

Referát

Hadrian and the divine

Hadrian's personality significantly influenced his policies in the East, particularly through his interest in divination, mystic cults, magic, superstitions, astrology, and various sciences and arts. These interests, though not directly linked to his cult in the region, facilitated his acceptance among the Greeks by connecting with their religious and cultural traditions. However, this fascination harmed his reputation among Roman elites and Senators.

Historical sources, even if partly fictional, often depict Hadrian as an extraordinary figure connected to the divine, reflecting Greek desires for a shared religious and cultural dialogue with the emperor. Hadrian's interest in the past and future is evident in his frequent visits to oracles and prophets. He was notably generous to the city and oracle of Delphi, ensuring their autonomy and privileges, and visited Delphi in 125 AD, being elected archon of the city for the second time.

The 5th-century church historian Sozomenos, in his "Historia Ecclesiastica" addressed to Emperor Theodosius II, recounts a peculiar event involving Hadrian and the temple of Apollo at Daphne near Antioch.

According to Sozomenos, the Castalia fountain at the sanctuary had oracular powers. Before becoming emperor, Hadrian supposedly consulted this oracle, which then revealed his future. After becoming emperor, Hadrian reportedly covered the fountain to prevent others from benefiting from it.

Historia Augusta notes that Hadrian frequently consulted oracles. Before becoming emperor, Hadrian reportedly received oracles from the Vergilian oracle or Sibylline verses and the temple of Zeus at Nikephorion (likely the temple of Zeus Nikephorios by the Euphrates). These accounts align with Hadrian's character. The author of the "Historia Augusta" even suggests that oracles attributed to Antinoos, his late lover whom he deified, were actually composed by Hadrian himself.

The "Historia Augusta" has several references to Hadrian's proficiency in astrology. Hadrian was supposedly so skilled in astrology that he could predict events for the entire year and even the hour of his death.

Hadrian was extensively using divinations and magical arts. This is exemplified by a magical papyrus in Paris describing a "spell of attraction" with potent effects, which Hadrian witnessed during a demonstration by Pachrates, a prophet from Heliopolis. Pachrates showcased his magical abilities by attracting, inflicting sickness, killing, and sending dreams, impressing Hadrian so much that he doubled Pachrates' allowance. Hadrian likely encountered Pachrates during his 130 AD visit to Egypt, which coincided with the death of Antinoos.

Pachrates is possibly the same as Pancrates, mentioned by Lucian and Athenaeus, who celebrated Hadrian and Antinoos' lion hunt. Hadrian's interest in Pachrates might have been driven by health concerns. Historian Cassius Dio supports this, suggesting Antinoos' death was either an accidental drowning or a sacrificial act to prolong Hadrian's life. Dio notes Hadrian's superstitious nature and his reliance on various divinations and magical practices, implying that Antinoos willingly, or perhaps forcibly, sacrificed himself to extend Hadrian's life.

Hadrian had some health concerns which coincided with his relationship with Antinoos. Aurelius Victor, in "De Caesaribus," highlights Hadrian's affairs with men, suggesting that the honors given to Antinoos were due to Hadrian's desire to extend his life. According to Victor, magicians (potentially including Pachrates) requested a volunteer to die in Hadrian's stead, and Antinoos offered himself when everyone else refused.

This theory aligns with other historical accounts. For instance, the fourth-century source Epiphanius in "De mensuris et ponderibus" mentions Hadrian's serious illness and his extensive search for a cure, including summoning doctors from across the empire. Epiphanius notes that Hadrian's journey to Egypt was specifically due to his health concerns. During this trip, Hadrian also visited Jerusalem and initiated the rebuilding of the city as Aelia Capitolina.

Epiphanius's emphasis on Emperor Hadrian's illness in connection to his visit to Egypt reveals the significant impact of the emperor's presence and health issues on the local populace. This emphasis also suggests an early oral or written tradition linking Hadrian's health concerns with Antinoos' death, as hinted by Cassius Dio.

Hadrian's health might have seen some improvement during his stay in Egypt, as suggested by a coin issued from the Rome mint. This coin depicts Hadrian in military dress with his foot on a crocodile, possibly symbolizing him as Horus, the Egyptian god associated with healing and protection from evil forces. Anthony Birley posits that Hadrian might have identified himself with Horus to cure his ailments, reflecting a common practice in Egypt where ill individuals associated their afflictions with demonic animals and sought healing through such identification and spells.

This is further supported by the hieroglyphics on Antinoos' obelisk in Rome, erected after Antinoos' death and during Sabina's lifetime (we have an approximate date - 130-137/138 AD). The obelisk's inscriptions celebrate Antinoos as a deified figure, Osirantinoos, and include prayers to Re-Harachte for Hadrian's well-being. The inscriptions describe Hadrian as "beloved of the Nile and the Gods," affirming his health and vitality, and similarly praise Sabina. It is quite obvious that Hadrian believed his engagement with Egyptian divination and magic had beneficial effects on his health.

He likely composed the text himself. The inscriptions, particularly on the east side, reflect Hadrian's hope that Antinoos's sacrifice would yield the promised results, despite Hadrian never fully recovering from his illness. Cassius Dio records that Hadrian turned to charms and magic as a last resort, experiencing only temporary relief from his ailment.

Dio portrays the use of magic negatively, associating it with non-Romans or immoral individuals, often leading to danger or banishment. He highlights this stance through Maecenas' fictitious speech to Augustus, advocating against the worship of living emperors and the use of magic, warning that such practices undermine the Roman gods and threaten imperial stability. Dio's negative view of Hadrian's involvement with magic reflects the senatorial class's perspective, which saw itself as the protector of traditional Roman values and the state.

In contrast, Hadrian's acceptance and use of divinations and magic arts were likely more accepted in the East, where such practices were more common. This openness indicates Hadrian's vision of an inclusive empire that embraced diverse traditions, aiming to integrate rather than assimilate different cultures, particularly Roman and Greek. This approach is further evidenced by Hadrian's promotion of the cult of Roma and his attachment to the cult of Zeus, highlighting his efforts to unify and strengthen the empire through cultural acceptance and integration.