

UNIVERSITATEA
„ALEXANDRU IOAN CUZA”
din IAȘI



CENTRUL DE STUDII
CLASICE ȘI CREȘTINE



FACULTATEA
DE ISTORIE



SYMPOSIUM INTERNATIONALE «VARIUS ANTONINUS TIBERINUS»,
MILLESIMO OCTINGENTESIMO ANNO A NECE MARCI AURELII ANTONINI (HELIOGABALI)
(IN CIVITATE IASSIENSI, IV KAL. DECEMBRES A.D. MMXXII)



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INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM «VARIUS ANTONINUS TIBERINUS».
1800 YEARS SINCE THE MURDER OF MARCUS AURELIUS
ANTONINUS (ELAGABALUS) (**IAȘI, NOVEMBER 28TH, 2022**)

Hall: H₁ (Casa Catargi), Faculty of History, “Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University

Format: in presence and online on Webex

Organisers: prof. dr. Nelu ZUGRAVU, PhD Pavel-**Flavian CHILCOȘ** (Center for Classical and Christian Studies, Faculty of History, “Alexandru Ioan **Cuza**” University of **Iași**)

PROGRAM

10-10.30 *am* RO | 9-9.30 *am* ESP and NL | 8-8.30 *am* GBR

Welcome: Nelu ZUGRAVU, Director of the Center for Classical and Christian Studies, Faculty of History, “Alexandru Ioan **Cuza**” University of **Iași**

Lucrețiu-Ion BÎRLIBA, Dean of the Faculty of History, “Alexandru Ioan **Cuza**” University of **Iași**

Introduction: Nelu ZUGRAVU, *Introduction: De Heliogabalo fertur...*

1st Morning session. Chair: Florica BOHÎLȚEA MIHUȚ

10.30-11.00 *am* **RO** | 9.30-10.00 *am* ESP and **NL** | 8.30-9.00 *am* GBR: Leonardo de ARRIZABALAGA Y PRADO (Trinity College, Cambridge/Woolf University), *Introducing Varian Studies*

11.00-11.30 *am* RO | 10.00-10.30 *am* ESP and NL | 9.00-9.30 *am* GBR: Martijn ICKS (University of Amsterdam), *The crimes of Elagabalus: Building blocks for a character assassination*

11.30-12.00 *am* RO | 10.30-11.00 *am* ESP and NL | 9.30-10.00 *am* GBR: Roundtable Discussion

12.00-12.15 *pm* RO | 11.00-11.15 *am* ESP and NL | 10.00-10.15 *am* GBR: Coffee Break

2nd Morning session. Chair: Leonardo de ARRIZABALAGA Y PRADO

12.15-12.45 *pm* RO | 11.15-11.45 *am* ESP and NL | 10.15-10.45 *am* GBR: Juan Ramón CARBÓ GARCÍA (Universidad Católica San Antonio de Murcia), *Emperor Elagabalus and the triad of Emesa: Sol Invictus Elagabal, Azizos and Monimos*

12.45-13.15 *pm* RO | 11.45-12.15 *pm* ESP and NL | 10.45-11.15 *am* GBR: Iulian MOGA (“Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University of Iași), *When the Sun of the Bassiani Was Risen*

13.15-13.45 *pm* RO | 12.15-12.45 *pm* ESP and NL | 11.15-11.45 *am* GBR: Roundtable Discussion

13.45-15.00 *pm* RO | 12.45-14.00 *pm* ESP and NL | 11.45-13.00 *pm* GBR: Lunch Break

1st Afternoon session. Chair: Iulian MOGA

15.00-15.30 *pm* RO | 14.00-14.30 *pm* ESP and NL | 13.00-13.30 *pm* GBR | 9.00-9.30 *am* BRA: Lucrețiu BÎRLIBA (“Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University of Iași), *Le dossier épigraphique du règne d’Elagabale en Mésie Inférieure*

15.30-16.00 *pm* RO | 14.30-15.00 *pm* ESP and NL | 13.30-14.00 *pm* GBR | 9.30-10.00 *am* BRA: Eduard NEMETH (“Babeș-Bolyai” University of Cluj-Napoca), *Roman Dacia in the Reign of Elagabalus*

16.00-16.30 *pm* RO | 15.00-15.30 *pm* ESP and NL | 14.00-14.30 *pm* GBR | 10.00-10.30 *am* BRA: M.a Pilar GONZÁLEZ-CONDE PUENTE (Universidad de Alicante), *La présence épigraphique d’Elagabalus en Hispanie*

16.30-17.00 *pm* RO | 15.30-16.00 *pm* ESP and NL | 14.30-15.00 *pm* GBR | 10.30-11.00 *am* BRA: Roundtable Discussion

17.00-17.15 pm RO | 16.00-16.15 pm ESP and NL | 15.00-15.15 pm GBR | 11.00-11.15 am BRA: Coffee Break

2nd Afternoon session. Chair: Martijn ICKS

17.15-17.45 pm RO | 16.15-16.45 pm ESP and NL | 15.15-15.45 pm GBR | 11.15-11.45 am BRA: Florica BOHÎLȚEA MIHUȚ (University of Bucharest), *Elagabalus' gender experiences: ancient accounts, modern interpretations*

17.45-18.15 pm RO | 16.45-17.15 pm ESP and NL | 15.45-16.15 pm GBR | 11.45-12.15 pm BRA: Semiramis CORSI SILVA (Universidade Federal de Santa Maria), *The emperor and the historian: the construction of Elagabalus' image analyzed from the trajectory of Cassius Dio and his vision of the imperial environment*

18.15-18.45 pm RO | 17.15-17.45 pm ESP and NL | 16.15-16.45 pm GBR | 12.15-12.45 pm BRA: Roundtable Discussion

18.45-19.00 pm RO | 17.45-18.00 pm ESP and NL | 16.45-17.00 pm GBR | 12.45-13.00 pm BRA: Coffee Break

3rd Afternoon session. Chair: Eduard NEMETH

19.00-19.30 pm RO | 18.00-18.30 pm ESP and NL | 17.00-17.30 pm GBR | 13.00-13.30 pm BRA: Nelu ZUGRAVU ("Alexandru Ioan Cuza" University of Iași), *Ille pestis. Elagabalus as a metaphor for the plague in the Historia Augusta*

19.30-20.00 pm RO | 18.30-19.00 pm ESP and NL | 17.30-18.00 pm GBR | 13.30-14.00 pm BRA: Pavel-Flavian CHILCOȘ ("Alexandru Ioan Cuza" University of Iași), *Abolitio memoriae of Elagabalus. The Danubian epigraphic file*

20.00-20.30 pm RO | 19.00-19.30 pm ESP and NL | 18.00-18.30 pm GBR | 14.00-14.30 pm BRA: Roundtable Discussion

20.30: Concluding Discussion



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Abstracts

Leonardo de ARRIZABALAGA Y PRADO

Introducing Varian Studies

Keywords: art, artefacts, avatar, Caracallan, Elagabalus, emperor, evolve, Heliogabalus, historiography, imperial, legendary, literature, Marcus Aurelius Antoninus, metamorphosis, mythical, princeps, Roman, study, Syrian, Varian, Varius.

Varian studies are the first rigorous, comprehensive study of the Roman emperor wrongly called Elagabalus or Heliogabalus, who ruled AD 218-222 as Marcus Aurelius Antoninus. Sceptically examining in detail ancient historiography and artefacts they explode the modern myth of Heliogabalus and inaugurate the study of Varius, the Syro-Roman boy who became priest of the Syrian sun god Elagabal, then *princeps* through a lie of Caracallan imperial paternity. They show how the metamorphoses of his live persona evolve into the avatar of his legendary or mythical afterlife as Heliogabalus in modern historiography, literature and art.

Florica BOHÎLȚEA MIHUȚ

*Elagabalus' gender experiences: ancient accounts,
modern interpretations*

Keywords: *Elagabalus, gender, Roman tradition, sexuality (transsexuality).*

Elagabalus' sexual extravagances, which are more or less detailed in ancient sources (mainly in the works of Cassius Dio, Herodian, and the biographer of the *Historia Augusta*), have represented over time one of the main topics within the scholarly debates. This 'false Antoninus' (the last one of the series of eight emperors who officially had this *cognomen*) seems to have hesitated between shameless masculinity and depraved effeminacy, demonstrating 'behavioural deviations' usually explained by psychological lability or dictated by religious reasons (Turcan 1985; Frey 1989; Monserat 2000; Gualerzi 2005; Icks 2011; Rantala 2020). Due to his excesses of a sexual nature, this so-called 'infantile' anarchist or 'adolescent' eager to emancipate himself from the tutelage of his grandmother, Julia Maesa, and his mother, Julia Soaemias (A. y Prado, 2010, ch. 4), has been identified with both the opposite of the Roman tradition and the symbol of an oriental culture which was threateningly invading the capital of the empire. Our communication aims to explore these contemporary interpretations in a cultural context, adding the lack of such concerns in Romanian historiography.

Selected bibliography (secondary sources):

- Leonardo de Arrizabalaga y Prado, *The Emperor Heliogabalus: Fact or Fiction?*, Cambridge, 2010.
- Paul Chrystal, *Emperors of Rome the monsters from Tiberius to Theodora, AD 14-548*, Barnsley, 2018.
- Martin Frey, *Untersuchungen zur Religion und zur Religionspolitik des Kaisers Elagabal*, Stuttgart, 1989.
- Saverio Gualerzi, *Né uomo, né donna, né dio, né dea. Ruolo sessuale e ruolo religioso dell'Imperatore Elagabalo*, Bologna, 2005.
- Martijn Icks, *The Crimes of Elagabalus: the life and legacy of Rome's decadent boy emperor*, London-New York, 1st ed. 2011.

Dominic Monserrat, *Reading Gender in the Roman World*, in J. Huskinson (ed.), *Experiencing Rome: Culture, Identity and Power in the Roman Empire*, London-New York, 2000, p. 153-182.

Jussy Rantala, *Ruling in Purple... and Wearing Make-up: Gendered Adventures of Emperor Elagabalus as seen by Cassius Dio and Herodian*, in A. Surtees and J. Dyer (eds.), *Exploring Gender Diversity in the Ancient World*, Edinburgh, 2020, p. 118-128.

Robert Turcan, *Héliogabale et le sacre du soleil*, Paris, 1985.

Juan Ramón CARBÓ GARCÍA

Emperor Elagabalus and the triad of Emesa:

Sol Invictus Elagabal, Azizos and Monimos

Through the analysis of the structure of the religious pantheon of the city of Emesa and of several coins specific to the emperor Elagabalus, in this paper we shall try to check whether the individual stars present in these coins could be identified as concrete astronomical facts with a religious significance, applying the parameters established for these studies. In Roman coins, the presence of symbols of an astronomical nature is very common and has received different interpretations. More precisely, the symbol of the star, present individually or in greater or lesser numbers, appears in the coins of different emperors. In light of the religious policy of Elagabalus, we might conclude that these stars, depending on their position on the reverses of the studied coins, could be identified with the god Azizos – the morning star – or with the god Monimos – the evening star –, gods accompanying the Sun Invictus Elagabal in the triad of Emesa.

Semíramis CORSI SILVA,

The emperor and the historian: the construction of Elagabalus' image

analyzed from the trajectory of Cassius Dio and his vision

of the imperial environment

The purpose of this presentation is to build the *cursus honorum* of Dio Cassius and analyze some political agents mentioned in *Roman History* (Ρωμαϊκή Ιστορία) considering their functions in the government of Marcus Aurelius Antoninus (Elagabalus). We will seek

to reflect on the relationship between Cassius Dio's career, his view on the rise of certain agents alongside Elagabalus and his highly negative construction of this emperor's image.

Martijn ICKS

The crimes of Elagabalus:

Building blocks for a character assassination

The literary sources paint a very hostile picture of Elagabalus, scorning him for his alleged effeminacy, excessive luxury and circle of unworthy favourites, among many other points of criticism. While the veracity of these claims is sometimes hard to establish, it is clear that they are part of a discourse that seeks to discredit the emperor by emphasizing his flaws and downplaying or denying any positive traits he may have possessed. As such, they can be regarded as a posthumous character assassination, a term which refers to the **deliberate destruction of an individual's reputation. In this paper, I will examine various "building blocks" that contributed to this character assassination, tracing how allegations against Elagabalus built on well-worn tropes or contemporary concerns, and how they developed over time.**

M.a Pilar GONZÁLEZ-CONDE PUENTE

La présence épigraphique d'Elagabalus en Hispanie

Les témoignages épigraphiques liés aux années de gouvernement de l'empereur Elagabalus sont rares mais très significatifs. Ils affectent inégalement la géographie de la péninsule ibérique mais montrent que les travaux publics et les infrastructures urbaines ne se sont pas arrêtés durant ces années au début du III^e siècle de notre ère. Malgré les précédents de la crise que l'on peut observer à l'époque sévérienne, les villes continuent à faire des investissements, du moins certains d'entre eux, et les communications ont continué à avoir une valeur stratégique considérable.

Iulian MOGA

When the Sun of the Bassiani Was Risen

Issued from a rather insignificant Oriental sacerdotal dynasty of a semi-nomadic ancestry, Elagabalus seemed unfit to rule an Empire whose imagery of power and religious

traditions varied considerably from those deeply embedded into the minds of his people of origin. His typical conduct, even if seen immoral, pervert, depraved, etc. could be perceivable through the perspective of a well-defined cultural Eastern legacy. It was not for the first time when the Romans encountered and coped with Oriental cults and customs on their soil, due to their having adopted the Idean Mother along with her own *chorus cinaedorum* that dissuaded poets like Juvenal. But to fully support an Oriental-type sovereign trying to replace values of their own, that was hardly bearable.

Nelu ZUGRAVU

*Ilia pestis. Elagabalus as a metaphor for the plague
in the Historia Augusta*

The metaphor of the plague stems in Ciceronian political invective, being one of the rhetorical methods by which the great orator vilified political opponents. In the *Historia Augusta*, **this tool of the “rhetoric of blame” is applied to the emperors Elagabalus, Gallienus, and Maximinus Thrax.** Just as the plague meant destruction, physical death, the emperor as a metaphor for the plague symbolized the morbidity of the state, the dysfunction of institutions, the putrefaction of values. Our communication analyzes the aspects of private and public life in which the anonymous author of the collection of imperial biographies applies this stylistic figure to Elagabalus. An important role in the analysis is the comparative study of origin and incidence of terms such as *polluere, contaminare, contagio, profanare, violare*, as well as the comparative look at other political men or sovereigns whom classical or late sources characterize by using the same terminology. Our conclusion is that the biographer wanted to emphasize the complete annihilation of the emperor as an individual (physical, moral, political, social, gender) and public person (sovereign, priest). Thus, just as plague means reduction to physical nothingness, for the anonymous author of the *Historia Augusta*, Elagabalus as a metaphor for plague was social nothingness itself – *«nec im(perator) nec Antoninus nec civis nec senator nec nobilis nec Romanus»* (SHA, *Alex. Seu.*, VII, 4). It is, in the last instance, a literary and cultural *damnatio ultima*. **Following that “plague” (*pestis illa*), which the gods themselves wanted eradicated (*«di illum eradicarunt»*), Aurelius Alexander (Alexander Severus) was “as a cure for the human race” (*ad remedium generis humani*), the one who purified him (*«tu purifica»*), saved him and restored his life and the joy of living (*«in te salus, in te vita... ut vivere delectet»*).**



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