

MAGIC AND THE ROMAN EMPERORS

(1 Volume)

Submitted by Georgios Andrikopoulos, to the University of Exeter as a thesis/dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Classics, July 2009.

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Abstract

Roman emperors, the details of their lives and reigns, their triumphs and failures and their representation in our sources are all subjects which have never failed to attract scholarly attention. Therefore, in view of the resurgence of scholarly interest in ancient magic in the last few decades, it is curious that there is to date no comprehensive treatment of the subject of the frequent connection of many Roman emperors with magicians and magical practices in ancient literature.

The aim of the present study is to explore the association of Roman emperors with magic and magicians, as presented in our sources. This study explores the twofold nature of this association, namely whether certain emperors are represented as magicians themselves and employers of magicians or whether they are represented as victims and persecutors of magic; furthermore, it attempts to explore the implications of such associations in respect of the nature and the motivations of our sources. The case studies of emperors are limited to the period from the establishment of the Principate up to the end of the Severan dynasty, culminating in the short reign of Elagabalus. The late Republican background of magic will also be explored as an introduction, since it is important to the understanding of the connection of emperors and magic in our imperial sources.

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