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The book of Attilio Mastrocinque, professor at the University of Verona, Italy, and famous specialist in the history and religion of antique Rome, is highly distinguished through scientific literature, above all for its synthetic quality and the methodological perspective it advances: framing the myth of foundation of Rome into the larger context of other myths of the same kind (the mythical cycles of Hercules and Faunus) and revealing historical aspects of Roman culture, which were projected in the myth of Romulus. Previous theories on Romulean deeds were polar approaches circumscribed by the "traditional" position, which sustains the historicity of the founder of Rome, and the "hypercritical" position, which pleads for Romulus being the historic expression of collective Roman imaginary.

As the author says in the *Preface* and *Introduction*, the research does not intend to establish who and when did found Rome, but to reveal the sources at the bottom of the Romulean mythical cycle (literary traditions, in first place Greek and Etruscan, archaeological sources, political and non-political ideologies) and also the hermeneutic mechanisms that adapted mythical schemata from other foundation cycles. In this sense, some aspects of the Romulean cycle, isomorphic with other from other myths, were investigated, as are the myth of beef stealing and the one of the birth of a sovereign (the myths of Faunus, Latinus, Servius Tullius etc.), as well as the modalities of transmission and elaboration of the narrative material from these myths in the context of the legendary cycle of Romulus. A relative chronology of the Romulean cycle is also advanced: this was elaborated during the first centuries of the republic, from the last Etruscan kings until the *Liciniae Sextiae* laws.

The first two chapters are dedicated to the identification of a series of mythical schemata from the foundation cycles of a number of Italic and Greek cities, in most cases connected with the deeds of Hercules. In Chapter I (*The Stealing of the Beef of Gerion*), the following mythical pattern is analyzed: after killing Gerion, Hercules travels with his herd to Greece. As he stops in different regions, he is hosted by local heroes and a number of his bovines are stolen. Hercules kills the thief and in that very place he founds a city, or kills by mistake his host, founding in his memory a settlement. In Rome, this schema is encountered in the myth of Cacus, son of Vulcan, who is either the host either the killed beef thief. Other variants of the myth are also presented. Chapter II (*Hercules and Women*) analyses the *topos* of hierogamy between Hercules and as number of maids, who give birth to a series of eponimic heroes (Keltos, Scythos, Thyrrenos). In Rome,

Hercules became, in that way, father of heroes Pallanthos, Latinus and Aventinus. Remarkable is the myth of Acca Larentia, a prostitute who becomes mother of Romulus and Remus by union with Hercules; the fortune Acca obtains from her marriage to Tarutius is donated by her to the Roman people. Mastrocinque sees in this myth the projection and legitimation of juridical privileges of Vestals, Acca Larentia being herself a former Vestal become prostitute by association with 'lupa' who gives suck to the twins, or by the law of hospitality, which also implied sacred prostitution (and love affairs with the locals). In the above mentioned schema, a special place is taken by the violent hierogamy between a mythical impersonation of *numen* (Hercules, Faunus or Mercurius) and a sacred maid, priestess of goddesses Bona Dea, Iuno Sospita or Vesta, from which eponim heroes are born. In these myths, celebrating the submission of the tutelary deity of the maid (a deity overruling virginity) by a male god (who transforms the maid into mother), the reality of procreation is transferred to myth, before its regulation through marriage; or, this cultural reality supposes a founding violence, which unties feminine fecundity.

Chapter III (*From Hercules to Romulus*) reveals the relations established between the numerous contact elements of the Herculean cycle and that of the birth of Servius Tullius, on one hand, and the Romulean cycle, on the other. There are a lot of resemblances between the myths connected to Hercules and those referring to the deeds of Romulus:

- 1) the birth of the twins as consequence to the rape of Rhea Silvia by Mars;
- 2) the quality of 'animal thieves' of the twins Romulus and Remus, following Latium traditions;
- 3) the divinisation of Romulus follows the model of the apotheosis of Hercules, the pair of Romulus being identified with Hebe (Greek goddess of youth), posthumous wife of divine Hercules;
- 4) Herculean deeds, that give birth to Latin eponim heroes, explains the origins of the ethnic group from which Romans will come.

In what concerns 'herogony', the mythical schema is common to several heroic cycles. This would be the fecundation of a daughter of king, who is the maid, by a *numen* of the fireplace (the Volcan cycle) or by an anthropomorphic god (the Hercules, Mars, Faunus, Mercurius cycles). Based on a cycle of ritual exclusions, as well as on the functional tie of the architectonic complex from Regia, Mastrocinque observed that Vestals (the sacred maids of Rome) represented symbolically the daughters of the king, which were offered to a masculin fecundating *numen*, in a non-sanguine sacrificial gesture. The priesthood of Vesta, who overrules virginity, would be the symbolic substitution of the death of the daughters of the king, for the guilt of having broken the swore; this myth could have at its basis an Athenian tradition, taken by Romans in the VI-th or V-th century a.Chr., which also supposed a ritual similar with the recruiting and priesthood of Vestals. The myth also legitimates new forms of power introduced by Etruscan kings.

In the period of Etruscan domination also originate most of the deeds of Romulus, as Chapter IV (*From Myth to History*) describes. An important part is played by the last two Etruscan kings, Servius Tullius and Tarquinius Superbus, who developed opposite political and ideological propaganda, the first centered on the figure of Volcan, the other

on that of Hercules, which is also reflected in Roman mythology. Some mythical episodes draw special attention:

- 1) the comrade of Servius Tullius, Caelius Vibenna, helps Romulus against Titus Tatius, getting in exchange, as a reward, a land in Rome. This is a legitimacy for the ruling of Servius Tullius;
- 2) Cacus, son of Volcan, comes with war against Rome and is killed by Hercules: this is a mythological reflection of the murder of Servius Tullius by Tarquinius Superbus;
- 3) *Roma quadrata*, raised by delimiting the *pomoerium* by Romulus, would be the expression of the division of Rome in four by Servius Tullius, or of the attribution of a geometric form to the town, a form which is specific to Roman colonies, conceived as repeats of the foundation of the metropolis;
- 4) The triumph of Romulus and the introduction of personal guards would be elements that were taken from the Etruscan;
- 5) A federal temple on the Aventin would correspond to the asylum Romulus opened, as the former could use as a slave asylum. The temple was dedicated to Servius Tullius;
- 6) The rapine of the Sabines represents, on one hand, the union of Sabines and Romans and the integration in the Roman society of the great Sabine-origin *gentes* (Valerii, Claudii etc.) and, on the other, the reclamation of *ius connubii* by Foedus Cassianum;
- 7) The adoption of the twins by Acca Larentia would translate in mythical language the adoption of Servius Tullius by Tanaquil, former Vestal, wife of Tarquinius Priscus, the first Etruscan king in Rome;
- 8) The tyranny of Romulus and his removal by the senators translates, in mythical terms, the reign of Tarquinius Superbus and *regifugium*.

On the other hand, the Romulean legend developed especially in patrician milieu, which pursued to legitimate their power: Romulus put the basis of patrician class, and of the patrician-clientele relationship, while Remus became the exponent of plebeians. During the centuries, the myth enriched with historical elements taken from the Gallic siege (the legend of Tarpeia) or from social-political traditions of "Gracchian fights". The projection to myth of historical facts was made possible also by the Roman historical conception, according to which the history and destiny of one people are virtually contained by the founder deed, meant to be a renewable *exemplum*.

The last chapter of the book (*Lupercalia and the Foundation of Rome*) contains an interesting and unusual comment on the Lupercalia, pointing out the connections between this feast and the different myths that determined multiple significance to the ritual performed on this occasion. The name *Luperca* derives from the substantive *lupus*, the whole feast being associated to lycanthropic traditions. A savage behavior is thus attributed to the wolf, which is re-done by the *lupercae* in a mythical and ritual way. In ritual terms, this behavior is the expression of puberty initiation practices (to which Romulus and Remus were submitted), which aimed the integration of youngsters into adulthood, while in mythical terms it represented the behavior of 'natural' human communities, prior to the foundation deeds of civilizing heroes (Faunus, Hercules, Romulus), city founders and authors to a communitary legislation. Lupercalia does so integrate, at the level of feast, the primitive time of Rome and thus temporarily suspends civilisation, a fact which is also reflected by the victory of Fabian *lupercae*

(representatives of Faunus, mythical personification of wilderness) over Quinctial lupercae (who represent Juppiter, celestial god, warranty for order and civilisation).

Otherwise, the wolf is associated to the afterworld and the souls of the deceased, ritually embodied by the lupercae: thirsty for blood and sexually untamable, they return on earth and unite *more ferarium* with women. In this mythical-religious traditions could originate the fecundating rite of Lupercalia: the stripes of male-goat skin would represent exactly the souls of the dead, 'united' to Roman matronae who, fecundated in this way, were giving birth inside their legal marriage. The ritual repeated mythical traditions referring to procreating violence, but also myths connected to the fecundation by the *numen* of a maiden, which thus procreates in the context of a marriage with a hero (for example, Acca Larentia, wife of Tarutius, gives birth to the twins Romulus and Remus as a consequence of her union with Hercules). Lupercalia are ritually reproducing, in this way, a series of aspects specific to the time of the origins in which civilizing heroes were procreated. Some dionysiac implications of the Roman feast are also considered, as well as the presence of a series of orgiastic rites and the morphologic similarities between this ceremonial and the cult of Dionysos-Bacchus.

On the other hand, Lupercalia were conceived also as an expression of the double dimension of Faunus, teriomorphic god while being anthropomorphic. This trait, explained by the association with Circe, the wife of the god in a number of traditions, the witch who transforms men into animals and vice-versa, is the model for the epiphany of the founding twins, who become from men wolves (by means of suckling from the wolf they receive the characteristics of this one) and then become back human.

Finally, the author observes that all legends investigated have as departure a theogony, the birth of child Juppiter as a consequence of hierogamy between Fortuna Primigenia (identified with the goddess of earth, Rhea) and Chronos, and the divine childhood attentively watched by Faunus. In conclusion, given the fact that the mythical attestation of Romulus is late in report to the other heroes, it can be said that the main nucleus of the Romulean legend was conceived by imitatio of other legends, through a process of mythogenesis which began in the times of the last Etruscan kings and ended by the year 300 a.Chr.

The source-documents which sustain the historical-religious analyse are mainly written sources, the work of antique writers (especially Dionysos of Halicarnassos, Diodor of Sicily, Servius, Titus Livius, Vergilius, Plutarch) but also archaeological evidence (artistic representations) and ethno-anthropological proofs. The bibliography is highly exhaustive, justifying the synthesis pattern of the book. The work covers a vast mythological material, well structured, and surprises unexpected analogies. Highly remarkable is the rigour of the historical-religious comparative perspective done by the author, who delimits precisely the cultural area of reference (Greek and Italic mythical traditions) and the most careful extension of morphologic analogies to other Indo-European cultures. Comparison is not forced but contextualised by its relation to the cultural-historical frame; the level of narrative crystallization of the legend of Romulus in a certain historical moment is related to both the anterior level of elaboration of the other legends and the level at that moment. The whole argumentation is logical and well-structured, the author reaching every proposed purpose. Through its multiple openings (historical-religious, anthropological, historical, literary etc.) that he operates during the research over the mythical foundation traditions (from whose morphologic class the

legend of the foundation of Rome takes a part), the book of Attilio Mastrocinque imposes itself as a definite reference.