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**MACIEJ JOŃCA, *Głośne rzymskie procesy karne* (Zakład
Narodowy im. Ossolińskich – Wydawnictwo, Wrocław,
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Pp. 320**

Łukasz Jan Korporowicz

University of Łódź

Books written by the scholars may be very often characterized as a largely incomprehensible for the ordinary readers. Specific terminology, different methods of argumentation and interpretation of the sources lead to limit the number of readers of certain publications.

In his book M. Jońca refers to a large number of legal and literary sources (an index of sources at the end of book contains more than a 200 items), but simultaneously he tells the story of the trials in a chatty and narrative manner. At the end of the book an inquisitive reader may also find a selection of bibliographical items. Many professional publications about Roman criminal law and criminal litigation were placed there. The book is wonderfully complemented by its illustrations that correspond with the content of each chapter. A rivet cover illustration which represents a scene of “Christ before Pilate” is particularly interesting and worth mentioning. The illustration is a part of Rossano Gospels.

The work is divided into fifteen chapters. Each chapter tells a story of a single trial. All the trials are chronologically ordered. The author interlaces the exact stories with legal and historical anecdotes. The first case which was discussed by the author is the semilegendary story from the times of Roman kings about Horatius, who killed three enemies (the Curatii brothers from Alba Longa) and then killed his own sister, after she proclaimed that one of the Curatii brothers was her fiancé. The assassination of the young woman by her brother was the very first Roman example of the parricide (*parricidium*)². The next trial to be discussed is the trial of Appius Claudius who almost enslaved a free Roman girl named Verginia. Both cases

² M. Jońca published recently his doctoral thesis in book: Jońca M, *Parricidium w prawie rzymskim [Parricidium in Roman Law]*, Lublin 2008.

are similar in several points. First of all in the two cases readers are introduced with the concept of *parriciudium* and *provocatio ad populum*. Furthermore, both cases described by M. Jońca are legendary and were created by the Romans in order to explain (a specific *ratio legis*) the existence of certain institutes in the system of Roman law.

Third chapter of the reviewed book is devoted to the trial of *virgines Vestales* in 114 B.C. Three of six distinguished priestesses, who were strictly obliged to sexual abstinence, were sentenced to death penalty for *incestum*³. Together with the dishonoured *virgines* death penalty was given to a large number of men and women who were acquainted with the sacrilegious secret. The author also mentions other similar cases in that chapter, like the trial of Postumia in 420 B.C. or the trial of Floronia and Optimia in 216 B.C. Also the next chapter was devoted by the author to another problem of the sexual crime. While homosexual intercourses were generally tolerated in Rome, both homosexual and pederasty intercourses were strongly prohibited by the Roman criminal law. In chapter four M. Jońca discusses the trial of Caius Scantinius Capitolinus, a plebeian tribune, who tried to convince young Marcus Claudius Marcellus to that prohibited activity. The trial took place in 266 B.C. In this chapter M. Jońca broke a chronological structure of

³ Recently the problem of *incestum* was widely analyzed in Polish literature by J. Misztal-Konecka, Ph.D. in her book *Incestum w prawie rzymskim [Incestum in Roman Law]*, Lublin 2007.

author revolves around the trial of Julia, the daughter of Augustus, who committed multiply crimes which were both adultery and prostitution. But the most significant in that trial was the Augustus's heritage as the matrimonial and moral regeneration legislator. Augustus punished his daughter and sent her on a small island into an exile (*relegatio*). Later on his granddaughter, Julia Minor, was also condemned by August for the same crime and in the same manner.

Following chapter discussed the history of one of the best known trials of the antiquity – the trial of Jesus Christ. In Polish literature this trial was recently widely discussed on the pages of book published several years ago by the Cracovian scholar Paulina Świącicka, Ph.D.⁴ M. Jońca described in great detail all the events that happened in the last days of Christ's life from the legal perspective. He analyzed both the informal trial of Sanhedrin and the Roman trial before Pontius Pilate (in the opinion of M. Jońca it was more an administrative trial than a criminal one). Chapter twelve presented the accusation in the case of the ancient freedom of speech and its final political repercussions. In the A.D. 25 trial, an old senator Cremutius Cordus became the accused. The charges against him involved presumed glorification of two former Julius Caesar's murderers and defamation of Roman senate and people of Rome. Though all the charges were fabricated the accused senator knew that

⁴ Świącicka-Wystrychowska P., *Proces Jezusa w świetle prawa rzymskiego* [*The Trial of Jesus in the light of Roman Law*], Kraków 2005

