perducendum) the decemviri found 'that it was not the Marcia, but rather the Anio... which was to be brought to the Capitol'. In his apparatus Bücheler proposed <*sed Appiam*> *seu*: 'not the Marcia, but the Appia – or rather the Anio...'. Even with the emendation *perducendum* the position of *esse* makes this supplement awkward. Schöne's <*fas*> (1872) has since won universal acceptance.⁵ It obviates the need to alter *perduci* and, more important, it eliminates *sed* from serious consideration. In *non esse* <*fas*>...*perduci* the position of the negative is decisive: it is impossible Latin to understand 'it was not right for the Marcia, but it was right for the Anio... to be brought to the Capitol'. Bücheler's tentative <*sed Appiam*> *seu* ought now firmly to be rejected.⁶

The decemviri, quite simply, 'are said to have discovered that it was not right for the Aqua Marcia, or rather the Anio (for tradition is more consistent in recording the latter), to be brought to the Capitol'. Scholars have generally taken this to mean that there were two traditions concerning the Sibylline ban. In the more prevalent one, the decemviri had spoken out against the Anio; in the other, against the Marcia. Frontinus, apparently, accepted the less common tradition because he knew that the Marcia had in fact been taken to the Capitol and it would have made no sense for the decemviri to object to the Anio, an aqueduct which could not and did not supply the higher portions of the city. The puzzle remains, then, 'that there were two distinct traditions about the aqueduct taken to the Capitol, and that in the more widespread version it was the Aqua Anio which was taken to the Capitol over the objections of the Decemviri'.⁷

This view ignores an elementary point of Latin syntax. The words *non esse fas...perduci* depend on *invenisse dicuntur*: Frontinus is reporting the substance of what the decemviri found in the Sibylline Books.⁸ They found, in effect, 'it is *nefas* for X to be brought to the Capitol'. Traditions differed over whether 'X' was *aqua Marcia* or *Anio*. There can be no doubt that Frontinus himself was well aware of which aqueduct the decemviri opposed and which aqueduct was taken to the Capitol.⁹ His statement, however, has nothing to do with an 'aqueduct taken to the Capitol'. He is reporting what the decemviri claimed to have found in their Sibylline Books.

From a fragmentary report in the Oxyrhynchus Epitome of Livy (*Oxy. Per.* 54) we learn that *aqua Anio* somehow figured in the dispute of 140. The papyrus is badly mutilated and its text is probably corrupt as well. I give a conservative (and, I hope, uncontroversial) version of the relevant lines:¹⁰

	q. occius	186
oppress]us [i]nsidiis lus[i]tanorum fortissime		187
cecidit]inae devotaest aquaannioaqua		188
. in Capi]tolium contrasibyllae carmina		189
.]		190

⁵ *Hermes* 6 (1872), 249. Note that the Monte Cassino MS has a short space left blank after *esse* (but this occurs at the end of a line): see the excellent facsimile in C. Herschel, *The Two Books on the Water Supply of the City of Rome* (Boston, 1899; 2nd edn New York, 1913).

⁶ A. E. Astin, 'Water to the Capitol', *Latomus* 20 (1961), 541–8, and M. Hainzmann, 'Zur kapitolinischen Wasserleitung des Q. Marcus Rex', *GB* 6 (1977), 27–37, have both resuscitated Bücheler's supplement. For a sober refutation see Morgan, pp. 55–7.

⁷ Morgan, p. 57.

⁸ Morgan, pp. 55–6 makes much of the *oratio obliqua*, suggesting that Frontinus used it to dissociate himself from the commoner tradition. I concede that Frontinus may have chosen *obl.* to indicate his suspicion of the decemviral discovery (although cf. his use of *traditur* at *Aq.* 5. 3); but I fail to see how he could avoid indirect statement to report what the decemviri had found. The only alternative would have been a direct citation from the Sibyl's *carmen*.

⁹ Astin pp. 542–4 (with conclusive reference to *Aq.* 18. 6); Morgan, p. 55.

¹⁰ P. Oxy. 668 (Grenfell–Hunt, *The Oxyrhynchus Papyri* [1904], iv. 113). I have used the facsimile provided by O. Rossbach, *T. Livi Periochae omnium librorum* (Leipzig, 1910).

Nothing resembling scholarly agreement has emerged from the various studies devoted to this text, and a satisfactory restoration of lines 188–90 is still to be sought.¹¹ In whatever way the epitomator may have simplified or distorted Livy's account, it will suffice to note that in his terse statement he refers to *aqua Anio* only a few letter-spaces before a Sibylline objection involving the Capitol. Morgan has rightly emphasized that the debate in 140 took place as work on the Marcia was nearing completion. The Epitome must be reporting (for 140) the triumphant success of a project undertaken in 144–143 and twice vindicated in senatorial debates. It is altogether likely that *aqua Anio* in the Epitome is one example (the only one which survives) of Frontinus' 'more consistent' tradition that the decemviri objected to 'Anio' rather than to 'Marcia'.

Context makes it clear that Frontinus believed that the decemviri aimed to block an extension of the Marcia. With *seu potius Anionem* he is faithfully recording the prevalent tradition that they had found a Sibylline objection to *aqua Anio*. With *aliis ex causis*¹² and *invenisse dicuntur* he invites the suspicion that the accidental discovery was a deliberate fabrication. The decemviri seem to have opposed bringing water to the Capitol at all.¹³ Their reasons were probably more political than religious, and Morgan has shown how their motive was more serious than a desire to deprive Marcus of additional prestige which would accrue from a Capitoline extension.¹⁴ The Senate's original mandate had already assured him credit for the aqueduct which would bear his name.

Frontinus does not explain – perhaps he did not understand – how members of the college could have used an apparent ban on *aqua Anio* as a weapon in opposing Marcus Rex and his project for extending the Marcia. We cannot be sure whether *non esse fas aquam Anionem in Capitolium perducere* is an indirect paraphrase of a Sibylline oracle or whether it is merely an interpretation which the decemviri put forward in 143. We can safely do no more than speculate as to how the decemviri could have made their attempt, or how Marcus and his supporters overcame the hurdle.

There is no evidence that there was ever a plan to extend the older Anio aqueduct to the Capitol, although there may have been talk of such an undertaking when repairs on the Anio Vetus were authorized in 144–143, before it became clear that enormous technical difficulties stood in the way. Still, it is possible that an oracle which apparently would have forbidden an extension of the Anio Vetus could have served the decemviri as a basis for arguing that no aqueduct should be brought to the Capitol.¹⁵ Even if the discovery was a fabrication directed at Marcus' project, the decemviri can hardly

¹¹ Morgan, pp. 57–8 summarizes previous scholarship; cf. M. Stuart, *CP* 39 (1944), 40–4. In support of Stuart's *cecidit*, see now *A Concordance to Livy* (Cambridge, Mass. 1968), i. 713–15. Morgan's *Iovis in aede vota est <st>atua* (line 188) has a certain appeal, but he offers no parallel for the unusual order *Anio aqua* with which he begins the next sentence, and plausible as it is to suppose that there was a commemorative statue of Q. Occius we have in fact no corroborating evidence. To supply *refecta* at the beginning of line 189 not only makes the sentence 'impart erroneous information' (as Morgan admits), but there is no good reason why repairs to the Anio Vetus (done in 144–143) should be mentioned in connection with an event in 140.

¹² We know that the decemviri consulted the Sibylline Books in 143 in connection with the consul Appius' initial defeat in his war against the Salassi (Obseq. 21); cf. A. E. Astin, *Scipio Aemilianus* (Oxford, 1967), p. 106; Morgan, p. 48 and n. 113.

¹³ Schöne, p. 249; Morgan, p. 56.

¹⁴ Morgan, pp. 48–53.

¹⁵ I owe this suggestion to an anonymous reader, who feels that to see in *seu potius Anionem* anything other than a reference to the Anio Vetus would be to introduce a patent ambiguity. So it would: for Frontinus, indicating a certain surprise at the tradition, quite obviously assumed that the Anio Vetus was in question. He did not, alas, offer an explanation. I find it hard to believe that the decemviral objection was to a specific aqueduct – the wrong one at that – when their real goal was to obstruct any water supply for the Capitol.

have expected credence if they announced that they had found in the Sibylline Books an explicit reference to Marcus or the Aqua Marcia. Perhaps they felt that 'Anio' would be sufficiently vague, and they may have argued that the new aqueduct which brought water from the Anio valley could fairly enough be called 'Anio water'.¹⁶ The water came from springs, it is true, and not from the river; but the springs are those which feed the river, and the water would have flowed in the river had it not been tapped for the aqueduct.

The fact remains, as Frontinus saw clearly, that the 'aqua Anio' which the decemviri sought to ban was indeed none other than the Aqua Marcia. The variant traditions in Frontinus' source(s) and the perplexities of modern scholars may reflect more than technical or historical ignorance if they originated in the deliberate obscurity of a Sibylline oracle. Historians who named the Marcia may have mistaken the argument of the decemviri for the oracle itself, or they may have simplified the story by omitting the particulars: the decemviri, after all, had opposed Marcus' new aqueduct. Those who recorded Aqua Anio possibly preserved the substance of the decemviral discovery, perhaps without fully understanding it or misled by the fact that the Anio Vetus was also the object of senatorial concerns in the same period. They may have reasoned that the Anio Vetus, though newly repaired by Marcus Rex, never did supply the Capitol, whereas the Marcia did; hence the Sibyl's ban had been for the Anio and Marcus had overridden the objection by bringing another water. In Frontinus' report one can discern, I believe, both the reality of the controversy (Aqua Marcia) and an ineffective objection formulated by the decemviri (Aqua Anio). Whatever may have been the details at issue in 143 and 140, there lingers in Frontinus' final phrase the unmistakable echo of a satisfied victor in a distant contest: *atque ita in Capitolium esse aquam perductam*.

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¹⁶ On the sources of the Anio Vetus and the Marcia see T. Ashby, *The Aqueducts of Ancient Rome* (Oxford, 1935), pp. 57-9 and 95-6.