

plans than his Republican predecessors, who had to make do with a temple or some such. The twelve chapters in this volume explore this theme through the expected explorations of public monuments and monumentalization (Zanker, Eck, Mayer), both as signs of the power of the emperor, his relationship with the people, and the prestige of the Senate. Other chapters present potentially more intriguing propositions, such as monuments whose addressants had since fallen from favor (Marlowe, Fittchen), or how a monumental building program could turn against its maker, such as Nero (Flaig). Two articles are somewhat more traditional topographical studies, exploring the history of a single monument or a building program (Packer, Boatwright). Some are interesting in pointing out the obvious, such as the momentous change that occurred when the Republican principle of having no standing army inside the *pomerium* was cast aside, and the massive barracks of the praetorian guard would stand as a reminder of the physical power of the emperor (Koorboojian). Two chapters present the curious phenomenon of the imperial funeral in Rome (D'Ambra, Arce).

The volume stands as a very interesting contribution to the historical topography of Rome and provides a view of the *Stand der Lehre* at this point. Evaluated as it is now, some six years after publication, it is clear that some of the novelty of the ideas presented has been dented with the passage of time. Many useful insights and interesting facts may be learned from all of them, but the chapters have a somewhat uneven quality. The illustrations are very numerous, however the over a hundred figures and photographs show a similarly uneven quality, as some are new, up to date, and high quality illustrations, while others are reproductions of often seen plans from general works. All in all, the volume is a worthwhile addition to the study of Roman topography.

*Kaius Tuori*

LEONARDO DE ARRIZABALAGA Y PRADO: *The Emperor Elagabalus - Fact or Fiction?* Cambridge University Press, Cambridge – New York 2010. ISBN 978-0-521-89555-2. XXXVIII, 381 pp. GBP 60, USD 99.

Varius Avitus Bassianus, or to give him his imperial name, Marcus Aurelius Antoninus, has been known to later generations as the notorious and decadent Elagabalus or Heliogabalus (218–222). The *damnatio memoriae* after Elagabalus' death has left modern scholarship reliant on ancient historiography. This in turn has resulted in several studies on the subject of the credibility of the accounts of ancient historians during the last decades. One of them is Martijn Icks's *The Crimes of Elagabalus: The Life and Legacy of Rome's Decadent Boy Emperor* (I.B. Tauris 2011), which concentrates more on the *Nachleben* of Elagabalus.

The book under review is divided into six parts: "Exposition" (pp. 1–24) presents the methodology; "Explosion" explores the relevant historiography by Cassius Dio, Herodian, etc. (pp. 25–56); "Constitution" is an inquiry into Elagabalus' reign on the basis of epigraphy, numismatics, papyri and sculpture (57–161); "Speculation" presents a reconstruction of the events of Elagabalus' reign (162–259); "Findings in contexts" mirrors the results especially against the whole of the Severan period (260–84); and the final chapter "Appendices" presents a chronology of the reign and adds some further material in the form of lists (pp. 285–360).

In "Exposition", Arrizabalaga states that "No allegation of ancient historiography about this emperor is here considered true unless proven". This is tested with a sort of a binary question board, which puts ancient historiography to the test bit by bit. The ancient texts are simplified into propositions of which the author asks the following questions: 1) Is the proposition inherently verifiable or not? 2) Is the proposition controversial? 3) Is the proposition vital to its proponent's purpose? 4) Is the proposition public or private? 5) Could it be verified, in public, by a random contemporary observer? 6) Would there be risk for its proponent if it were exposed as false? 7) Could the proponent have some agenda in respect of the proposition? and 8) Would or could collusion be involved in its proposal? This binary system produces the answers "yes" or "no", which in turn give the results "True", "False", "Unverifiable", "Virtually true" or "Opinion or emotion".

In "Explosion", Arrizabalaga explains his system in more detail and hacks the credibility of Dio, Herodian, and so on to pieces. There are 840 of these simplified propositions and according to his system only 50 of them appear to be "True" or "Virtually true".

Arrizabalaga's aim in chapter 3 ("Constitution") is to reconstruct the real life of Elagabalus, or Varius, as he prefers to call him. The material used here is archaeological and numismatic. This chapter reconstructs a normal imperial life consisting of consulships, priesthoods, etc. As for coinage, the only differing feature from previous imperial coinage is the appearance of the Syrian sun god Elagabal in the Roman pantheon.

"Speculation" considers Elagabalus' childhood, genealogy and motivation on the basis of the material evidence. This results in a theory about why Elagabalus saw himself as a priest; moreover, according to the author, he was more probably born near Rome and not in Emesa in Syria, as previously thought. This leads to a theory of Elagabalus' travelling provincial childhood from Britain to Syria with his real father Sextus Varius Marcellus. This new reconstruction of the emperor's childhood and his short reign are placed within Severan dynastic life in the fifth chapter ("Findings in context"), which also includes a short note on the emperor's *Nachleben*. The "Appendices", a chapter in its own right, explains the author's methodology in the short section "Theory of knowledge".

The text is a pleasure to read, even though the author too frequently begs the reader to "practice mental exercises" with him. Despite the author's assertion, I do not think that modern historians take Dio's or Herodian's accounts as literally true. However, Arrizabalaga's well-presented appendices are a valuable source for further studies on the subject, even though his binary question board seems a little too straightforward to be able to assess the credibility of ancient texts. The numismatic evidence is well presented and plays a vital part in showing Elagabalus' reign to have been a normal one, consisting of judging, sacrificing, parading, building and repairing. However, it would be surprising if it did not point to this conclusion. Imperial mints, after all, can lie as much as senators turned historians.