Anaglyptica Variana: Column capitals with sculptural relief and associated fragments, related to the cult of Elagabal

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Fascicle 3: Second stage of the discussion, 1902-1962; Third stage of the discussion, 1962-2002; The state of the question in 2002.

Second stage of the discussion, 1902-1962:

The second stage of this discussion corresponds to the period between the publication of Hülsen's article in *MKDAIRA* 17, 1902, reviewed above, and 1962, when Mercklin publishes, in *Antike Figuralkapitelle*, the first full description of all the artefacts here under consideration, as well as a bibliography of works up to that date referring to them. All these are reviewed in what follows. Between 1902 and 1962, the artefact here designated A is mentioned in a number of works, none of which makes it a principal object of enquiry, but some of which refer to it, in order to make certain points in the context of discussing Roman sculpture, or the emperor or god with whom this artefact is usually associated. Some works included in Mercklin's bibliography, and reviewed here, do not refer directly to A, or to its companion pieces, but help to clarify aspects of their history and iconography. A few works reviewed here, which I found to be relevant, are not mentioned in Mercklin's bibliography.

5. Altmann, Walter, ***Architektur und Ornamentik der antiken Sarkophage***. Weidmann, Berlin, 1902, p. 110.

In the context of a discussion of certain stylistic characteristics of relief sculptures on ancient sarcophagi that help one to date them, Altmann remarks that the first and so far only artefact that is definitively dated to the reign of Elagabalus (Varius) is the column capital from the Forum thus identified by Studniczka. Anyone will, Altmann claims, find Studniczka's conclusion convincing, based as it is on attributing to that reign the presence on this artefact of the sacred stone of Emesa. Stylistically, on account of the shape of its figures and plants, rounded despite their marked shadow lines, it seems nearer to suggesting the Antonine period than does another sculpture, the Meleager sarcophagus in the *Palazzo dei Conservatori*, which Altmann goes on to discuss.

6. Cumont, Franz, ***Elagabalus***. 1), in *Pauly's Real-Encyclopädie der Classischen Altertumswissenschaft*, Neue Bearbeitung, 5er Band, 10er Halbband, Metzler, Stuttgart, 1905, col. 2219-2222.

In this encyclopaedia article, devoted to the god Elagabal, called here by the Latinised form of his name, Elagabalus, Cumont refers to Studniczka's article, reviewed above, on three occasions:

Col. 2220, l. 22-23:

Discussing the *interpretatio* of Elagabal as equivalent to Zeus or Jupiter, Cumont remarks on Elagabal's close association with the eagle, a symbol both of Jupiter and of the sun, attested by coins of Emesa and Rome, cited, among others, by Studniczka.

Col. 2220, l. 37:

Describing the temple of Elagabal in Emesa, Cumont refers to images of it on coins of that city, cited, among others, by Studniczka.

Col. 2221, l. 10-17:

In the context of describing the temple dedicated by Varius to Elagabal on the Palatine hill in Rome, Cumont mentions a recent find discussed by Studniczka: "a column capital decorated with an ornate relief, from this temple, or rather from the hall, lobby, or foyer of the sacred enclosure...As well as the conical stone with an eagle, it shows images of Pallas and Juno – the two wives of Elagabal – and a Nike (Victoria) sacrificing a bull."

7. Butler, Orma Fitch, ***Studies in the Life of Heliogabalus***, *Roman History and Mythology, University of Michigan Studies*, 4, 1908 (1910), p. 81, text & n. 2.

The "Life" in the title of Ms. O.F. Butler's monograph is not, alas, that of Varius (as this study prefers to call the real historical personage who simultaneously occupied the roles of high priest of Elagabal and Roman emperor) but rather that of the largely fictional character depicted by the *Vita Antonini Heliogabali* in the *Historia Augusta*. Despite her primary focus on one of the least reliable texts in ancient historiography, Ms Butler provides, in her lengthy first chapter with its extensive footnotes, and in her indices of inscriptions, coins, and texts used, the most complete account, up to her time, of the literature and artefacts concerning Varius. In doing so, she raises many historical, as opposed to purely historiographical questions related to him. It is in the context of discussing the question of the location of the Roman temple(s) of the god Elagabal, that she refers to the column capitals here under consideration.

Ms. Butler's discussion of that question begins with the statement that "for many reasons it is clear that this temple was on the Palatine," and adduces "the Greek

authors,"[1] as well as (Aurelius) "Victor,"[2] in support. She cites a passage in a lexicon,[3] which proposes the possible identification of the temple of Jupiter Victor, mentioned by Livy,[4] with that of Elagabal, mentioned by "Lampridius" (the suppositious author of the *Vita Heliogabali*),[5] among others, and which situates both at a certain spot on the Palatine. Stating that this "identification has not been very generally accepted," she then goes on to discuss the artefacts here under consideration.

Referring to the presence on A of "Elagabalus," Minerva and Urania, she says that Studniczka and Cumont have linked A to a Palatine temple of Elagabal. But Hülsen, referring to the "other fragments" seen by Signor Boni at the findspot, thinks it more probable that the capitals and related fragments formed part of a "chapel of Elagabalus which stood in the Forum." In support of Hülsen's thesis, and invoking the assertion (by Studniczka, rebutted later by Mercklin) that the upper fragment of A was found by the Regia, she notes the proximity of the separate findspots of the two fragments of A to the Temple of Vesta, and ventures that A, "when considered with the figures on the capital itself, probably points to some structure built in honor of Elagabalus and Vesta." Finally, she adduces another reason for doubting that A and related fragments come from "the Eliogabalum," that is, the Palatine temple of Elagabal: The *Passio Sancti Philippi*[6] states that the building burned before A.D. 304, yet the artefacts show no traces of fire.

8. Domaszewski, Alfred von, ***Die politische Bedeutung der Religion von Emesa***, in ***Abhandlungen zur Römischen Religion***, Teubner, Leipzig, 1909, p. 197-216, esp. p. 201, n. 3.

Domaszewski's article is, save for some brief remarks in Cumont's encyclopaedia article, the first extended study of the subject to which its title refers: the political significance of the religion of Emesa. In the context of discussing the two temples of Elagabal in Rome, Domaszewski cites first, with an equal lack of scepticism, the same passage in the *Historia Augusta* cited by Studniczka, locating one of them on the Palatine, at the site of a certain *aedes Orci*.[7] Regarding the second temple, somewhere in the suburbs - the only place where Domaszewski thinks there was room for such an enormous structure - he refers to Herodian's description, singling

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[1] Dio. 79.12.1; Zonaras 12.14 616 C; Herodian 5.6.7.
[2] Aurelius Victor, *De Caesaribus* 23.1.
[3] ***Denkmäler des Klassischen Altertums***, Ed. Baumeister, A., III. 1888, p. 1484.
[4] Liv. 10.29.
[5] *HA AH.* 3.
[6] ***Acta Sanctorum***, Vol. 9, October, p. 546, Ch 1, § 8, cited in *MKDAIRA* 7, 1892.
[7] *HA AH.* 1.6, cited by Studniczka, discussed above. Cf. the reinterpretation of this passage by Coarelli, discussed below.

out its mention of high towers as one of that temple's most imposing features.[8] He goes on to say that these were corner towers of the temple façade, like those of the temple of the sun at Kasr Raba.

In the footnote (p. 201 n. 3) developing this point, Domaszewski refers to his own collaborative work with Brünnow on the Roman province of Arabia,[9] and mentions that Puchstein apprised him of this similitude. He also refers, still with respect to the towers, to the verses of Avienus about the Temple of Emesa (which describe them, albeit at a much later date than that of the reign of Varius).[10] Domaszewski then mentions the column capital, here designated A, on which he says Studniczka has recognized the triad of Emesa. (This is, of course, the Syrian triad, discussed in the review of Studniczka's article, above, which is in fact not mentioned as such by Studniczka, but only discussed by him in its Roman form, which he argues to be that of the Capitoline triad.) Domaszewski says that A can only have come from the smaller Roman temple, but he does not say why this should be so. He may refer here indirectly to its relatively small size, compared with that of other Roman column capitals, a fact which has already suggested, both to Wissowa and to Studniczka, that it may come from a relatively modest temple, or even from a mere chapel (though Studniczka prefers the notion that it comes from the Palatine temple of Elagabal).[11]

Domaszewski then goes on to remark that it is hard to understand how the capital survived. It is not clear whether by this he means that it is surprising that it did so at all, given the *damnatio memoriae* of Varius effected under his successor, Alexander Severus, and the consequent destruction of Varius' monuments, or if Domaszewski simply means that it is difficult to see how it turned up in the place where it was found, if indeed it came from somewhere else. He proceeds then to venture a novel suggestion, regarding the original emplacement of A, one that might deal with either of these possible perplexities. Perhaps, rather than from any temple, the capital may come from the *statio* of the Emesenes in the Forum, a monument belonging to a category of structures, for information regarding which he refers one to an article by Hülsen.[12] That *statio's* decoration could have been far older than that of any temple built by Varius, since Varius did not himself invent the triad.

It should be noted that if Domaszewski's suggestion were to prove correct, it might explain why, to Hülsen, as well as to Altmann, the capital looks older than Severan,

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[8] Herodian 5.6.6.

[9] Brünnow-Domaszewski, ***Die Provincia Arabia*** . I , 46 ff.

[10] Avienus, Postumius Rufus/Rufius Festus, ***Descriptio Orbis Terrae***, 1084-1094.

[11] *Wissowa & Studniczka, op. cit., reviewed above.*

[12] Hülsen, Christian. *MKDAIRA* 20, p 9. See the discussion of this article in ***The state of the question in 2002***, below.

and even to Studniczka seems almost too beautiful to be so. It would also, despite its modest manner of presentation, in a footnote, and almost as an afterthought, be quite devastating in its consequences for the discussion of A, whether previous or subsequent; for if it were to prove true, all discussion of A (and by extension, of the other artefacts here under consideration, assuming their relationship to A) on the basis of its assignation to the reign of Varius, would be rendered nonsense.

There are, however, problems with Domaszewski's suggestion, both flaws in the manner of its proposition, and weaknesses detectable if it is put to the test of detailed consideration, in the light of the topography that it implies. These problems will not, however, be examined at this point, since this thesis' potentially devastating effect, should it prove correct, will be more fully appreciated if it is revisited after completing the present critical review of the discussion of these artefacts between 1902 and the present. The reader may look forward to thorough consideration of that potential devastation, and of the problems affecting the menacing thesis, when this monograph addresses the state of the question in 2002.

9. Hay, J. Stuart, ***The Amazing Emperor Heliogabalus***, Macmillan & Co., London, 1911, p. 132.

Hay's book, sporting an introduction by J.B. Bury, is the first full length monographic treatment of the emperor in question, to be published since the eighteenth century, in any language, as an independent volume with pretensions to academic status and historical value. Whether those pretensions are justified or not is a subject discussed in detail elsewhere in the set of studies of which the present monograph forms a part.[13] Suffice it here to say that Hay refers to A in the context of discussing the marriage of Varius (whom he calls Antonine) to Aquilia Severa, the Vestal virgin.

He notes "the erection of a shrine in the Forum to celebrate the event, which was probably built, according to Commendatore Boni, somewhere in the summer of 221. Certain pieces of a capital discovered near that place between the years 1870-1872, display the God Elagabal between Minerva and Urania, his second wife, which leads on to the conclusion that the union [of Varius] with Vesta, though no longer of earthly, was at least considered as one of spiritual duration."

Thus Hay aligns himself, perhaps unwittingly, with Hülsen against Studniczka (both of whom are cited in his bibliography, as is Jordan, whereas neither Boni nor Wissowa is), in the debate about the original provenance of A.

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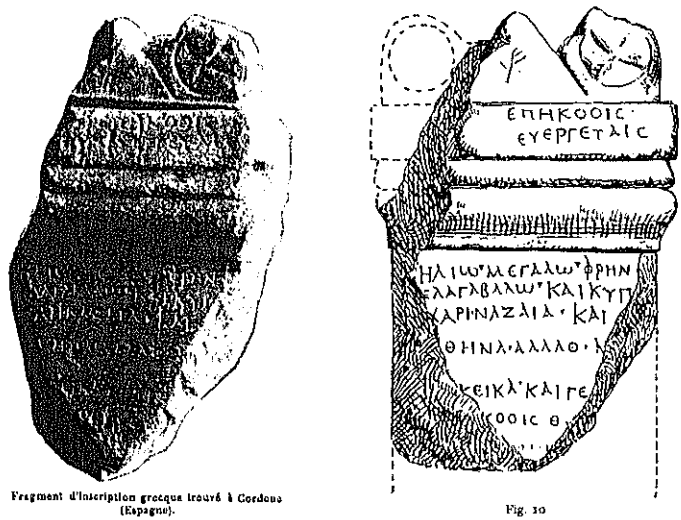
[13] ***Studia Variana: Metamorphoses Varianae: Mythographica Variana: The post-antique historiography of Varius and Elagabal***, yet to be published.

10. Pernier, L., ***Heliogabalus***, in *Dizionario Epigrafico di Antichità Romane*, 3, 1922, p. 658-669, esp. p. 667a.

In an encyclopaedia entry concerning Varius (here called Heliogabalus) Pernier mentions **A** in the context of discussing his architectural legacy to Rome. Citing Studniczka's and Hülsen's articles reviewed above, Pernier notes that the latter believes the capital to come, not from a Palatine temple of Elagabal, but from "una edicola," a smaller structure, erected in the Forum. Going beyond Hülsen, Pernier offers a possible reason for the construction of such a monument: it could have had some connexion with the marriage between Varius and the Vestal virgin, Aquilia Severa.

11. Hiller von Gaertringen, F., Littmann, E., Weber, W., Weinreich, O., ***Syrische Gottheiten auf einem Altar aus Cordova***, *Archiv für Religionswissenschaft*, 22, 1923/24, p. 117-132, esp. p. 118, text, p. 123, n.1, p. 127, text, & p. 128, text.



Fragment d'inscription grecque trouvé à Cordoue (Espagne).

Fig. 10

Photograph and drawing of the Cordovan inscription to Elagabal

This article records and discusses the find in Cordova of a Greek inscription dedicated to Elagabal, together with a number of other Syrian deities. It contains three mentions of **A**. As well as these, however, this article offers further elements relevant to the present discussion: it discusses, with extensive reference to ancient

historiographical texts, as well as to coins and inscriptions, the Syrian *interpretatio* of Elagabal as Jupiter, and the existence of a triad linking him to Aphrodite and Athena in their Syro-Phoenician embodiments.

It is therefore relevant to Studniczka's contention that three deities on **A**, depicted atop platform and plinths, constitute an *interpretatio* of the Capitoline Triad, originally consisting of Jupiter, Minerva, and Juno. It will be remembered that Studniczka bases this thesis on his observation that the two goddesses on **A**, to either side of Elagabal, are Pallas and Urania, the latter being the Carthaginian *interpretatio* of Astarte, who is in turn interpreted by the Romans as Juno. This leads Studniczka, given the equivalence of Pallas and Athene, and the Roman *interpretatio* of Athene as Minerva, to assert that Elagabal is, by virtue of his placement here between Juno and Minerva, to be interpreted as Jupiter, and, moreover, that this *interpretatio* constitutes evidence of a religious policy, conducted by Varius, designed to overthrow Jupiter, and replace him with Elagabal.

In the context of introducing Elagabal, as well as the other deities named on the Cordovan inscription, this article relates him to Varius, to whose reign it also ascribes the inscription. It states, mistakenly, that Varius was the son of Maesa, the sister of the empress Domna. (He was, of course, Maesa's grandson, the son of her daughter Soaemias.) It then goes on to say (p. 118, text) that "this god Elagabal was now, in a counterpart of the Capitoline trio, linked with the Carthaginian Juno Caelestis and the Greek Pallas in a triad, whereby the triumph of the peoples of the empire over the universal sovereignty of its Capitoline god was proclaimed." [14]

Thus, by virtue of an extended chain of *interpretatio* (which this article does not itself forge as such, or join directly to the following conclusion, but whose links with it are deducible from *interpretationes* documented in its text), Juno can be equated, *via* Libyan Urania, Phoenician Astroarche, and Syrian Atargatis, who is also called Astarte, with Graeco-Roman Aphrodite/Venus. This equation may then be used to support Studniczka's thesis. By the same token, it may also be used to argue against Seyrig's later objection to that thesis, denying the presence of Juno on **A**, and stating that the goddess in question is, instead, Aphrodite/Venus. [15]

The first direct allusion in this article to **A**, in a footnote (p. 123, n.1), referring to Studniczka's relevant article, cites it as an example, among others drawn from coins, of the iconography of Elagabal. This article's second allusion to **A** (p. 127,

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[14] Hiller v. Gaertringen, et al. op. cit., p. 118: *"Dieser Gott Elagabal war nun, als Gegenbild der kapitolinischen Dreiheit, mit der karthagischen Juno Caelestis und der griechischen Pallas zu einer Trias verbunden, worin der Sieg der Völker des Reichs über den weltbeherrschenden Gott des Kapitols zum Ausdruck kam."*

[15] Seyrig, op. cit., reviewed below.

text) identifies the goddess standing on a plinth between Elagabal and Nike/Victoria as Caelestis, the Carthaginian *interpretatio* of Libyan Urania and Phoenician Astroarche, who is in turn interpreted as Graeco-Roman Aphrodite/Venus. The article remarks on the absence of her usual pair of lions, and considers her to be very Romanised. It contrasts this choice of a second partner for Elagabal, to complement Athene/Minerva/Allath on his other side, with that of a goddess to fulfil this same function in the Cordovan inscription: Cypris Nazaia, the Cypriot-Phoenician *interpretatio* of Astroarche.

The author(s) of this article believe(s) that this choice provides evidence of a desire on the part of Varius, not so much to spare Roman religious sentiment, as to seek, in execution of his religious policy promoting the cult of Elagabal, to associate his god with *paredroi*, or ritual partners, well known to the Romans and respected by them. Germane to this belief is the statement, immediately before this passage, that Varius had chosen Caelestis as a second spouse for his god without consideration of the fact that she had been – long before, at the time of the Carthaginian wars – the greatest adversary of Rome. But, says this article, since the time of Severus, whom Varius sought to emulate, and of Julia Domna, who related that goddess to her own Syro-Phoenician cult (that of Elagabal), there was no longer a defeated Carthage, but a defeated Rome, succumbing to the Orient.

The third mention of **A** in this article (p. 128, text) concerns, initially, the identification of the other goddess on a plinth as Athena. It occurs just after a quotation from Herodian's passage (5.6.3) alleging that Varius said he had to find a second wife for Elagabal, because Pallas was too warlike. (This assertion of Herodian's is the object of subsequent refutation by Frey, arguing on the basis of the iconography of **A**.[16]) Quoting Studniczka's statement (*MKDAIRA* 16, p.123 n.1) that "[the goddess] on the left is made identifiable as Pallas by [her] Aegis and the crest of [her] helmet," this article goes on to assert, regarding Varius: "He was not at all a warlike ruler – indeed he was put to shame by the *deus invictus* in whom he believed – but not for that reason did he make the Roman Palladion the concubine of his god, but rather because he wanted to make himself comprehensible to the Romans. It occurred to him, in his folly, to confound his supreme god with that of the Romans, giving [Jupiter] new life, and introducing [Elagabal] into the western world."

12. Strong, Eugenia, ***La Scultura Romana da Augusto a Costantino***, Alinari, Firenze, 1926, p. 310-312; § 4. ***Rilievi romani con rappresentazioni del Cono di***

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[16] Frey, Martin. *Untersuchungen zur Religion und zur Religionspolitik des Kaisers Elagabal. Historia. Zeitschrift für Alte Geschichte. Einzelschriften*. Heft 62. 1989. p. 52. text & n. 4; p. 53. text & n. 1. reviewed below.

Emesa, di Sol e di Tauroboliu; a) ***Il rilievo di Elagabalo*** (figg. 188-189) = ***Roman Sculpture from Augustus to Constantine***, Hacker Art Books, New York, 1971, p 307-308, & Pl. xciv.

Characterising A not only as a notable work of art, but one which serves to illustrate the contact between Roman ideas and a famous Oriental cult, Ms Strong goes on to describe it. She notes how the sacred stone that it depicts was brought by Varius to Rome, and identifies the goddesses to either side of that idol as Athena and Juno, their hands gently poised over the stone, forming a new Capitoline triad, with *Sol invictus* (another name for Elagabal) taking the place of Jupiter.

Referring obliquely to Studniczka's irate rhetorical outburst, discussed above, she implicitly dissents from it, saying that this scene is not simply the product of the caprice of a young fanatic, of a 'shameless rascal from Syria,' who, 'dishonouring the name and throne of the Antonines,' dared 'to force the Gods of Rome' (here she offers a reading of Studniczka's ambiguous simile:) 'as common mortals into the service of his Kaaba.'

Rather, she says, it holds for us "a much deeper significance, for it is the first time that the free Pagan divinities of ancient Greece and Rome are brought into direct subordination to a foreign Deity. Already on the altar of the Arch at Benevento we saw the old Capitoline Triad handing over the symbols of power to the Roman Emperor. But now they have neared by a mighty step the period of their complete eclipse."

Passing on to the other figures on the capital, Ms Strong remarks that the image of Victoria sacrificing a bull had become familiar during the empire, after its appearance in the sculpture group of Mithra Tauroctonus. With reference to the figure of Tellus, she limits herself to mentioning its likeness to that on "the armour of Augustus," without invoking or referring to the use made by Studniczka of this comparison.

Of the sculptural technique, she says that it "clearly declares its date," but that the composition is still animated and sustained. "The relief is deeply undercut, and the figures stand out boldly from the dark groovelike shadows." The eagle is masterfully sculpted. "The goddesses are nobly conceived figures, grandly posed and draped. Each stands, in true Roman fashion, on a little pedestal, in imitation of statues in the round."

13. Strong, Eugenia, ***Art in Ancient Rome***, 1929, II, p. 148.

A is referred to briefly in this text, in the context of emphasising the role of religion in new construction in Rome, during the relevant period. Purveying, unattributed, the claim (for which there is no evidence) that Varius took the name Elagabalus from "the stone of which he was the priest," Ms Strong attributes to his reign "the remains of a large temple precinct constructed on the grandiose plan characteristic of the period on the north-east side of the Palatine. This is possibly itself the Temple of the Sun erected to house the black stone of Emesa...To one of the columns of its precinct belonged, we may conjecture, the capital ...[**A**]... which shows the stone guarded by the Capitoline Juno and Minerva...The temple seems to have been rededicated by Severus Alexander ... to ... Jupiter Ultor ..."

There are two points in this passage that advance beyond Ms Strong's earlier, fuller treatment of A. The first is her view of the role of the two goddesses on plinths as guardians of the stone. This might, because of the way Minerva holds her spear, conceivably apply to her, but seems unlikely in the case of her counterpart, whose hypothetical identification as Juno Ms Strong here states as certain. The second is her mention of the theory that the temple in question was rededicated after Varius' death to Jupiter Ultor by Alexander Severus. This refers, though here without attribution or explanation, to an hypothesis put forward by Bigot in 1911.[17] It is the first echo of this hypothesis in the literature concerning **A**; one which will not be heard again till that hypothesis is cited in greater detail, and with some error, by Castagnoli, in 1979. I shall consider that hypothesis when reviewing Castagnoli's contribution to this discussion.

14. Cook, Stanley A., ***The Religion of Ancient Palestine in the Light of Archaeology***, British Academy, London, 1930, p. 159-160.

This text, to which one is referred by Mercklin's bibliography, does not specifically mention the column capitals that constitute the object of this enquiry. Rather, it discusses the nature and nomenclature of the god Elagabal, and of the sacred stone whereby that god was represented. Using coins of various reigns as examples, Cook describes the stone itself, adding (to the sum of its characteristics that have already been cited from other sources in the present monograph) that the baetyl is sometimes represented with a star marked upon it. With respect to the emperor most closely associated with this idol, he repeats as fact the supposition, common among modern historiographers, but unsupported by the ancient sources, that Varius "assumed the name of the deity whom he incarnated," and goes on to mention that the Graeco-Roman form Heliogabalus involved a subtle change to

[17] *BCAR* 39, 1911.

indicate his solar affinity. The name Ela-gabal is translated (presumably from some Semitic language, though Cook does not say from which) as 'the god mountain,' and he remarks: "the very persistence of this archaic type of god is in itself noteworthy."

15. Rumpf, Andreas, ***Einleitung in die Altertumswissenschaft***, 4 Ed., II, 3, Teubner, Leipzig, 1931, p. 103-104; § XX. ***Das Dritte Jahrhundert n. Chr., Skulptur.***

In the context of a discussion of the evolution of Roman sculptural style in the third century A.D., Rumpf proposes that the figured column capitals from the Baths of Caracalla (also referred to by Studniczka towards the end of his article. reviewed above) constitute a crude continuation of the late Antonine style. This proposition is supported by the stylistically related capital from the Forum with the stone of Elagabal. Here, the decorative style of the Severan period, itself developed out of the linear Flavian style, lives on.

16. Goethert, Friedrich Wilhelm, ***Trajanische Friese***, in *Jahrbuch des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts*, 51, 1936, p. 72-81, esp. p. 80, text & n. 2.

This article focuses on the iconography of Victoria, or Nike, as represented in various examples of Trajanic and later architectural sculpture reliefs. There are two main attitudes: Victoria sacrificing a bull, and Victoria hanging a garland of laurel leaves on an incense-burner. Both are illustrated by several examples, reproduced in various plates and insets to the text.

While earlier Greek and Roman iconography always shows Victoria fully clothed, these images of her in sacrificial attitude depict the goddess bare from the waist up. In keeping with her energetic pose - thrust forward, with one knee pressing down hard on the bull's spine, her other foot clamping down its restless rear hooves – and perhaps as a result of adopting that pose, her drapery has fallen from her shoulder, freeing her arms to pull back the bull's head by one horn, and plunge a dagger into its throat.

In her other, far more tranquil attitude, Victoria, fully draped, genuflects before a tall incense burner, shaped like a large candelabrum, and prepares to bedeck it with a string of laurel leaves.

A is mentioned in the context of discussing the continued replication in Roman sculptural relief of these iconographic types, from the time of their earliest documented appearance, in a frieze of the Basilica Ulpia, datable to Trajan, through the Hadrianic and Antonine periods, and into the Severan, of whose contribution to the series this column capital is cited as exemplary.

Victoria sacrificing a bull

Victoria decrating an incense burner

In a footnote referring to Studniczka's article, reviewed above, Goethert remarks, "for the sake of completeness," on a "pasticcio with Nike bedecking a candelabrum," to be found in a sketchbook attributed to Andreas Coner.[18] Goethert does not explain why he appends this reference to his citation of Studniczka's article.

Could it be that he is indicating, indirectly, that he thinks the incense-burner-tending Nike of Coner's sketchbook may correspond to a figure to be found on the putative second column capital, whose existence was first suggested by Wissowa, as forming a complementary counterpart to A? If so, Goethert would be proposing that the sacrificial image of Victoria depicted on A is normally found in conjunction with another image of her in the incense-burner-tending attitude, a proposition that would not seem unreasonable, based on the series of examples cited in this article. But what I have just said is only speculation, based on an unverifiable interpretation of Goethert's intentions, as conceivably reflected in the somewhat unusual introduction of this otherwise totally extraneous element into his footnote citing Studniczka.

The other aspect of Goethert's article that has a rather more direct bearing on the column capital(s) here in question, is his reference, at various points of his article, to the presence of griffins, in close iconographic relationship with the images of Victoria there described. This is a motif to which Mercklin will draw further attention, in his study of A and its companion artefacts.

17. Altheim, Franz, ***Sol Invictus***, *Die Welt als Geschichte*, 5, 1939, p. 292, text, & n.7.

The first of Altheim's two texts referring to A is an article whose theme is "the triumph of the East over the Ancient World and the West."[19] In this context, he cites Varius' transport of the sacred stone of Elagabal to Rome, and his construction of a magnificent temple to that god. "One of its surviving column capitals shows an image of the wedding of the sacred stone with Minerva and the goddess of the city of Carthage." This reference, though brief, goes well beyond his cited source, Studniczka, in suggesting that the sacred stone's wedding (or marriage) to both goddesses was simultaneous, as later argued by Frey (see below).

18. Altheim, Franz, ***Die Krise der Alten Welt***, 3, 1943, Ch. I, ***Der Aufstieg des Ostens***, p. 30-37, text, & Ch. II, ***Die Östlichen Kaiser***, p. 87-96 esp. p. 88, text & n. 58 (p.214).

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[18] *BSR* 2, 1904, p. 99.

[19] "***Der Sieg des Ostens über Antike und Abendland***," p.290.

The second of Altheim's texts referring to **A** is somewhat fuller, and discusses its religious background in much greater detail. Mercklin's bibliography cites only p. 33 of this text, but the whole of the passage from p. 30 to p. 37 is relevant to understanding the background of the column capitals in question. In the context of a wider exposition, concerning Oriental cultural, political and religious influence on Rome in the 2nd and 3rd centuries A.D., Altheim discusses the ancient religion of the city of Emesa, whence sprang both the sun god Elagabal, and his high priest, Varius. The most important point emerging from these pages is the enormous complexity of the religious map, as it were, of Syria, and of the whole Near East, during the period in question.

It emerges that the cult of the god Elagabal, far from being universal in the Roman Near East, was unique to the city of Emesa and its hinterland, and that it was something of an archaic survival, in the context of the forms that native religion had taken there, by the lifetime of the emperor who promoted that god's cult in Rome. It is not necessary in this monograph, because not strictly germane to understanding the role the column capitals in question may have played in Rome, where they were found, to go into the intricacies of the interplay among differing cults and deities in Syria, described in some detail by Altheim. It is enough here to note that the *interpretatio* of Elagabal as Jupiter is not the only syncretistic equivalence to which that deity is liable, since he was also closely associated, in the minds of many, with, among other gods, Dionysus.

A second relevant passage in this book, p. 87-96, not cited by Mercklin, relates to the rise and fall of the second sequence of the Severan dynasty, that embodied by Varius and his cousin Alexander. Altheim makes much of the aforementioned Dionysian *interpretatio* of Elagabal to explain the alleged behaviour of his high priest. His only direct reference in this passage (p.88) to the column capitals in question merely repeats, verbatim, his earlier assertion, in the previously published article referred to above, identifying the scene depicted on **A** as that of the (simultaneous) wedding (or marriage) of Elagabal to Minerva and the goddess of Carthage. Again his cited source is Studniczka.

19. Klauser, Theodor, ***Baal*** II, *Reallexicon für Antike und Christentum*, (*RLAC*) I, 1950, p. 1089 (text) & p. 1111-13 (bibliography).

While this lexicon article, in the context of a discussion of Elagabal, among other examples of Baalim, refers, both in its text and in its bibliography, to Studniczka's article concerning **A**, it does not directly mention or describe this, or the other related artefacts. It does, however, provide extensive reference to the literature up to its date concerning the study of that god.

20. L'Orange, Hans Peter, ***Apollon-Mithras***, in *Jahreshefte des Österreichischen archäologischen Institutes in Wien*, 39, *Camillo Praschniker in memoriam*, 1952, p. 80.

In the context of discussing how, in the 3rd century A.D., traditional Graeco-Roman gods and goddesses are iconographically represented as oriental deities, L'Orange cites A as an example: "And on a column capital apparently from the temple of Elagabal on the Palatine, (the Eliogabalum [*sic*]) from the Roman Forum, the Emesene Baal-Baetyl with the Eagle of Jupiter (or of Baal?) has taken the place of Jupiter in the Capitoline triad."

21. Picard, Charles, in *Karthago, revue trimestrielle d'archéologie africaine*, 3, 1951-2, p. 107.

Whilst discussing various types of images on column capitals, Picard mentions eagles, citing Studniczka's article regarding an example found in the Roman Forum, "where the symbol of an eagle, that of the stone of Emesa, attracted (one's) attention, attesting to Syrian influence on the ornamental grammar of the Western capital (Rome) in the time of Elagabalus."

22. Lambertz, M., Varius Avitus (10), in ***Real Encyklopädie der Classischen Altertumswissenschaft*** (***RE***), 8-A1, 1955, col. 391-404, esp. col. 398, line 56-, & col. 399, line 2.

The reference to A in Lambertz's entry on Varius in this encyclopaedia contains a typographical or editing error: Studniczka's article, in *MKDAIRA* 16, 1901, is attributed to Hülsen, while the volume and page numbers of Hülsen's own article, in *MKDAIRA* 17, 1902, are appended to this misattribution. This garbled reference is set in the context of a previous assertion to the effect that, as well as two temples to Elagabal, one on the Palatine, another by Porta Maggiore in the vicinity of the Amphitheatrum Castrense, this emperor (Varius) seems to have built a small temple in the Forum, in honour of Elagabal and Vesta. The misattributed reference to Studniczka's article in *MKDAIRA* 16, 1901, and the correct reference to Hülsen's article in *MKDAIRA* 17, 1902, together with another to Pernier's article ***Heliogabalus***, in Ruggiero's *Dizionario Epigrafico*, 1922 (all reviewed above), are clearly, by their placement just after this assertion, meant to suggest that the cited texts support it. While that of Hülsen does, and that of Pernier follows Hülsen, and indeed enlarges on his theory, Studniczka's (here misattributed to Hülsen) does not. It will be remembered that, though Studniczka does, without attributing it to Hülsen (or Wissowa), air Hülsen's (and Wissowa's) theory, regarding the possible existence on that Forum site of a third temple, or of a chapel to Elagabal, inserted into another godhead's (Vesta's?) temple, he stops short of subscribing to it, and indeed explicitly states his preference for the theory of a Palatine provenance.

In what seems to be further promotion of his assertion, regarding the existence of such a third temple, Lambertz goes on to say that the fragments of A were found next to the Temple of Vesta. While technically consonant with his cited sources (insofar as the eastern side of the Temple of Castor, the findspot indicated by Hülsen, faces that of Vesta) this seems tendentious, since it displaces the topical relativity in question from that textually indicated by Hülsen, to another only topographically implied. According to Lambertz, Hülsen attributes the provenance of the capital to a miniature temple (*Tempelchen*), which the emperor dedicated to Elagabal and Vesta on the occasion of his marriage to the Vestal virgin, Aquilia Severa. It will be recalled by the reader of the present monograph that it is not Hülsen, but Pernier, enlarging on Hülsen's theory, who proposes the connexion between the construction of such a miniature structure, "una edicola," and the marriage of Varius to the Vestal.

This cumulus of error makes one wonder how closely Lambertz consulted his sources.

23. Bartoli, Alfonso, ***Tracce di Culti Orientali sul Palatino Imperiale***, in *Atti della Pontificia Accademia Romana di Archeologia*, Serie III: *Rendiconti*, Vol. 29, Fasc. 1-4, Anno Accademico 1956-1957, p. 13-49, esp. p. 30-31.

Bartoli's agenda, in this passage forming part of a wide-ranging article discussing archaeological evidence for the presence of Oriental cults on the Palatine, is to support the theory that the Palatine temple of Elagabal, referred to in ancient historiography, was located on the site known as the *Vigna Barberini*. In support of this thesis, he adduces Studniczka's article, reviewed above, concerning the column capital here designated as A.

According to Bartoli, Studniczka's article deals with "three figural column capitals ... one of which Studniczka selects for examination, on account of its singular representation [of] a pointed stone with a more or less circular base, probably an aerolith, supported by an eagle perched on a trapezoid covered by a cloth. Studniczka attributes this capital" (and therefore the other two that have no interest for Bartoli) "to the temple of Elagabal on the Palatine, because he has placed together the reverses of coins that represent a temple with the architectonic precinct of the area characteristic of the *Vigna Barberini*."

There are two misrepresentations here. The first, relatively minor, is that Studniczka does not even mention the other two capitals, but writes only of A. The second, more serious, is that Studniczka does not at any point associate the temples depicted on the coin reverses in question with the site of the *Vigna Barberini*. It will be remembered that Studniczka limits himself to assenting to (or at least to not dissenting from) the assignation of that temple by a passage in the *Historia*

Augusta to the site of a putative *aedes Orci* on the Palatine, whose location is otherwise unknown. As has been seen, and will be further discussed below, the very existence of such an *aedes Orci* is in question, since its textual source may be corrupted by a mistranscription of some other, different phrase.[20]

Bartoli goes on further to argue his case from one of the coins depicted in the plates accompanying Studniczka's article, that designated as Plate XII, N° 5, which shows the composite idol of the sacred stone and eagle on top of an altar inside a temple, depicted independently of its surrounding precinct. According to Bartoli, the clear correspondence of the image on this coin to that on A demonstrates that A belongs to the temple of Elagabal. "At the same time we acquire, with the comparison effected by Studniczka, the certainty that the coin placed next to the representation on the plate certainly shows the temple of Elagabal in the *Vigna Barberini*."

5

Strudniczka's Plate XII N° 5

There are at least three problems with this argument. First, the coin to which Bartoli refers depicts the temple of Elagabal in Emesa, not that in Rome. Secondly, it is not clear what Bartoli means by "the comparison effected by Studniczka," (*il raffronto fatto dallo Studniczka*). Studniczka does not effect any comparison at all, at least not explicitly in words, between the two coins, one of Varius, the other of Alexander, that show an "architectonic precinct," as opposed to a temple on its own, independently of any such precinct. He does compare diverse images of the icon of Elagabal on various coins with that depicted on the capital, but it is hard to see how any such purely iconographic comparison of various depictions of the stone could help one to locate the temple of Elagabal in Rome. Thirdly, even supposing the topographically relevant comparison to which Bartoli refers is not made by Studniczka, but merely rendered possible for oneself to perform – as has

[20] Cf. the discussion of this matter in the critical reviews of Studniczka's and Coarelli's relevant articles in this study.

indeed been done, above, in this monograph's discussion of Studniczka's text - by virtue of the presence on Studniczka's Plate XII of images of coins and of the capital; and even supposing that such a 'do-it-yourself' comparison convinces one – as indeed it does – that the image on the capital is that of Elagabal, and that it corresponds to images of that same god on coins, including those that place it in a temple setting, and that the temples depicted on the coins of Plate XII, both those with "architectonic precincts" and those without, are all temples of Elagabal; nothing in the iconography itself, nor in the comparisons one may perform between and among any of the images reproduced on Plate XII, leads one to locate the Palatine temple of Elagabal at the site of the *Vigna Barberini.*

It is a pity that Bartoli should have employed such an ill-constructed argument in favour of his thesis, particularly since that thesis is most likely correct, though not for the reasons he adduces. But this is not the place to discuss the solid arguments that do exist in favour of locating the Palatine temple of Elagabal on the site of the *Vigna Barberini.* That is a separate, though closely related subject, and one that is large and complex enough to deserve thorough treatment in its own right.[21] Although Bartoli was writing before the excavations undertaken by *l'École Française de Rome* between 1985 and 1999, which have provided further evidence in favour of that thesis, he could nevertheless have argued more successfully on quite other grounds, even given the state of knowledge in his time. In particular, he could have based his argument on answering, or merely asking, two questions raised above, in the present monograph's review of Studniczka's article:

Where, on the Palatine hill, was there, in the Severan period, a flat space, not otherwise occupied, large enough to accommodate such a huge building complex as that depicted on these coins of Elagabalus and Alexander?

Where, on the Palatine hill, is there a vantage point from which such a building complex could have been observed at the precise angle implied by each of these coins?

Consideration of these questions would have led him with less trouble to the same conclusion: that the Palatine temple dedicated to Elagabal by Varius, and rededicated to Jupiter Ultor by Alexander, was almost certainly located at the site of the *Vigna Barberini.* With Bartoli's article, the second stage of discussion concerning the artefacts here under consideration comes to a close. The next contribution to it, that of Mercklin, alters its terms, insofar as it introduces new materials.

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[21] In *The site of the Palatine Temple of Elagabal: a topographical approach to the question*, yet to be published.

Third stage of the discussion, 1962-2002:

24. Mercklin, Eugen von, ***Antike Figuralkapitelle***, Deutsches Archäologisches Institut, 1962, § N° 383, p. 154-156, & illustrations Nos. 729-736.

Mercklin's text is an entry in a monographic encyclopaedia, entirely devoted to the subject of ancient column capitals with figured sculptural reliefs. It is the first, and so far only, text to discuss directly and in detail the other column capitals and fragments allegedly related to **A**. Mercklin designates the artefacts under consideration with lower case boldface letters. The same designation has been adopted here, although in upper case, since this seems more appropriate in English.

The heading to Mercklin's article, in keeping with its encyclopaedic nature, gives first the location of the artefacts under consideration – Rome, the Forum Museum – then lists them in two groups: column capitals (**A-C**), and fragments (**D-F**). It concludes with a reference to their possible origin – the Temple of Elagabal on the Palatine – followed by a question mark. This note of caution with respect to the question of their origin is worth remarking at this point, since it will assume an unexpected degree of importance when this monograph comes to discuss the state of the question regarding these artefacts in 2002.

An introductory paragraph in Mercklin's text refers to **A**'s generic nature: that of a column capital reconstituted out of two matching fragments; to its findspot: in the case of both fragments, by the eastern long side of the Temple of Castor in the Roman Forum; and to those fragments' earliest published descriptions: Jordan's of 1873 for the lower half alone; Hülsen's of 1902 for the reconstituted whole.

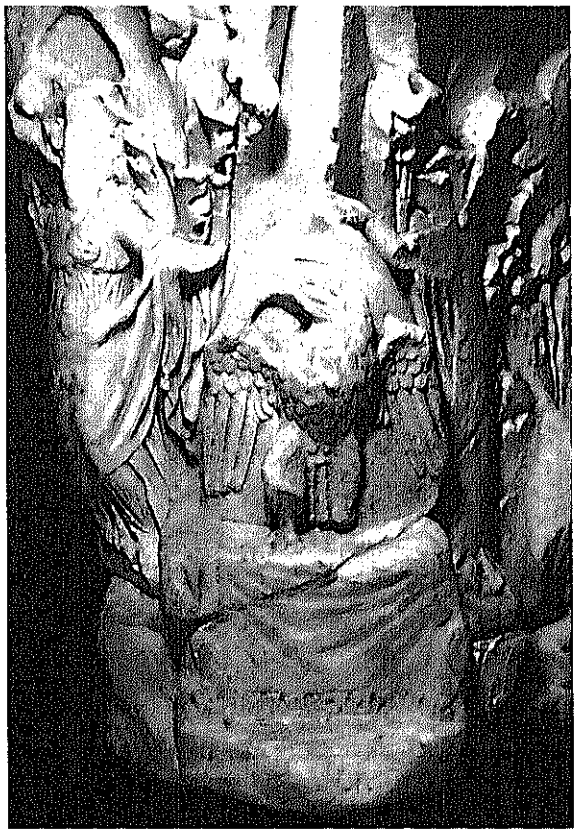
It is perhaps significant for understanding Mercklin's approach to the subject, and in particular his account of its early bibliography, that Studniczka's article of 1901, whose publication preceded that of Hülsen's, and which is far longer and more detailed, is mentioned in this introductory paragraph only to point out its alleged error in locating the findspot of the upper half of **A** in the excavation of the Regia, rather than in that of the Temple of Castor. [22]

This is followed by characterisation of the stone type as *marmor lunense*, and by its dimensions.[23] Mercklin notes that the sometimes splintered surface of the capital shows a few traces of coarse work done with a tooth-chisel (*Zahneisen*).[24] There is a wolf-hole (*Wolfsloch*),[25] and various dowel-holes (*Dübellöcher*),[26] some

[22] Initially alleged by Hülsen, reviewed above.
[23] *Which I have confirmed, and are published in the introduction to this monograph.*
[24] A chisel with teeth, rather than a single cutting edge.
[25] A hole chiselled in the quarry, for the purpose of lifting and transport.

with drainage canals (*Güsskanäle*).[27] See the photographs of the backside (δ) and the underside (ζ) of **A**, in the introduction to this monograph (Fascicle 1), for images of these various holes and canals.[28]

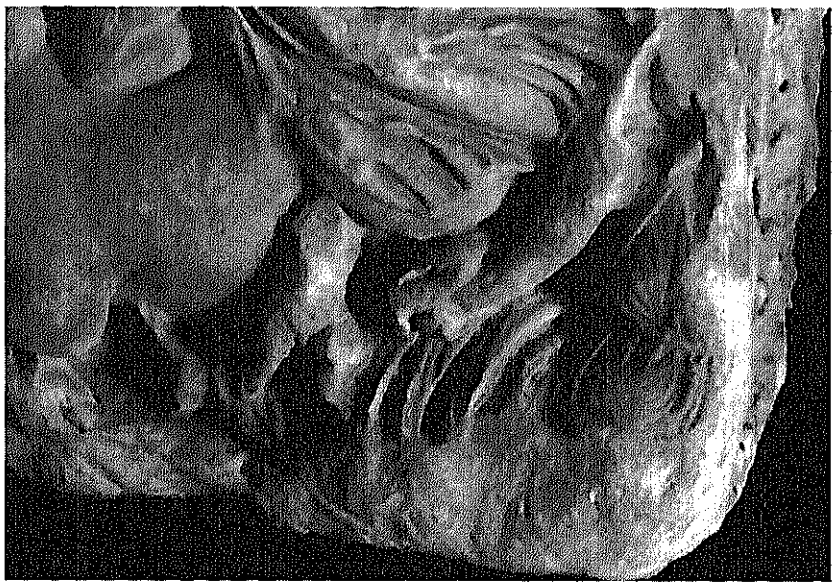
Following this introductory paragraph, comes the bibliography on which most of the preceding critical review has been based.



Elagabal flanked by goddesses.

[26] For fixing the stone to other surfaces.
[27] For the flow of lead, etc.
[28] I am indebted to Dr. Herrad Heselhaus of Tübingen University, for clarification of this highly specialised German terminology.

Entering now into an iconographic description of **A**, Mercklin remarks that the eagle, standing with a fluttering ribbon in his beak before the beehive-shaped stone of "Jupiter or Sol of Emesa," may well have been adorned with gold. Mentioning the platform with lion's paw feet, draped with a fringed cloth, upon which both stone and eagle stand, he notes, quoting Studniczka, that the goddesses on plinths to either side appear to be "caressing" the fetish. Identifying these figures respectively as Minerva, on the basis of her helmet and aegis, and the goddess of Carthage, Astarte-Juno, "plausibly on [that of] tradition" ("*aus der Überlieferung wahrscheinlich zu erschliessen*"), he passes on to Victoria, sacrificing a bull, "in the usual attitude," and Tellus with a cornucopia, and a naked infant on her right shank.



The infant on Tellus' right shank.

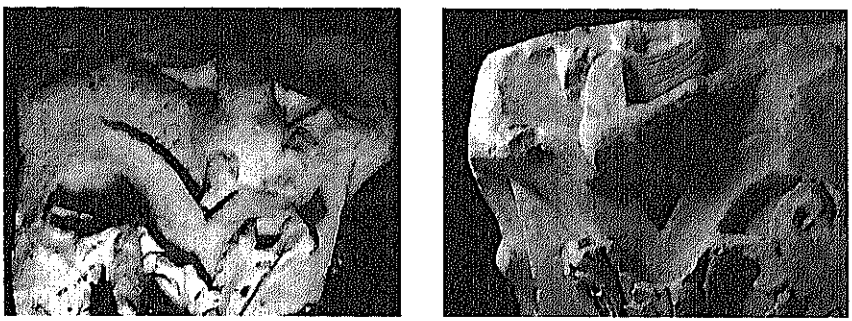
This location of the infant corresponds exactly with that observable on **A**. It is remrkable that it took nearly ninety years, since Jordan's initial, inaccurate location of this infant (on Tellus' feet, 1873), and nearly eighty since Wissowa's brave, but unsuccessful, try at improving thereupon (on her lap, 1883), for someone finally correctly to describe its precise location with respect to Tellus. Assuming the infant did not move since it was first spotted by Jordan, one can only wonder what prevented him, Wissowa, Studniczka, and Hülsen, followed by six further decades of classical scholars, from seeing what was there before their eyes.

Having thus effectively confirmed Studniczka's identifications of the deities concerned (though he does not credit Studniczka therefor), Mercklin goes on to discuss in some detail an aspect of this capital that was, until his contribution to its discussion, relatively neglected: that of the rest of its sculptural relief, apart from the figures of Elagabal and the four goddesses.

On the side here called α, acanthus leaves emerge from behind Minerva. A helix and a volute, its curl snapped off, spring up to her right. The shattered remains of the protome of a feathered lion-griffin, for whose identification Mercklin cites Studniczka, occupy the cleavage between helix and volute. A similar arrangement, with another griffin, occupies the corresponding place on the broad side (β). This helix is mirrored by another, emerging from behind the figure of Tellus.

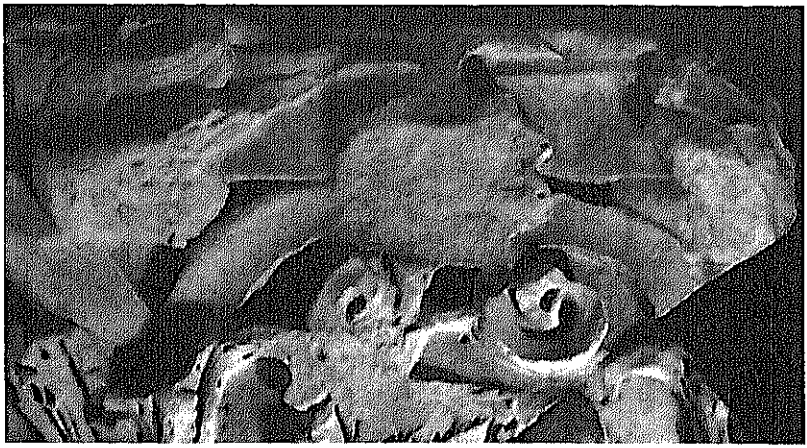
All that is left of a large acanthus flower, which may have formed part of a wreath around a bust, set above the point where the two helices meet, is the stump of its base. In the corner space between the right helix and the abacus, the flat remains of a protuberance suggest another griffin there, corresponding to that on the left.

On the right narrow side (γ) of the capital, a corner leaf and an acanthus leaf are separated by what seems to be a vertical stem. Mercklin states that the back side (δ) was "obviously smoothed out afterwards." A band about 20cm wide at the top was crudely chiselled. Drawing attention to the two dowel holes, whose exact dimensions (8.5 x 8.5 x 7) he gives, and to the diagonal split that runs between them, he thinks they bear witness to a late antique reworking of this capital to adapt it to reuse as part of the structure of a roof. In support of this conjecture, he cites an article concerning the weatherproofing of the Imperial Fora.[29]



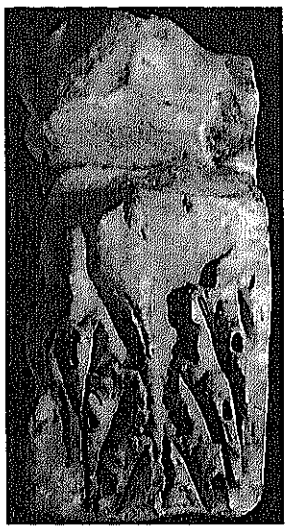
The griffins on sides α and β of A.

[29] Ricci. *Per l'isolamento degli avanzi dei Fori Imperiali*. *B.d'A.* 5. 1911. Abb.36.



Stump of an acanthus flower

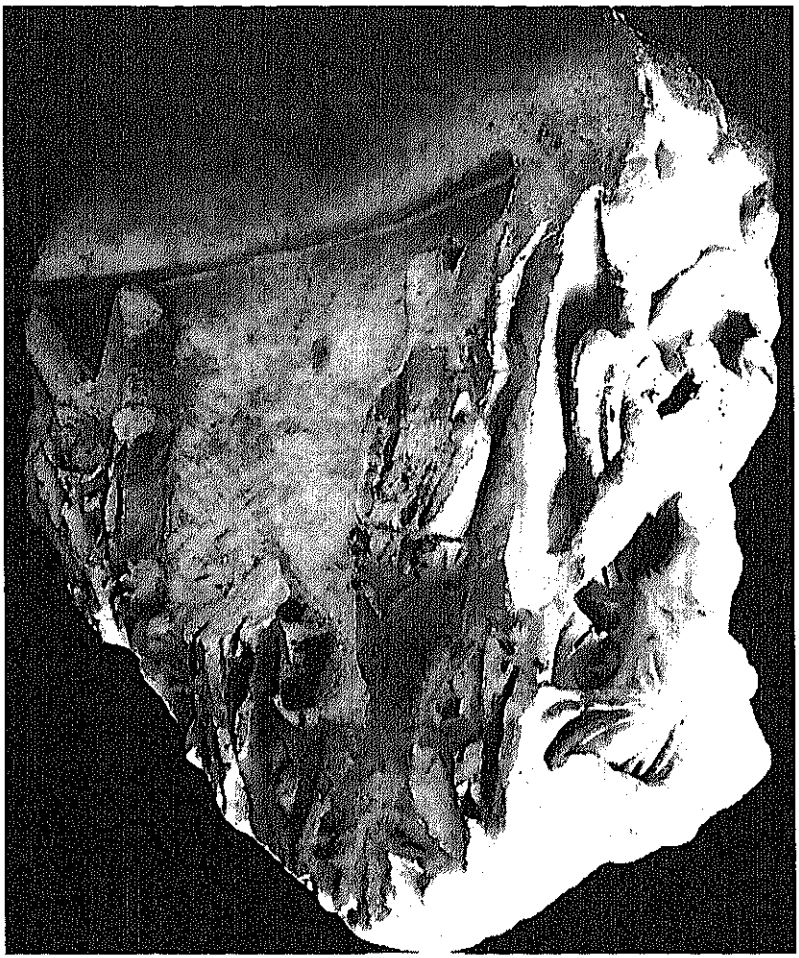
Helix behind Tellus



Sides γ and δ of A

From this point on, Mercklin describes and discusses, for the first time in the academic literature, the rest of the capitals and fragments, other than A.

B is identified as a fragment of a column capital, of Luni marble, whose dimensions are 63.5cm in height, 59.5cm in breadth at the widest point, and 26cm in depth. Worked with the tooth-chisel, the surface has several dowel-holes, some with drainage-canals. The wolf-hole is cross-shaped, for unknown reasons on which Mercklin speculates, citing Gerkan as a source. [30]



Capital **B**

[30] Mercklin, op. cit., p. 155.

Then Mercklin goes on to assert that **B** is clearly one of "several fragments of similar workmanship" that Hülsen relates to **A**. ("*Das Stück gehört wohl zu den „mehreren Fragmenten gleicher Arbeit" die Hülsen a. O. 67 zum vorigen Kapitell* (**A**) *nennt.*") [31]

This is slightly inaccurate. It will be remembered that what Hülsen says, with respect to this matter, is that he was told, by Signor Boni, "that yet further pieces of the same workmanship were found in the vicinity." ("*...wass mir Herr Boni mündlich mitteilte, dass noch mehrere Fragmente gleicher Arbeit in der Nähe gefunden sein.*") [32] Thus, Mercklin's grouping of these three capitals together, if it is based solely on an invocation of the alleged authority of Hülsen's remark, rests merely on hearsay, here reported imprecisely, and lacks any explanation of how these specific pieces, **B** and **C**, are to be identified as those referred to by Hülsen, or indeed by Signor Boni.

Since this is the first time, in any published record of the discussion of these artefacts, that **B** and **C** are identified as such, or described in any detail, one might reasonably have expected Mercklin to explain more completely on what basis he has grouped them together with **A**. Merely to refer inaccurately to Hülsen's remark, concerning their alleged common findspot, and their perceived similarity of workmanship, masking the fact that the allegation is based on hearsay, and failing to argue on stylistic or iconographic grounds for that perceived similarity, does not seem in keeping with the otherwise thorough and detailed treatment he accords to their description.

Passing on to **B**'s iconography, Mercklin identifies a figure on the "right narrow side," (γ). It is Victoria, sacrificing a bull, as on **A**. Large parts of her nude upper body, and all of her head, have broken off, and the feathers of her wings have flaked off. Her lower body is draped. Her left knee presses down on the neck of the bull, whose lower body is missing.

Before her (by which Mercklin presumably means to her left, observer's right) a leaf rises up, closely adhering to the calathus. Behind her (to her right, observer's left), a caulis with a furrowed stem, and a calyx with two acanthus leaves, grow out of the helix and volute. Above, between these, there are traces of wings, possibly those of a griffin, set alongside the corner. On this corner, at the very bottom, Mercklin thinks he sees the outline of the shoulder, and the trace of the left arm, of a reclining figure. This figure could be the counterpart to Tellus on **A** (as predicted by Wissowa, though Mercklin does not mention that prediction).

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[31] Mercklin, op. cit., p. 155; also, same page, a similar assertion with relation to **C**.
[32] Hülsen, reviewed above, p. 67 n. 2.

At the upper end of the helix, there is a peg-hole (*Stiftloch*) in a smooth round surface. Hereto, as on C, a small relief bust could have been affixed, perhaps the one that can be seen in illustration 735 from Mercklin's text, lying beside the capital, which disappeared from its storeroom in the Forum sometime after 1924 (before which, presumably, the photograph was taken). Its measurements, 6.5 cm x 8.5 cm, survive. It was the bust of a man, with raised forearm, and drapery bunched over his right shoulder. Its relief was intersected by a flat back surface. (This is the missing item, designated as G in the introduction to the present monograph.)

On the front side of B (β) only parts of the right corner leaf and the middle leaf of the lower garland survive. Between these leaves is a pair of caules with the stumps of volute and helix. Above, there are unclear remains of abacus flowers. The now empty middle part of side β is not intact. Possibly something was removed from here, after which the surface was smoothed and reworked, as can be seen on the lip of the calathus. Perhaps this reworking is related to the *damnatio memoriae* of the emperor (Varius), in A.D. 222, a conjecture immediately followed by a reference to a locus in Altheim's *Krise der alten Welt* that is not included in Mercklin's initial bibliography.[33]

It is unclear from this reference itself, as it appears in Mercklin's text, whether the locus referred to in Altheim's work concerns these column capitals, and their possible fate in connection with that of Varius, or merely concerns his *damnatio memoriae*, without mention of these artefacts. Only direct consultation of Altheim's text itself clears up this ambiguity: it makes no reference to these capitals. Lest this observation be considered unduly hypercritical, it should be noted that this reference to Altheim follows the only mention of Varius in the whole of Mercklin's article. An interesting consequence, perhaps unintended, of Mercklin's parsimony, with respect to mentioning Varius, and of his ambiguity, in referring here to Altheim, will be discussed in the context of addressing the state of the question in 2002.

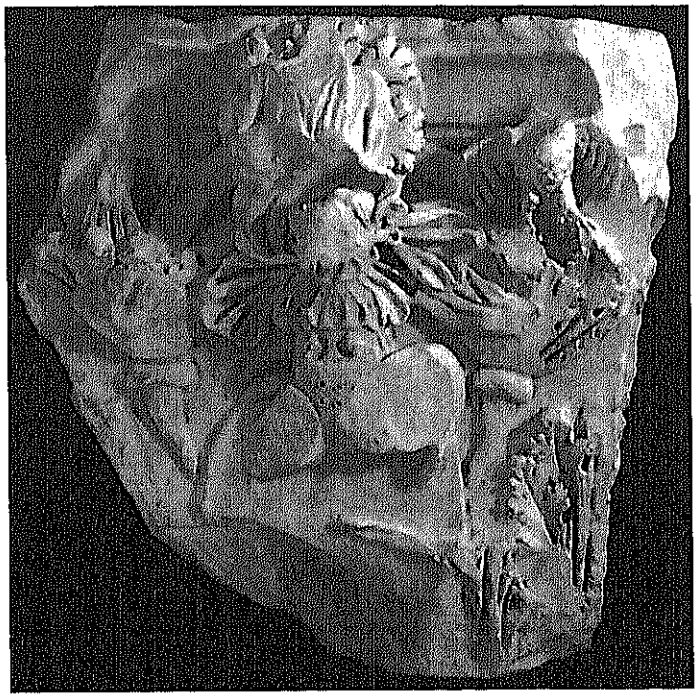
On the left narrow side (α) there is the upper part of a caulis with the stumps of volute and helix. The abacus consists of a wide hollow moulding, with a small rounded quarter-rod (*Viertelrundstab*) above it.

The working of the back side (δ) resembles that of A, with the difference that here the surface is entirely flat and unchiselled. Likewise, there are two dowel holes of similar dimensions, set in an oppositely corresponding relationship to that of A.

C is identified as a fragment of a column capital, of Luni marble, whose dimensions (height: 68.5; width: 65, or 56, if measured along the top; depth: 39)

[33] vol. 3, p.130.

almost correspond to those given in the introduction to this monograph. (It is a rather difficult piece to measure, because of the irregularity of its shape.) The base has been flattened out, and a dowel hole filled. The relief is badly damaged. Mercklin states that it, like B, is one of "several fragments of similar workmanship" mentioned by Hülsen.[34]



Capital C

Of the lower ring of foliage, only a few acanthus leaves, with finely serrated edges, remain to lower right (at the corner of β and γ). As a result, the bases of the caules (on β) are fully visible. Out of the smooth calyx stems with equally smooth collar-rings grow the helices and volutes, which, so far as they can be seen, are like flat ribbons. In each of the cleavages between helix and volute, partly hiding it, stands a headless eagle. The right claw (from its own point of view) of the eagle on the right (from the observer's point of view) rests on the oval stump of what may have been another beast, broken off at the point where it springs into relief.

[34] See discussion of this reference, in review of Hülsen's article, above.

The inner development of the leaf-sculpture is largely hidden by the billowing drapery of a figure occupying the centre of the capital, possibly Sol. The drapery once billowed round and over its head, now missing. Wearing a chiton with a girdle, leaning forward, as if driving, this figure stands on a chariot drawn by two horses. The bow-like shape of the chariot is that of a *pelta*, decorated with volutes, each with a borehole. One can make out, on or by the stumps of the bodies of the horses, the traces of the tail of one and a foreleg of the other. The rear legs are not executed, as the horses spring into relief at mid-torso, from an oval plateau on the capital's surface. In the place of the abacus flower, its lower part covered by the charioteer's billowing drapery, is the headless bust of a female figure, set in an acanthus leaf wreath, 19.5 cm in diameter.

Of the two narrow sides, only γ survives with recognisable sculpture. It has only one volute (at its corner with β), and two helices, that meet in the middle. The abacus consists of a quarter-rod, and a tightly curved hollow moulding.

Mercklin believes that three further small fragments are related to the three column capitals described. Though none fits any of these, he "absolutely feels" that they must have belonged to the same series. ("*An die oben erwähnten Kapitelle passen diese Bruchstücke leider nich an, doch habe ich durchaus den Eindruck, dass sie zur gleichen Serie gehört haben müssen.*")[35] Perhaps the best paraphrase in English of this sentence would be to say that he bases his inclusion of these fragments together with the capitals on a surmise.

Abb. 732 383d e

Fragments D and E

[35] Mercklin, op. cit., p. 156.

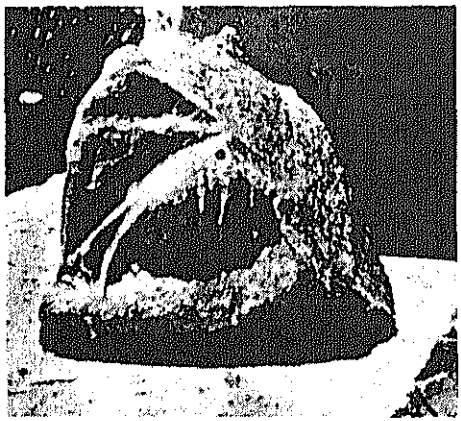


Abb. 733 383f

Fragments F and G

D (illustration 732, left) is a fragment of an abacus flower with the headless bust of a young man in a chlamys; 17.8 x 18 cm.

E (illustration 732, right) is a fragment of an abacus flower with the headless bust of a woman, elaborately draped; 17.5 x 21 cm.

F (illustration 733) is a fragment of a female figure, facing left. In style, it strongly resembles the relief of **A**; 16.2 x 20 cm.

Though Mercklin does not at this point refer again to the lost fragment here labelled **G**, its existence is recorded in an old photograph, here reproduced.
With Mercklin's article, the discussion of the artefacts here under consideration reaches a point from which it has not significantly progressed since Mercklin wrote. Mercklin's is at once the most thoroughly and accurately descriptive of sculptural detail, and the most straightforward, of all the texts so far published, directly devoted to this subject. It does not promote any thesis or agenda, other than to argue the association of the rest of the pieces with **A**, and is free of attitudinising. It constitutes an indispensable reference point for this, and for any subsequent study of these artefacts.

That said, it must be acknowledged that despite the great value of Mercklin's contribution to the discussion of these artefacts, he leaves that discussion with many questions and controversies, some already raised before he wrote, unresolved. Mercklin chose, no doubt in keeping with conventions dictated by the nature of the wider encyclopaedic study, of which the entry on these artefacts is but a part, and the constraints on space such a context imposes, to refrain from discussing in detail certain questions raised by, or implicit in, the findspot, material condition, and iconography of these artefacts.

Perhaps the most important of these unaddressed questions, given the nature and scope of Mercklin's contribution to this discussion, is the lack of sufficient explanation of the basis on which the relationship of **B** and **C** to **A** might be considered as established. This is a question that will be taken up when the present monograph comes to consider the state of the question in 2002.

Since the publication of Mercklin's text, till now, there has been no academic study monographically dedicated to these artefacts. In references to them, found in works on related subjects published after Mercklin's text, diverse questions and controversies concerning them have occasionally emerged, some continuing discussion of points raised before, others raising new points.

25. Milik, J.T., ***Inscription Araméenne en caractères Grecques et une dédication Grecque de Cordoue***, *Syria*, 43, 1966, p. 289-306, esp. p. 305, texte.

Discussing the Greek inscription to Elagabal and other Syrian deities found in Cordova in 1922 (reported by Hiller von Gaertringen and others in *Archiv für Religionswissenschaft*, 22, 1923/24, reviewed above), Milik seeks to date it to the reign of Varius. In support of this he argues that its dedicators treat the triad formed by Elagabal and the Syrian or Carthaginian avatars of Aphrodite and Athena, as imperial divinities. He recalls (without attributing the recollection) that Varius erected a temple on the Palatine to Elagabal, with these two goddesses as his *paredroi*, or ritual partners. "Particularly expressive in this regard is the capital which presents the black stone of Emesa with an eagle before it, flanked by two goddesses." He goes on to cite both Studniczka and Bartoli, reviewed above.

26. Optendrenk, Theo, ***Die Religionspolitik des Kaisers Elagabal in Spiegel der Historia Augusta***, *Habelts Dissertationsdrucke, Reihe Alte Geschichte*, 1969, p. 86, text, & n. 13, (p. 149); p. 88, text, & n. 3 (p. 150).

This monograph discusses several loci of the ***Vita Heliogabali*** in the ***Historia Augusta***, referring in one way or another to Varius' religious policy. It refers twice to A.

At p. 86, text, & n. 13, (p. 149):

Citing **A**, under the locus "*eique templum fecit*," [36] Optendrenk succinctly articulates the state of the question regarding its original location: "Studniczka, who was the first to describe it, ascribes it to the temple on the Palatine; Hülsen, thereafter, to a new Temple of Vesta built by Elagabal" (Varius); "Domaszewski, finally, to the *statio* of the Emesenes, which, already before Elagabal, is attested in the Forum." Of these, he goes on to rule out Hülsen's new Temple of Vesta, "since no such was ever built by Elagabal." Beyond which, he says, "no precise assignment of the capital is possible."

Unfortunately, Optendrenk's succinctness is not matched by accuracy, for at no point in Hülsen's cited article is any mention made of any temple of Vesta, let alone of one built by Varius. It is easy to rule out a theory that has never been advanced. Perhaps Optendrenk confuses Hülsen with Pernier, who does propose a structure built by Varius to celebrate his marriage to the Vestal, though that is not quite the same as building a new temple of Vesta.

In a footnote relating to this passage (n. 13, p. 149), Optendrenk enlarges somewhat on the state of this question. He notes that Cumont, in his *RE* article on Elagabal(us), agrees with Studniczka as to the origin of this capital, while Strong, in ***Art in Ancient Rome***, believes that it comes from a temple built by Varius on the north-east side of the Palatine, later dedicated to Jupiter Ultor by Alexander Severus. (Both these texts are reviewed above.)

At p. 88, text, & n. 3 (p. 150):

With reference to the locus "*ne quis Romae deus nisi Heliogabalus coleretur*," [37] in the context of describing the cult of Elagabal, Optendrenk mentions that its cult image was not fashioned by the hand of man; but was a conical black meteorite, depicted on coins of Elagabalus (Varius) as well as on the column capital mentioned above (in his text). Here the footnote merely cites Studniczka's article (reviewed above).

27. Seyrig, Henri, ***Le Culte du Soleil en Syrie à l'époque romaine, Antiquités Syriennes***, 95, in *Syria*, 48, 1971, p. 337-373, esp. p. 345, text & n.2.

The main thrust of Seyrig's article on the cult of the sun in Roman Syria is to refute the thesis, proposed by Cumont, among others,[38] that Syrian cults in the Hellenistic

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[36] *HA AH* 3.4
[37] *HA AH* 6.7.
[38] Cumont, F., ***La théologie solaire du paganisme romain***. *MAIBL*, 12.2, 1913, p. 478.

period underwent a gradual process of "solarisation," leading to identification of the Syrian sun god, conceived of as supreme, with Zeus, and hence, under the Romans, with Jupiter. As part of his rejection of this thesis, Seyrig also seeks to refute Studniczka's proposal that the divine trio depicted on **A**, consisting of Elagabal on a platform, flanked by two goddesses on plinths, constitutes a version of the Capitoline Triad. Seyrig's argument in this particular respect is based on two main points, one concerning Elagabal himself, the other concerning the goddess to Elagabal's left (observer's right) on side β of **A**.

Regarding Elagabal, Seyrig denies that his granted and manifest possession of sky and solar attributes, in the form of eagle and baetyl, constitutes any form of identification with the supreme deity. Seyrig maintains that, in Syria, Zeus, hence Jupiter, "is and remains the storm god – Hadad, Baalshamin, Téchoub (...) gradually taking on the aspect of a cosmic god, whose power is shown above all in the stars. (...) The sun thus becomes the principal manifestation of the supreme god, and in this way occupies an eminent place in monuments and usage, without however becoming confused with that great god, despite the brief episode of Elagabal." [39]

It would seem, at least to me, that the point argued here depends on a questionable methodology, as indeed does the contrary thesis it is seeking to refute. Both involve descriptions, amounting to ontological characterisations, regarding a phenomenon, that of religious belief or opinion in antiquity, that is very difficult, or even impossible, accurately to subject to such description or ontological characterisation. This is, of course because, quite independently of its antiquity, such belief or opinion is, by definition, an unstable phenomenon, both on account of its existence in (or absence from) the minds of many different people at once, and of its development over time.

In addition to this general problem, which is independent of any given time-frame, one must also reckon with the special problem, introduced by the fact that the phenomenon in question here existed in antiquity. The fragmentary and often fortuitous survival of evidence regarding religious belief and opinion in antiquity means that the modern student of this subject is liable to form a partial or distorted picture of it. Thus, rather than stating categorically that such-and-such was the case, it would be preferable to say that the existing evidence suggests that such-and-such may have been the case.

Regarding the goddess in question, Seyrig denies that she is Juno, an identification that "would have the effect of reconstituting the Capitoline Triad, with the baetyl in the place of Jupiter." Remarking that this, precisely, is what the Romans were

[39] p. 339, item 4.

reluctant to do, he prefers to identify this goddess more probably with Venus, and the triad on A with that of "Sol-Elagabal, Athena, and Aphrodite, that apparently attested by the Cordovan inscription" (discussed in *ARW* 22, 1922, and *Syria* 43, 1966, both reviewed above), which he goes on to discuss in an appendix.

The trouble with this second argument is, of course, that Juno is also identified with Venus-Aphrodite, *via* her identification with Urania Caelestis, the Libyco-Carthaginian *interpretatio* of Venus-Aphrodite; at least according to certain scholars.[40]

This case clearly illustrates the methodological problem affecting all arguments based on syncretism: the logic of *interpretatio*, in the hands of many of its practitioners, involves unstable identifications, and leads eventually to a situation where almost any deity can be interpreted as almost any other. Indeed, as a hypothetical example of just such an interpretation, it is theoretically possible, if one goes back far enough in time, and is prepared to argue by virtue of extended chains of association, involving equivalences between the Western and the Oriental avatars of deities (the latter being usually much earlier attested than their Western counterparts), to assert that Venus is Minerva, since Venus = Aphrodite = Astarte = Allath = Athena = Minerva. The crucial link for this *reductio ad absurdum* of the logic of *interpretatio*, that between Astarte and Allath, is provided (surely with no such perverse intention) by Delivorrias, in his article on Aphrodite in *LIMC*, where he states that both are manifestations of the "Great Goddess" of the Near East.[41]

28. Thompson, G. Ray, ***Elagabalus, Priest-Emperor of Rome***, University of Kansas Dissertation, 1972, p. 156, text & n. 78 (p.175); p. 158, text & n. 84 (p.175).

Though little known, because not commercially distributed, this is the second full-length monographic study of this emperor, with more or less justified pretensions to academic status and historical value, ever to be published. (One cannot count the far better known work by Antonin Artaud, ***Héliogabale ou l'Anarchiste Couronné***, 1934, republished 1970, as a work of any academic or historical value, despite its pretensions to be, in the words of its latter-day editor, "a work of erudition."[42]) Thompson's dissertation therefore follows, in this short series, Hay's ***Amazing***

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[40] Hiller v. Gaertringen, et al. op. cit., p. 118, reviewed above: *"Dieser Gott Elagabal war nun, als Gegenbild der kapitolinischen Dreiheit, mit der karthagischen Juno Caelestis und der griechischen Pallas zu einer Trias verbunden..."*

[41] Delivorrias, Angelos, *Aphrodite*, in *LIMC* II-1, p. 2b.

[42] Artaud, Antonin, *Héliogabale ou l'Anarchiste Couronné*, Vol. 7 in *Oeuvres Complètes*, Nouveau Roman Français, Paris, 1970, p. 179: *"Si Héliogabale est surtout l'oeuvre d'un poète, c'est aussi un ouvrage d'érudition."* A study of this grossly misleading, but widely influential text forms part of *Metamorphoses Varianae*, another section of the group of studies to which this monograph belongs, devoted to documenting and explaining the development of the Varian myth as such.

Emperor, of 1911, whose analogous pretensions it sets out to debunk. It is not, however, itself entirely exempt from criticism, specifically with regard to its two references to the subject here under consideration.

The first, at p. 156, text & n. 78 (p.175), reads as follows: "Yet a third temple, located in the Roman Forum, appears to have been erected in honor of the god Elagabal. Fragments of a sculpted column capital, perhaps from this shrine, have been discovered near the temple of Vesta. The scene portrayed on the capital is the god Elagabal standing between Minerva and the Carthaginian goddess Urania."

The relevant footnote cites Lambertz's *RE* article on Varius, and, correctly attributed, Studniczka's *MKDAIRA* 16, 1901, article on **A**, both reviewed above. It fails, however, to note that Studniczka's article does not necessarily support Lambertz's assertion regarding the existence of such a "third temple," and indeed actively prefers a different location as the likely source of **A**. This raises one's suspicion that Thompson may not have read Studniczka's article very carefully.

That suspicion is greatly increased by the second reference in Thompson's dissertation, at p. 158, text & n. 84 (p.175), to the subject matter here under consideration. It is not a reference to **A** as such, but rather to a closely related subject: the "divine marriage" of Elagabal to Urania: "It was in honor of this marriage that the small temple of Elagabal in the Roman Forum was constructed."

On this occasion, in the relevant footnote, Thompson again cites Lambertz's *RE* article, and the article in *MKDAIRA* 16, 1901, but here misattributes the latter to Hülsen (as does Lambertz). Compounding this error, Thompson seems to suggest, by their placement with respect to his text, that these references support its assertion that the hypothetical "third temple" was built to celebrate the divine marriage of Elagabal with Urania. The reader of the present monograph will recall that neither Studniczka, whose text, although misattributed, is being cited here by Thompson, nor Hülsen, to whom it is misattributed, and with whose own text, in *MKDAIRA* 17, 1902, it may well be confused here, nor yet Lambertz, whose *RE* article's error lies at the root of Thompson's misattribution or confusion, have any of them suggested such an occasion for the construction of this hypothetical "third temple." It is true that Pernier (whom Thompson does not cite at all) suggests it was built to celebrate the marriage of Varius with the Vestal, and it is also true that this earthly marriage has often been associated, both in ancient and modern historiography, with its divine counterpart, but Thompson's appeal to authority, by way of footnote reference, fails to support his thesis here.

29. Barnes, Timothy D., ***Ultimus Antoninorum***, *Bonner Historia-Augusta-Colloquium* (*BHAC*) 10, 1972, p. 53-74, esp. p. 62, n. 48.

Discussing the characterisation of Varius and his alleged (mis)deeds in the *Vita Heliogabali* in the *Historia Augusta*, Barnes argues that, compared to Herodian's treatment of that same subject, "the *HA* can offer a greater wealth of specific detail." Although some of the contexts in which such detail appears are "fictitious or at least dubious (...) the *HA* proffers several additional facts whose truth can be defended." In particular, "the *HA* appears to know the correct motive which underlay Elagabalus' innovations: he was attempting a fusion of all the traditional cults of the Greek and Roman world into a pantheon in which his God of Emesa would occupy the supreme place and others a subordinate rank. (...) An ornamental capital found in the Roman forum ostensibly reflects this ideology, in conformity with which Elagabalus ordered his God to be named first in all public sacrifices." As well as various loci of Herodian and the HA, Barnes cites Studniczka's article, reviewed above.

30. Castagnoli, Ferdinando, ***Su alcuni problemi topografici del Palatino***, *Atti della (Reale) Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei, Rendiconti, Classe di scienze morali, storiche e filologiche*, 34, 1979, 331 ss., esp. p. 332, n. 6

Castagnoli does not actually discuss **A**, or any of the other capitals and fragments here under consideration, but only refers to a passage in Studniczka's article concerning **A**, reviewed above, that is not focused directly on **A** itself, but on the question of the location of the temple from which **A** may originally have come. Because of its relevance to this question, which is one of the most often discussed, with respect to these artefacts, it is worth reviewing here.

In the context of discussing outstanding topographical questions concerning the Palatine, and with particular reference to the site of the monumental complex on its east side (otherwise known as the *Vigna Barberini*), Castagnoli notes that Bigot,[43] on the basis of representations in coins, both of Elagabalus and Alexander Severus, proposed this as the site, both of the temple dedicated by Varius to Elagabal, and of that of Jupiter Ultor, appearing on a coin of Alexander Severus.

Castagnoli's characterisation of Bigot's proposal is erroneous, as regards the evidence Bigot adduces therefor. Bigot does not, in that article, mention any coin of Elagabalus, but rather two of Alexander Severus. One is already familiar to the reader of the present monograph as that discussed by Studniczka in his *MKDAIRA* 16 article concerning **A**. It offers a bird's eye view of a temple that may or may not, according to Bigot, be that of Jupiter Ultor (the legend is indistinct).

[43] *BCAR* 39, 1911.

Fig. 1.

The other shows Jupiter Ultor, clearly designated as such, seated on a throne. Bigot argues that the god on the throne is identical with that shown sitting in the temple on the first coin, thus confirming the temple's identification as that of Jupiter Ultor.

Fig. 2.

Unlike Studniczka (to whose article Bigot does not refer) Bigot does not base his assertion that the site of the two temples is identical on confrontation of one coin of Alexander with another of Elagabalus (that cited by Studniczka as originally published and discussed by Froehner, whom Bigot likewise omits to cite). Rather, Bigot bases his assertion on a combination of topographical and numismatic evidence: he finds that the topography of the *Vigna Barberini* corresponds exactly with that of the temple compound depicted on the coin of Alexander with the bird's eye view of it.

Castagnoli, in a footnote citing Bigot's article, goes on to note that Studniczka had already (before Bigot) "thought to refer the coin of Elagabalus to the temple of Elagabalus, without however proposing any location for it." This much, at least, is accurate. Castagnoli's article goes on to discuss many conflicting hypotheses concerning the *Vigna Barberini*, and other possible locations for the temple of Elagabal. While the details of his argument cannot detain us here, it may be noted

that, on balance, he considers Bigot's thesis to be well founded, and the temple of Elagabal to have occupied the site of the *Vigna Barberini*.[44]

31. Balestrazzi, Elena di Filippo, ***La pompa del magistrato e il "Dio di Emesa,"*** in *Aquileia Nostra*, 56, 1985, col. 338-360, esp. col. 344 text & n.44.

Fig. 1 - *Aquileia, Museo Archeologico. La "pompa del magistrato".*

This article considers a relief sculpture preserved in the Archaeological Museum of Aquileia, showing part of a "*pompa*", or ceremonial procession, with an "*edicola*" or portable shrine, containing an object arguably resembling the baetyl or sacred stone of Emesa. This portable shrine is preceded by an open carriage, transporting two "magistrates" wearing *toga contabulata*, one of whom carries a sceptre, and may be an emperor, perhaps one fulfilling a sacerdotal function with respect to the idol in the portable shrine.

Citing, by way of comparison, the image of the baetyl shown on A, and noting, on the relief in Aquileia, fragmentary traces of a winged figure, which could be an eagle, preceding the open carriage with the magistrates, Ms. Balestrazzi thinks it possible, perhaps even likely, that the idol in the portable shrine is the sacred stone of Emesa. She believes, on the basis of its detail and style, that the Aquileian relief records an actual event in Aquileia, a procession with that stone, presided over by an emperor acting as *sacerdos amplissimus* of its cult. She notes, however, that its portrayal here, half-hidden inside a shrine, carried on the shoulders of human porters, is much less triumphal than depictions of the transport of that same sacred stone, on a cart decked with "parasols," drawn by four horses, on coins of Elagabalus.

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[44] p. 337 ff.

After giving certain detailed information regarding the cult of the stone of Emesa, and that of the sun for which it stands, drawn, among other sources, from the article by Seyrig reviewed above, and noting that sun worship was brought back into favour in Rome by Aurelian, Ms. Balestrazzi goes on to consider the question of the identity of the two "magistrates" in the open carriage. If the idol in the portable shrine is indeed the sacred stone of Emesa, and if the personages are imperial, as well as sacerdotal, "the search for [an emperor] who might be its *sacerdos amplissimus* should be conducted among those who somehow worshipped the stone in the arc of time between Elagabalus and Aurelian, or at least between the Severans and Aurelian." Having previously noted the fact that the figure with a sceptre is clearly more important than the one sitting beside him, she focuses her search on imperial "couples:" an "Augustus" and a "Caesar." She finds among imperial couples with features corresponding to those of the Aquileian "*pompa*," falling within this time-scheme, only three: Caracalla and Geta, Balbinus and Gordian III, and finally Valerian and Gallienus.

One may well wonder why, despite her observation of the difference between the degree of triumphality between this depiction and those on the coins of Elagabalus, she does not consider that particular "Augustus," Varius, and Alexander, his "Caesar," to be eligible candidates. Since the stone in question was brought to Italy by Varius (overland, thus almost certainly *via* Aquileia) and sent back to Emesa by Alexander, once he was emperor,[45] all previous and subsequent "couples" would appear to be excluded, especially if, as Ms Balestrazzi supposes, this relief records an actual event, taking place in Aquileia. That being the case, if the difference, in degree of triumphality between representations of the stone on coins of Elagabalus and that in this relief, is held to exclude Varius and Alexander from consideration, perhaps her identification of the idol in the portable shrine as the sacred stone of Emesa is less likely than she thinks.

32. Turcan, Robert, ***Héliogabale et le sacre du Soleil***, 1985, p. 123, & p. 149.

This book of Turcan's is the third full-length monographic study of Varius, with more or less justified pretensions to academic status and historical value, to be published in the series of works of this type, after Hay's ***Amazing Emperor*** of 1911, and Thompson's ***Priest-Emperor*** of 1972.[46] It refers to A and C both, at one point, and to A alone at another.

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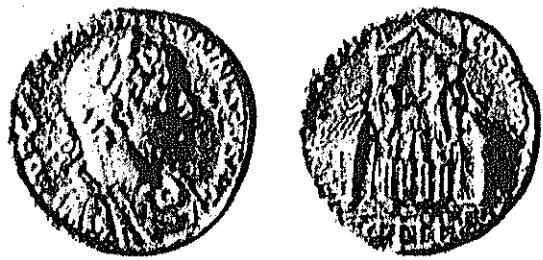
[45] See my *Iter Principis*, *Journal of Area Studies*, 21, Tsukuba University, 2003.

[46] See the remark, above, in the present text's review of Thompson's dissertation, regarding the status and value of Artaud's ***Héliogabale ou l'Anarchiste Couronné***. Turcan alludes to Artaud's text, without using it as a source, and does not comment on its status or value.

The first reference, to A and C both, occurs in the context of discussing the Palatine temple of Elagabal, which Turcan, without citing any of the arguments for and against such an assignation, confidently assigns to the *Vigna Barberini*. Describing the coin of Elagabalus (published by Froehner, and cited by Studniczka), that shows the temple in a frontal view, he suggests that it was minted to celebrate the inauguration of the Elagabalium, as that god's Palatine temple is also sometimes called. He notes the presence of two "doves" perched on the roofs of the two lateral porticos, as well as that of the Dioscuri, Castor and Pollux, above the entrance. (Turcan's characterisation of these birds as doves can, by the way, be traced to Gnecchi's ***Medaglioni Romani***.[17])

The coin of Elagabalus drawn for Froehner



The same coin photographed for Gnecchi

These "doves" are obviously the same figures identified by Froehner and Studniczka as "eagles." It is not clear if by "Castor and Pollux" whom he situates "above the entrance," he means the figures standing in front of the temple, identified by Froehner and Studniczka as Varius himself, sacrificing, each citing a different number of attendants, or the much smaller figures at their feet, on top of the lintel over the columns, that Studniczka thinks are four horses, and Froehner says are a row of smaller arches or columns. In Turcan's view, these "doves" refer

[17] Gnecchi, F., *I Medaglioni Romani*, 1912, Vol 2.2, *Bronzo: Moduli Minori*, p. 41, & Tav. 152, N. 11.

to "the Syrian Aphrodite, Urania," and the Dioscuri to "the two celestial hemispheres." He laments that the narrow space available prevents the engraver from showing these figures' detail in such a way as to provide indisputable evidence.

"But a richly sculpted column capital has been found in the Forum, next to the temple of Castor and Pollux, where, among the acanthus, appears the conical stone of Emesa, on its platform and behind its eagle, just as it is shown on contemporary coins. The baetyl appears between two female deities, next to a bull being immolated by Victoria. Above the volutes emerge griffins, who belong to the fabulous fauna of Apollo and the Sun. On another capital of the same style and provenance, we recognise the silhouette of Helios on a chariot, accompanied by an eagle. These capitals have a decoration appropriate to the Elagabalium. They may have been detached from it after the death of [Varius], when the temple was disestablished and rededicated in honour of Jupiter. They may also have been abused later by Christians, who may have removed them from the Palatine, together with other debris from the dishonoured sanctuary."

Turcan's second reference to A in this book occurs in the context of discussing the wedding of Elagabal with "the Syrian Aphrodite," Caelestis/Urania. Noting the theory (first advanced by Herodian,[48] whom Turcan does not cite here), that the Syrian sun god's marriage to the Carthaginian moon goddess was arranged by his high priest as an alternative to his first, unsuccessful marriage to Pallas, whom he found too warlike for his taste, Turcan thinks, rather, that the presence of both goddesses on A suggests that Varius intended his god simultaneously to be associated with both, in "a triad that coincided, by syncretism, with the Capitoline triad." With respect to simultaneity alone, he anticipates an argument put forward three years later by Frei, which is reviewed below. However, it should already be clear, to the reader who has in mind the sequence of reviews above, and in particular those of Studniczka's and Seyrig's contribution to this discussion, that I consider all argument "by syncretism" to require independent evidence in order to be verified; evidence that, in the nature of the case, is often lacking, as it is here.

33. Coarelli, F., *(Porticus) Adonaea, Aedes Heliogabali, Aedes Jovis Ultoris – La Tomba di Antinoo?*, *Mélanges d'Archéologie et d'Histoire de l'École Française de Rome* (*MEFRA*), 98, 1986, p. 230-253, esp. p. 234, text & n. 46.

Coarelli refers to A in the context of an article whose principal purpose is to discuss the question of the location of the tomb of Antinoüs. The connexion wrought by Coarelli between that question, relating to the reign of Hadrian, and the Severan artefacts here under consideration, occurs in the context of a complex

[48] Herodian 5.6.4.

argument, whose details need not concern us here. Its basic premise derives from an article by Jean-Claude Grenier, *La Tombe d'Antinoüs à Rome*, immediately preceding Coarelli's in the same issue of *MEFRA*, in which, as the result of Grenier's interpretation of the Egyptian hieroglyphic inscription on the obelisk of Antinoüs, found at a site associated with Varius, that known as the Circus Varianus, the tomb in question is to be sought in some imperial garden in Rome. A possible candidate for consideration in this role is the site on the Palatine known as the *Vigna Barberini*, also, as it happens, associated with Varius, because identified by some as the site of the temple of Elagabal.

In discussing that identification, Coarelli notes that it was first proposed by Bigot. Like Castagnoli's, whom he also cites in this context, his reference to Bigot's text is erroneous, but, besides, he adds his own, further error to that of Castagnoli. He coincides with Castagnoli in mistakenly stating that Bigot's thesis involves comparing a coin of Elagabalus with one of Alexander Severus. (It will be remembered by the reader of this monograph that Bigot, in fact, discusses two coins of Alexander, and none of Elagabalus.) But while Castagnoli correctly says that a certain temple complex, depicted on a coin of Alexander, is identified by Bigot as that of Jupiter Ultor, Coarelli erroneously says that Bigot identifies it as that of Jupiter Victor. While Bigot does initally consider the reading "Jupiter Victor," he quickly discards it in favour of "Jupiter Ultor."

Remarking that Bigot's thesis was, for a time, rejected, Coarelli says that it has recently come back into favour, partly as a result of studies conducted on different (meaning archaeological) bases. The key to the problem, he says, lies in the depictions of the temple on coins. Performing, now, that comparison between coins of Elagabalus and Alexander Severus, which he mistakenly ascribes to Bigot (but which was first, in fact, at least in print, suggested, though not performed, by Studniczka in his *MKDAIRA* 16 article, reviewed above), Coarelli notes that the building represented on the coin of Elagabalus, and that which appears on the coin of Alexander, are practically identical. One difference between them, however, is that, on the coin of Alexander, the cult image, a male deity seated on a throne, with a sceptre in his right hand and a patera in his left, identified by the legend as Jupiter Ultor, is clearly recognisable, whereas "on that of Elagabalus, the cult image is not recognisable, although the legend allows one to identify the temple as that dedicated on the Palatine to the god of Emesa. The appearance of the cult image can, however, be deduced from other coins, and from a figured capital, discovered in the Forum, that Studniczka has been able with certainty to attribute to the same sanctuary on the Palatine."[49]

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[49] "*Nel medaglione di Eliogabalo invece il simulacro di culto non è riconoscibile, ma la leggenda permette di riconoscere nell'edificio il tempio dedicato sul Palatino al dio di Emesa. L'aspetto del*

There are three problems with this reference to **A**.

The first relates to accuracy of citation, a problem already evident with respect to Coarelli's reference to Bigot. It overstates the case to say that Studniczka "with certainty" attributes the capital to the Palatine temple. He merely thinks that site to be a likelier source for it than a hypothetical "third temple" in the Forum.

The second problem has to do with establishing the precise meaning of Coarelli's reference to **A**, for his use of language here is ambiguous. One possible interpretation might hold his meaning here to be: not only is the cult image (of Elagabal) not recognisable on the coin of Elagabalus in question (that showing the frontal view of the temple); it is not depicted there at all, though it is on others, and also on the column capital in question, whence we can deduce its appearance. Another interpretation might construe him to mean: the cult image in question is depicted on that coin, but is not recognisable there, though it is distinctly recognisable on others, and on the capital in question. If the second possible interpretation of this sentence were to correspond to Coarelli's intended meaning, it would be very puzzling, since nothing in the coin of Elagabalus here under discussion (depicted in an illustration on the same page) remotely resembles the composite icon of a baetyl fronted by an eagle, which constitutes the cult image of Elagabal on other coins of Elagabalus, and on **A**. In determining which of these interpretations is correct, it is perhaps significant that Coarelli does not at any point in his article describe the specific iconography of the cult image of Elagabal.

The third problem is that nowhere in the legend on this coin, neither in the obverse, *Imp(erator) Caes(ar) M(arcus) Aur(elius) Antoninus Pius Aug(ustus)*, nor in the reverse, *P(ius) F(elix) Tr(ibunicia) P(otestas) V Co(n)s(ul) IIII P(ater) P(atriae)*, is there any element which "allows one to identify the temple as that dedicated on the Palatine to the god of Emesa." All this legend allows one to do is to ascribe the coin to Varius, and to the year a.u.c. 975 = A.D. 222.

Coarelli goes on to venture an interpretation of the scene depicted on the coin of Elagabalus, which, though it is not strictly relevant to discussion of the capitals here in question, is worth quoting, for the novel element it introduces into the closely related discussion of that coin. "It is interesting to note that on the medallion (as Coarelli calls the coin of Elagabalus) is represented a cultual scene that seems to include dancing. This detail is confirmed by a passage of Herodian[50] that recalls the performance of analogous rites in the sanctuary of Elagabalus..."

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simulacro si può invece ricavare da altre monete, e da un capitello figurato scoperto nel Foro, che lo Studniczka ha potuto attribuire con certezza allo stesso santuario del Palatino."

[50] Herodian 5.5.9.

Finally, it is worth noting yet another element in Coarelli's article: it discusses, at some length and in some detail,[51] the question of the precise meaning of the term "*aedes Orci*," that mysterious and, from an archaeological point of view, purely hypothetical temple of Orcus, referred to in a passage of the *Historia Augusta*,[52] and cited by Studniczka, among others, as a possible reference point for situating the temple of Elagabal, and hence the origin of the capitals here in question, on the Palatine. Referring to the manuscript tradition (and showing an example in an illustration), Coarelli believes "*aedes Orci*" to be a corruption of the text, and proposes instead "*Adonidis horti*," a reading which would reconcile Bigot's theory, regarding the *Vigna Barberini*, with others, previously thought to be incompatible with it, and hence provide a key to situating at that site the Tomb of Antinoüs.

34. Pietrzykowsky, M., ***Die Religionspolitik des Kaisers Elagabal***, *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt* (*ANRW*) 2.16.3, 1986, p. 1810, text & n. 12; p. 1812, text & n. 24.

There are two brief references to **A**, and to other texts about it, in this study.

At p. 1810, text & n. 12:

In the context of listing archaeological sources for this study of the religious policy of Varius, Pietrzykowsky remarks that these consist mainly of coins, and that the only noteworthy example of monumental art is the figured capital found in Rome. He cites both Studniczka's and Mercklin's texts concerning **A**.

At p. 1812, text & n. 24:

Discussing the composite icon of Elagabal, consisting of a baetyl and an eagle on a podium, he remarks that the form of the eagle is still in dispute, and cites, at this precise point, Studniczka's article about it, as well as a locus of Optendrenk's text, closely following his reference to **A** (reviewed above).[53] Was it a relief chiselled onto the front of the black stone, or a freestanding object? The second possibility appears more likely to Pietrzykowsky, particularly with reference to the numerous illustrations that show the eagle standing on top of the stone.

35. Augé, Christian & Linant de Bellefonds, Pascale, ***Elagabalos***, in *Lexicon iconographicum mythologiae classicae* (*LIMC*), III.1, 1987, text, p. 705b-708a, esp. p. 706a&b, § B: ***L'aigle devant le bétyle***, 5, & III.2, 1981, plates, p. 542, § 1-15.

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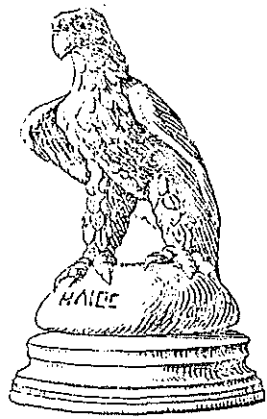
[51] p. 244-5.
[52] *HAAH* I, 6.
[53] Studniczka, op. cit. p. 275-6; Optendrenk, op. cit. p. 89, text & n. 9 & 10 (p. 150).

This article provides as complete a repertory as is known up to its date of the iconography of Elagabal, and is thus especially useful here, as it enables one to place these column capitals in context. There are 20 examples cited in all, of which all but three are coins. The three exceptions include, as well as A, a limestone stela from the 1st century A.D., showing the Syrian god Arsu standing next to an eagle on top of a mound of stones, with a Palmyrene inscription in Aramaic labelling it as Elagabal, and a bronze statuette with an eagle on top of a rounded stone inscribed ΗΛΙΟΣ.

Arsu 18

The Stela[54]



Elagabalos 2

The Statuette

3 a 3 b

Two coins of Antoninus Pius.

[54] *LIMC* 2.2. Arsu.

The iconographic categories into which the images are sorted are as follows:

A (1): The eagle on the baetyl:

1) the stela;
2) the statuette;
3) (a&b) two coins of Antoninus Pius.

A (2): The same on a quadriga:

4) a coin of Elagabalus.

B (1): The eagle in front of the baetyl:

5) the capital here designated **A**;
6) a coin of Elagabalus.

B (2): The same in the temple of Emesa:

7) a coin of Caracalla.

B (3): The same carried in procession by a quadriga viewed face on:

8 a,b,c) three coins of Elagabalus.

B (4): The same carried in procession by a quadriga viewed in profile:

9) a coin of Julia Cornelia Paula (1st wife of Varius);
10 a&b) two coin types of Elagabalus;
11 (a&b) two coin types of Elagabalus;
12) a coin of Uranius Antoninus.

C (1): The baetyl without an eagle:

13) a coin of Uranius Antoninus.

C (2): The same in the temple of Emesa:

14) a coin of Uranius Antoninus.

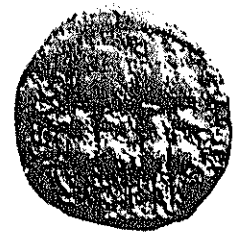
C (3): The same carried in procession on a quadriga:

15) a coin of Elagabalus.

7

14

8 a



8 b

11 b

Elagabalos 15

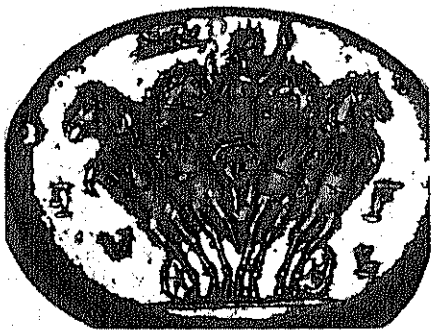
Illustrations of coins from LIMC "Elagabalos"

It may be noted that of all the images described (and depicted in Volume III.2, containing the plates), the only one, apart from A, showing Elagabal with any other deity, is the stela with Arsu, the earliest image listed. The only image depicting a complex scene with several anthropomorphic figures, and showing the performance of a ritual, in this case the sacrifice of a bull, is A.

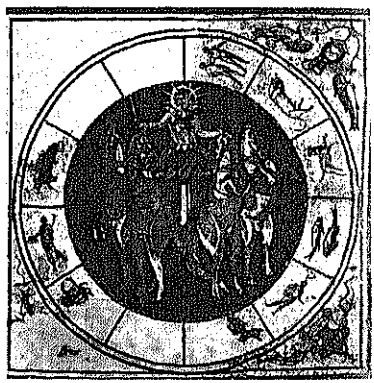
The commentary agrees with Studniczka, in distinguishing the composite icon of Elagabal from other images of baetyls that to do not include an eagle, but differs from him in saying that the triad depicted on **A**, at least one of whose female members it denominates Minerva or Roma, does not necessarily allude to the "sacred marriage" celebrated in the Palatine temple by Elagabal.

36. Letta, Cesare, ***Helios***, in *Lexicon iconographicum mythologiae classicae* (*LIMC*), IV.1, 1989, text, p. 595a, § f: ***Sol Invictus***, & IV.2, plates.

This entry in *LIMC* relates to the sun god, not as Elagabal, whose composite icon is an eagle and a stone, but rather as Helios/Sol, an anthropomorphic manifestation. Reference is, however, made in the text (p. 593 a), to the cult of Elagabal at Emesa, as one of the manifestations of the cults of Helios and Sol Invictus. It includes, in a list of ancient literary references to Sol Invictus, two items relevant to the cult of Elagabal: one, a text of Commodian,[55] referring to a golden statue of Ammudates-Elagabal in a temple in Rome; another, a passage from the *Historia Augusta*, alluding to Aurelian's glimpsing an iconic (?) statue of Elagabal in that god's temple in Emesa.[56] The catalogue of iconographic types lists three relief sculptures representing Helios as charioteer, depicted frontally,[57] the very form in which a driving charioteer is represented on the capital here designated **C**. These are not, however, because of their quality, suitable for reproduction here, but two similar images from engraving and mosaic respectively, are:



Sol 204



Sol 291

Illustrations from LIMC of Sol as charioteer

[55] Commodianus *instr.* I, 18, 1-20.
[56] *H.A. Divus Aurelianus* 5.5.
[57] On p. 601 a: *g) su quadriga di prospetto*, nrs. 122-124.

37. Frey, Martin, ***Untersuchungen zur Religion und zur Religionspolitik des Kaisers Elagabal***, *Historia, Zeitschrift für Alte Geschichte, Einzelschriften*, Heft 62, 1989, p. 52, text & n. 4; p. 53, text & n. 1.

Although, because of the specialised nature of its focus on one aspect (albeit a central one) of Varius' reign, it does not belong to the series of full-length monographic studies of this emperor, with more or less justified pretensions to academic status and historical value, referred to above,[58] Frey's monograph on the religion and religious policy of Varius is, from a methodological point of view, by far the best study published so far on any aspect of this emperor. Its thorough and sceptical approach, addressing directly the all-important question of the truth or otherwise of ancient historiographical accounts of Varius' religious practices and policies, provides a model for ***Studia Variana***, the set of studies of which the present monograph forms a part. ***Studia Variana*** seeks to develop and extend Frey's approach to cover all aspects of the study of this emperor.

An example of the superiority of Frey's approach to any previous treatment of Varius can be seen in his discussion of a passage of Herodian,[59] to which the present monograph has already drawn attention, in reviewing Turcan's monographic study of Varius, above; in particular its second reference to A. Although they share (at least with respect to this passage of Herodian, and to the relevance thereto of A) the same conclusion, Frey's exposition of that conclusion is far more thoroughly and clearly argued than Turcan's. Whereas Turcan fails even to cite the passage of Herodian in question, but only refers in a general way to the assertion it contains – that Varius married Elagabal to Caelestis/Urania as a result of, and an alternative to, the failure of that god's previous marriage to Pallas/Minerva – Frey begins by quoting the relevant passage in full, in the original Greek. Having done so, he goes on to discuss it, in the light of the evidence afforded by A:

"Herodian thus gives the impression that the emperor first wedded his god to Pallas, then disowned her, in order to marry him to the Carthaginian Caelestis. But there is a column capital, found in the Roman Forum, surviving from a building of the time of Elagabal (Varius), that shows two goddesses with the stone of Elagabal (the god)." At this point he cites Studniczka's *MKDAIRA* 16 article. "The stone is, as on the coins, depicted with the eagle standing before it. The two goddesses stand to its left and right, and each places a hand on the crown of the stone. The goddess on the

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[58] Including Stuart Hay's ***The Amazing Emperor Heliogabalus***, 1911, G. Ray Thompson's ***Elagabalus, Priest-Emperor of Rome***, 1972, and Robert Turcan's ***Héliogabale et le sacre du Soleil***, 1985, and excluding, on grounds of status and value, Artaud's lamentably well known work, ***Héliogabale ou l'Anarchiste Couronné***.

[59] 5.6.4.

left is clearly Athena. The badly damaged figure on the right may well have represented Aphrodite. It is not easy to see how one could possibly consider this representation to constitute confirmation of Herodian's cited locus, since, rather, it contradicts it: while Herodian claims that one goddess displeased the god on account of her warlike characteristics, and was replaced by the other, both goddesses are depicted together on the capital, peacefully united with the god. Unless one is prepared to countenance the existence of a triad composed of a god, his wife, and his ex-wife, one must treat Herodian's assertion with scepticism. And indeed the argument Herodian puts in the emperor's mouth, in order to explain the rejection of Pallas - that the warlike goddess had displeased his god - is highly suspect. The character of Athena/Allath has already been described above: even in the emperor's homeland she was a war-goddess, and was often depicted armed. Besides, in the Semitic world, as previously noted, the notion of a warlike goddess had already been commonplace for centuries."

38. Turcan, Robert, ***Les dieux de l'Orient dans l'Histoire Auguste***, *Journal des Savants* (*JS*), 1993, p. 21-62, esp. p. 39, n. 103.

In the context of a passage devoted to the treatment of the cult of Elagabal by the *Historia Augusta*, Turcan thinks it curious that no mention is made there of its principal cult object, the sacred stone or baetyl of Emesa, as depicted on coins and on A, with reference to which he cites Studniczka. He attributes this icon's absence from the *Historia Augusta's* highly denigratory account of Varius' alleged attempt to promote that cult in Rome, to a supposition that the presence in Rome of the greatly venerated stone of Pessinus, related to the cult of Cybele, may have prevented the author of the *HA* from ridiculing Varius for adoring a "big pebble" (*un gros caillou*).

39. Hijmans, Steven E., ***The sun which did not rise in the East: the cult of Sol Invictus in the light of non-literary evidence***, *Bulletin Antieke Beschaving*, 71, Leiden, 1996, p. 115-150.

Although this article does not directly mention any of the artefacts here under consideration, it is highly relevant to the discussion here in progress, in several ways:

In terms of its own main argument, which focuses on the correct identification, proper iconography, and, as Hijmans maintains, indigenous aetiology, as opposed to Oriental provenance, of the Roman solar deity known as Sol Invictus, his article is directly relevant to the discussion of the capital here designated C; for on its side β there is a badly damaged, but easily discernible, depiction of a charioteer, possibly identifiable as Sol Invictus, driving a team of horses. In discussing, below, the state of the question in 2002, with respect to capital C, I shall refer in greater

detail to Hijmans' argument, since that is the context in which it can throw the most light on specific questions.

Hijmans' article is also, by virtue of its characterisation of Sol Invictus as an indigenous Roman deity, rather than an import from Syria or elsewhere, relevant to discussion of the titulature of the emperor here called Varius, which often identifies him as that god's high priest, and hence to consideration of this emperor's religious policy. These issues are taken up elsewhere in the group of studies to which the present monograph belongs.

But Hijmans' article is also relevant to broader issues, of more general importance, raised in this discussion so far:

One of these is the distorting role of prejudice, identified by Hijmans as the product of a specific ideology, widespread among classical scholars of a certain period and provenance, in the discussion of Sol Invictus and related topics, including the god Elagabal, and the emperor here called Varius. Just as here, in reviewing Studniczka's contribution to the discussion of these artefacts, attention was drawn to the distorting effect of prejudice on his arguments concerning A, so Hijmans draws attention to the way in which a closely related prejudice long prevented realisation of the fact, which he maintains to be demonstrable from iconographic evidence, that Sol Invictus is a native Roman deity.

Another is the question of the relative value, as evidence in addressing questions such as this, and others arising in classical studies, on the one hand, of archaeological materials, such as coins and inscriptions, or the artefacts here under consideration, and, on the other, literary materials, such as texts of ancient historiography. Just as here, again in discussing Studniczka's contribution, attention was drawn to his preferential, and often uncritical, use of literary materials as evidence, Hijmans shows, with reference to the identity and provenance of Sol Invictus, how a general tendency, among certain classical scholars, to accord primacy, as evidence, to literary over archaeological materials, can lead to error, in seeking answers to those questions.

Also relevant to this discussion, and to the rest of the group of studies to which it belongs, is the fact that Hijmans points out an error, regarding the identification of Sol Invictus with the god Elagabal, in the work of Martin Frey reviewed above: ***Untersuchungen zur Religion und zur Religionspolitik des Kaisers Elagabal.*** Hijmans says that Frey "voices a common opinion when he suggests that Sol on the coins of Heliogabalus (Varius) refers to the Emesan god Elagabal. I believe this to be incorrect."

If Hijmans' thesis is right (and he argues it persuasively) then it would seem that Frey despite his, in my view, otherwise excellent scholarship, and refreshingly sceptical approach to the study of Elagabal, and of Varius, as well as of the relationship between them, has, nevertheless, in this instance, fallen prey to one of the commonest vicissitudes of the scholarly profession: uncritical acceptance and transmission of others' opinions or assertions. Which of us has never done so? To ask this is not to excuse or overlook Frey's error, if error it be, but to put it in perspective: his contribution to Varian studies is not, in my opinion, significantly diminished by such an error, if it should prove to be such. Indeed if it does, and he acknowledges it as such, he may still correct it, without prejudice to his otherwise valid, and methodologically valuable, approach to the subject.

40. Chausson, François, ***Le site de la Vigna Barberini de 191 à 455***, in ***La Vigna Barberini, Histoire d'un site: étude des sources et de la topographie***, *Roma Antica*, 3, Rome, 1997, p. 31-85, esp. 55-69.

In the course of a thorough discussion, with extensive reference to ancient historiographical sources, of modern theories identifying the site of the *Vigna Barberini* as that of the Palatine temple dedicated by Varius to Elagabal, Chausson refers to **A**:

"A marble column capital showing an eagle before a baetyl, flanked by a helmeted goddess (Minerva-Pallas) and another goddess who is hard to identify, found near the Temple of Vesta, has been attributed to the *Vigna Barberini*. This is unfortunately an errant stone whose origin is unknown. One will recall, in any case, that baetyls also formed part of the decoration of the Palatine temple of Apollo. Only an analysis of the module itself will allow one to determine if this artefact fits or not into the dimensions of the *Vigna Barberini*."

Chausson's suggestion that one must analyse the module itself provides part of the inspiration for my composition of this monograph. The following section, devoted to discussing the state of the question in 2002, aims to consider the question to which he points, as well as several others, raised by the discussion of these artefacts so far.

The State of the Question in 2002:

The foregoing review, in two stages, of the discussion of these artefacts since 1902, allows one now to consider the present state of the question concerning them, in the light of contributions made during the intervening century. While considering the state to which the question has been brought by others' contributions, I offer some suggestions for further investigation of these artefacts, and ask some questions of my own.

In terms of their significance for this discussion, two contributions made after 1902 stand out as deserving particularly close attention: those of Domaszewski, 1909, and Mercklin, 1962. Their significance is, however, discussed here not in chronological order, but in that of the categories of questions to which they pertain. Likewise, my own contributions to this discussion are made at the points where questions arise, to which they relate. It will be remembered that this discussion can be said to be framed in terms of certain broad categories of questions, identified and classified as follows:

Questions concerning these artefacts themselves: their material identity and number, specific iconography, origin, chronology and purpose: What are they? What do they depict? Who commissioned them; who sculpted them; when; and for what purpose?

Questions about the structure to which these artefacts may have belonged: What kind of a structure was it; where did it stand; and when was it built? Furthermore: What function and location did these pieces have within that structure? What were the circumstances of its construction? Was it built from the ground up, or was an existing structure reconditioned? What was the time span within which either enterprise may have been accomplished?

Questions of religious and political history deriving from the iconography of these artefacts: What is the nature of their relationship to the cult of Elagabal? What is their significance for understanding the reign in which they were presumably created?

Finally, though hardly addressed in the existing literature, there are questions relating to the history and technique of sculptural art, as well as to the theology and ritual of the cult of Elagabal, deriving from analysis of the aesthetic and iconographic content of these artefacts.

Questions relating to these artefacts themselves:

With respect to the first set of questions, that relating to these artefacts themselves, the most important contribution to this discussion in the course of the 20th century is undoubtedly the introduction, by Mercklin's ***Antike Figuralkapitelle***, 1962, for consideration alongside **A**, of two further capitals, **B** and **C**, and four smaller fragments, **D**, **E**, and **F**, and a missing fragment, which the present monograph calls **G**, all purporting to form part of the same group of artefacts.

If correct, Mercklin's inclusion of **B-G** together with **A**, greatly augmenting the number of artefacts relevant to this discussion, affects all subsequent consideration

of its subject matter. There are various ways in which this is so. One is that many, though not necessarily all, hypotheses regarding **A**, must now be taken also to apply to the other artefacts. Conversely, all, or some, of the other artefacts, may be relevant to hypotheses originally limited to **A**. It is also possible that this augmented set of artefacts, taken as a group, may raise new questions, and suggest new hypotheses, other than those conceived with only **A** in mind.

It is noteworthy that no subsequent contributor to this discussion has challenged Mercklin's thesis grouping these artefacts together. It is not my intention to do so; quite the contrary, for I find it persuasive, though methodological scruple prevents me from declaring it conclusive. The reason for that scruple is that Mercklin's proposition of his thesis is not properly argued, and that there are consequently many missing links in its underlying chain of reasoning.

It will be remembered that Mercklin effects his introduction of the latter four of these artefacts, **D-G**, into the discussion on the basis of surmise. Moreover, his inclusion of **B** and **C** together with **A** is not argued for at all, but is merely assumed, on the basis of Hülsen's allusion, itself made on the basis of reported hearsay, to "yet more fragments of similar workmanship," allegedly "found in the vicinity," according to Hülsen's source, Signor Boni. It is not clear from Hülsen's allusion what the "fragments" in question might be, whether capitals or smaller pieces, or some combination thereof. Indeed, in the absence of any further information, such as descriptions or catalogue numbers, it is not clear that Hülsen is alluding to the same pieces as those later described by Mercklin. It is not clear from his text on what basis Mercklin identifies **B** and **C** as the pieces to which Hülsen alludes, and is sure that these correspond with those mentioned by Signor Boni. Neither is it clear from Mercklin's text why he chooses to differentiate **B** and **C**, taken as a set, from **D-G**, taken as another, and to base his grouping of the former set with **A** on the authority of Hülsen's allusion, while justifying his conjunction of the latter set to that grouping on the basis of surmise.

Despite these defects in the presentation of Mercklin's thesis, I do not dissent from its main proposition, not only because I find it persuasive, though on grounds other than those adduced by Mercklin, but because I have no more plausible alternative to offer. The contrary thesis - that these pieces are all completely unrelated, and that their having been found (if they are indeed the pieces referred to by Boni) in fairly close proximity to one another, as well as their sharing a common style and subject matter, are both products of pure chance - is no more persuasive than Mercklin's thesis; indeed rather less so, especially if one adopts Occam's principle of reasoning, for cases where evidence is lacking, and prefers the simplest explanation. For to imagine, for each of seven artefacts, the random sequence of events that could have brought it to that spot, where six other somewhat similar artefacts just happened also to be found, is exponentially more complicated than

assuming that these artefacts were all found there together because they were all, somehow, originally related.

Had Mercklin chosen to argue for his grouping together of these artefacts, rather than base it on a combination of Hülsen's allusion and his own surmise, he could have made quite a persuasive case for their relationship, both to one another, and to a common theme, on the basis of their iconography. Such an argument would, given the nature of its subject matter, also have been relevant to the third set of questions concerning these artefacts: that of their religious and political significance.

An argument linking these three capitals starts with the fact that the connection of **A** to the cult of Elagabal is fairly certainly established, by virtue of the presence on **A** of the sacred stone and eagle of Emesa, correctly identified as such by Studniczka. The presence on **C** of Helios then links **C** to **A**, by virtue of the identification of Helios/Sol with Elagabal, as attested by iconographic and epigraphic,[60] numismatic,[61] and historiographic[62] sources. Victoria, on **B**, in a pose almost identical to that in which she is found on **A**, provides a link between these two capitals, and thence to the cult of Elagabal, also by virtue of iconographic evidence, linking her cult to his: her presence on **A** together with Elagabal. The presence of griffins on **B**, as well as on **A**, and of eagles on **C**, as well as on **A**, reinforces the cross-linkage of these capitals to one another, as well as their relationship to the cult of Victoria, in combination with whose iconography griffins are frequently found.[63] The common iconographic theme is therefore identified as that of the cult of Elagabal, and of cults related to it, in particular those of Helios and Victoria.

It is perhaps a pity that Mercklin does not choose to argue on these, or on any other grounds. That said, it must be acknowledged that, while the application of Occam's principle of reasoning to cases such as this, where evidence is lacking, produces intellectually attractive hypotheses, they are only hypotheses, and could still prove

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[60] The bronze statuette listed as A.2 in LIMC III.1, *Elagabalos*, reviewed above, showing the baetyl and eagle of Elagabal, inscribed ΗΛΙΟΣ.

[61] The coins listed as B.10a&b, and as 11a, in the same article in LIMC III.1, showing the baetyl and eagle of Elagabal carried in procession on a quadriga, seen in profile, with the reverse legend: *Sanct Deo Soli Elagabal*.

[62] Dio 79.31.1: ... Ἡλίου, ὃν Ἐλεγάβαλον ἐπικαλοῦσι; Herodian 5.3.3-4: ... θεῷ ἡλίῳ· τοῦτον γὰρ οἱ ἐπιχώριοι σέβουσι, τῇ Φοινίκων φωνῇ Ἐλαιαγάβαλον καλοῦντες.

[63] See Goethert, Friedrich Wilhelm, *Trajanische Friese*, in *Jahrbuch des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts*, 51, 1936, p. 72-81, esp. p. 80, text & n. 2, reviewed above.

wrong. Sometimes, counter-intuitively, the right answer to a given question is a complicated one.
In this case, as in so many others pertaining to ancient history, we shall most likely never have a certain answer. As in the case of Studniczka's unproven, perhaps unprovable, argument concerning the Capitoline triad, discussed above, the only possible conclusive proof for Mercklin's thesis must consist of independent evidence; such as, say, proof that **B** and **C** fit, like pieces in an architectonic jigsaw puzzle, into the remains of a structure, into which **A** also fits. That sort of evidence is lacking.

One must therefore beware of assuming Mercklin's thesis to be proven, or the relationship to **A** of **B** and **C**, together with that of the other artefacts, to be anything other than an hypothesis, albeit a very likely one. Perhaps it is because of his awareness of this limitation, that Mercklin prefers to base part of his proposition on a surmise, and the rest on hearsay. But the way in which hearsay, surmises, conjectures and hypotheses become enshrined as supposed facts, is all too easily observable in the literature of Varian studies; so a warning is not superfluous here. That notwithstanding, it is worth noting that Mercklin's is the only contribution to this discussion since 1902 to address directly the first set of questions relevant to the study of these artefacts: those concerning their identity and number, specific iconography, origin, chronology and purpose.

Questions relating to the identity and location of the structure to which these artefacts belonged:

With respect to the second set of questions, that relating to the identity and location of the structure to which these artefacts belonged, the discussion has been more plurally sustained. Two schools of thought have emerged: one assigning these artefacts' origin to a Palatine temple of Elagabal; the other assigning it to some or other structure in the Forum.

The most significant, because most potentially devastating, contribution to the discussion after 1902 of this second set of questions, concerning the original structure to which these artefacts belonged, is that of an article belong to the second school of thought: Domaszewski's ***politische Bedeutung der Religion von Emesa***, 1909, containing, in a footnote, a suggestion whereby **A** (and presumably the other artefacts, if they are all related) could have originated in a *statio* of the Emesenes in the Forum, a structure possibly predating the reign of Varius, perhaps by several generations.

As stated above, in the critical review of Domaszewski's article, there are problems with this thesis, both flaws in the manner of its proposition, and weaknesses detectable if it is put to the test of detailed examination, in the light of the

topography that it implies. Such examination has been deferred till this discussion of the state of the question in 2002, because this vantage point, coming after the critical review of the literature concerning these artefacts up to this date, allows one to contemplate quite how devastating it might be, were it to prove correct.

If proven correct in its main proposition alone – that these artefacts come from a *statio* in the Forum - Domaszewski's suggestion would render irrelevant all those contributions to this aspect of the discussion, that are based on the premise that these artefacts come from a temple on the Palatine. This, though fairly devastating, would still leave some contributions standing: those which prefer to attribute these artefacts to a structure in the Forum, built or reconditioned by Varius. If, however, it could be established that the construction of the *statio* in question predated the reign of Varius, and proven that these artefacts could not be other than of the same date as that *statio*'s initial phase of construction, then all discussion of these artefacts' relationship to Varius, and to his religious policy, would be rendered meaningless. Very few of the foregoing contributions to this discussion would remain standing.

One that would, however, interestingly enough, is Mercklin's. It will be remembered that he sounds a note of caution, in the form of a question mark, appended, at the outset of his article, to the entry in its heading, assigning the origin of these artefacts to a Palatine Temple of Elagabal. Moreover, at no point in his article does Mercklin explicitly assign these artefacts to the reign of Varius. Indeed the only mention of this emperor at all therein is hedged with a "perhaps," alluding to the possibility that the destruction of the central image on side b of capital **B** might have taken place in the context of the *damnatio memoriae* to which Varius' records and monuments were posthumously subjected. Mercklin's immediately subsequent citation of a certain locus in Altheim's ***Krise der Alten Welt*** is ambiguous, as cited, with respect to the question of whether that locus explicitly relates these capitals to that *damnatio*, or whether it merely serves to document the *damnatio* itself. Only consultation of that locus, and of its related footnote, reveals that it merely does the latter. Thus, a less-than-thorough reader, who did not consult that locus, might reasonably suppose the former to be the case, and so the only mention of Varius in Mercklin's text might seem to be attributable, not to the initiative of Mercklin himself, but to that of Altheim. Now even if this ambiguity is innocent of any intention to mislead the less-than-thorough reader, Mercklin's text, by virtue of the caution with which it treats the assignation of these artefacts to a Palatine temple, and of its equally cautious parsimony with respect to any mention of Varius, could survive the proof of the correctness of Domaszewski's thesis.

Such a proof, were it forthcoming, would have to emerge in spite of the flaws in that thesis' proposition and reasoning, and of the results of detailed examination of

its topographical implications. With regard to the manner of its proposition, its flaws lie in its misrepresentation of its cited source, and in the inexplicitness and imprecision with which it makes its point.

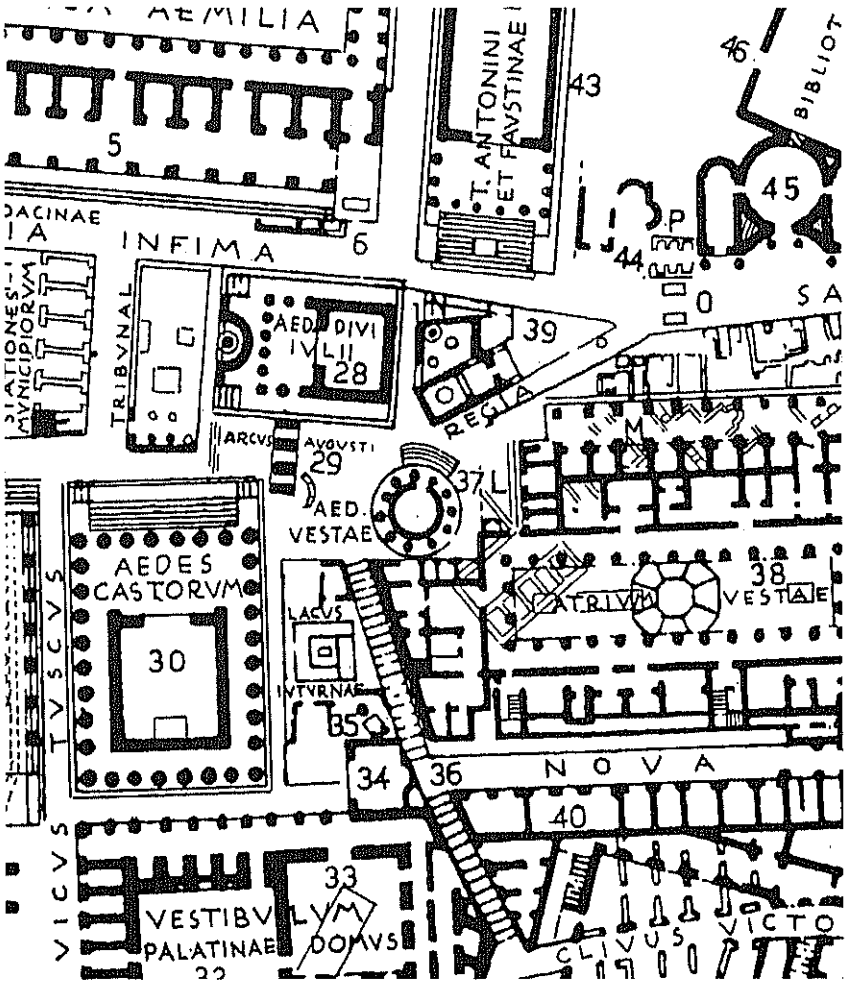
In citing Hülsen in support of its conjecture regarding the existence of a *statio* of the Emesenes in Rome, it misrepresents its cited source.[64] This is a passage in an article by Hülsen belonging to the same series as his earlier contribution to the discussion of **A**, listing and commenting on recent finds made in the excavation of the Forum, and on the scholarly literature relating to them. Hülsen reviews a Russian text by Turzewitsch, on the *stationes municipiorum*, which that author defines as "meeting places [in Rome] for the natives of foreign cities, organised into corporations." Hülsen then goes on to discuss how Turzewitsch has corrected the reading of a Greek inscription relating to such a *statio*, pertaining to the Claudiopolitans, or natives of Tiberias, a city of Syria Palestina, resident in Rome. He links this inscription to another, found on the Sacra Via, referring to the same *statio*. Finally, he tentatively ascribes yet another inscription, found in the Basilica Aemilia, to some such *statio*. At no point does he mention Emesa, or the Emesenes resident in Rome.

Perhaps not surprisingly, given this lack of specific evidence or authority to back up his conjecture, Domaszewski does not explicitly propose any particular reign to which one might assign the introduction of **A** into the *statio* in question, nor any precise location for that *statio*. He merely implies both. With respect to the question of the reign during which **A** may have been introduced into that *statio*, although he does not say so explicitly, Domaszewski implies, by virtue of the context of the rest of his article, discussing as it does the role of the religion of Emesa in the Roman empire in a much wider time-frame than that of the reign of Varius, that the *statio* in question could have dated back to the reign of Septimius Severus, whose wife, Julia Domna, was an Emesene, and hence, that **A** could also date back to that reign. With respect to the question of the location of such a *statio*, again Domaszewski implies, rather than states, that it would have been at or near the findspot of **A**, since it is in the context of discussing **A**, and its findspot, that he proposes his theory, assigning **A** to a *statio*. He implies that it is more likely that it should have originated at a spot in the Forum, where it was found, than that it should have been transported to its findspot from a temple on the Palatine.

With regard to its reasoning, the most easily detectable weakness in Domaszewski's thesis is its reliance on a *non sequitur*: the mere existence of a given structure, such as a *statio* of the Emesenes in the Forum, during a given reign, even if it were to be established, does not imply that all its eventually pertaining decorative, or even all its structural elements, were necessarily in place from the

[64] Hülsen, Ch., *MKDAIRA* 20, 1905, p. 9.

outset. Thus, even if these artefacts did come from such a *statio*, there is no reason why they may not be assigned to the reign of Varius, if it be assumed that the *statio* in question, whenever it may originally have been built, still stood during his reign. They could have been introduced into it by Varius, who is, after all, alleged to have reconditioned and redecorated several other structures.



Part of the Roman Forum, by the Temple of Vesta. [65]

[65] *Roma Antica. Il Centro Monumentale.* 1946.

Detailed examination of the topographical consequences of Domaszewski's implied location of this *statio*, at or near the findspot of these artefacts, reveals further flaws in his thesis. That findspot has variously been described by scholars writing at or near the time of the find itself as "in the immediate proximity of the Temple of Castor," (Jordan, for the lower half of **A**), "during the excavation of the Regia," (Studniczka, for the upper half of **A**), "beneath the middle of a row of upright columns on the eastern side of the Temple of Castor," (Hülsen, for both halves of **A**), and "in the same vicinity," (Hülsen, for, the other artefacts later associated by Mercklin with **A**).

Consultation of historical maps of the Forum, such as that of Lugli, as well as personal inspection of the Forum itself, reveals that the various findspots assigned to **A** and its companion pieces all lie within a very narrow compass, defined by the northeast side and corner of the *Aedes Castorum*, the northwest corner of the *Lacus Iuturnae*, the west and north perimeter of the *Aedes Vestae*, the south side and southwest corner of the *Regia*, the southeast corner of the *Aedes Divi Iulii*, and the southeast front of the *Arcus Augusti*. The space defined by these structures coincides with a slight widening in a fairly narrow street.

Now all these are structures whose sites, home in most cases to various layers of construction over several centuries, were already defined as such by the Republican period or the early Principate. Given the litigious nature of Roman society, and the zeal with which owners of urban real estate defended their prerogatives, and their perimeters, against encroachment,[66] it is difficult to see where a *statio*, presumably a gathering place for some considerable numbers of people, given the affluence of Syrians to Rome under the patronage of the empress Domna, could have been located in such a small space. Any attempt, even by such a tyrant as her husband, Septimius Severus, to appropriate land for such a *statio* from any of these structures, old and venerable already in his time, would have met with stiff opposition, of a kind he was unlikely to wish to face, merely to please his wife. It would have had to be built in the middle of the street, obstructing it; again a most unlikely proposition.

Comparison of this narrow, crowded spot in the Forum with a place where it is possible to see a number of unequivocally identified *stationes*, the so-called "Square of the Guilds" (*Piazzale delle Corporazioni*) in Ostia, reinforces one's doubt that a *statio* could ever have been situated here. The *stationes* in Ostia are numerous, fairly uniform in shape, and contiguous, arranged around a central courtyard, like stalls in a market, or stands in a trade fair, which, in a sense, they were, though the "fair" in question was permanent, at least over a long span of time. For Domaszewski's hypothetical "*statio* of the Emesenes" to have been located in

[66] Crook, J.A., *Law and Life of Rome*, chapter 5: *Property*, passim.

this particular *vicus* of the Roman Forum, it would have had to stand alone, for there is hardly room in this spot for one such structure, let alone for more. Given the social and commercial nature of *stationes*, as discernible from the Ostian example: places where prospective clients (in the modern sense of the word) could visit several establishments in succession, comparing qualities, availability, and prices of whatever was for sale or on offer there, such isolation would seem to militate against the location of a *statio* in this *vicus*.

Thus it is unlikely that any *statio* such as that alluded to by Domaszewski, could have coincided with the alleged findspot of these artefacts. Nor is there any nearby spot in that part of the Forum where similar considerations would not have applied. No traces, moreover, of any foundations that could be ascribed to such a *statio* have been found at this site, or anywhere nearby. The likeliest nearby place for the location of such a *statio*, the many storied market complex adjoining the Forum Traianum, has so far afforded no evidence of any "*statio* of the Emesenes."

The most detailed description of these artefacts' findspot, that of Hülsen, tells us that they were found "beneath the middle of a row of upright columns on the eastern side of the Temple of Castor." If they were found beneath upright columns, it follows that those columns were erected on top of them. If that is so, and if, both by virtue of unlikelihood, and of the absence of any archaeological evidence to the contrary, coincidence of their findspot with the location of a hypothetical *statio* is ruled out, then the question is: how did they arrive at this spot, and come to land at a level, such that columns could be erected above them?

The most plausible answer is that they were used, as was so often the case in ancient Roman construction, and indeed throughout the ancient world, as fill. Having been removed from somewhere else, they were brought here to fill a hole, and thus to serve as a base for further construction on top of them. If that is the case, then there is no evidence on which to base a preference for provenance from a *statio*, rather than a temple. Indeed the patently religious nature of their iconography would seem, rather, to tip the balance in favour of a temple.

If it is thus demonstrable that Domaszewski's suggestion has so many flaws, why is it here considered so significant? Because, despite these weaknesses in Domaszewski's proposition of his thesis, and in his reasoning, it could still prove to be correct, either in whole or in part, were unexpected evidence to surface to that effect. And if it were to prove correct, it would have devastating consequences for the rest of this discussion, as outlined above.

Such proof, however, is most unlikely to be forthcoming. Not only – in contrast with the case of the Palatine temple of Elagabal - has no specific site in the Forum so far been assigned by archaeological investigation to any such *statio* of the

Emesenes, nor have any other architectural or sculptural relics been related to it; but proof that, if still standing at the time, it remained unaffected by any reconstruction or redecoration in the reign of Varius, is impossible, in the absence of specific evidence to that effect: evidence whose very nature is hard to imagine; for what would it take to prove such a negative proposition?

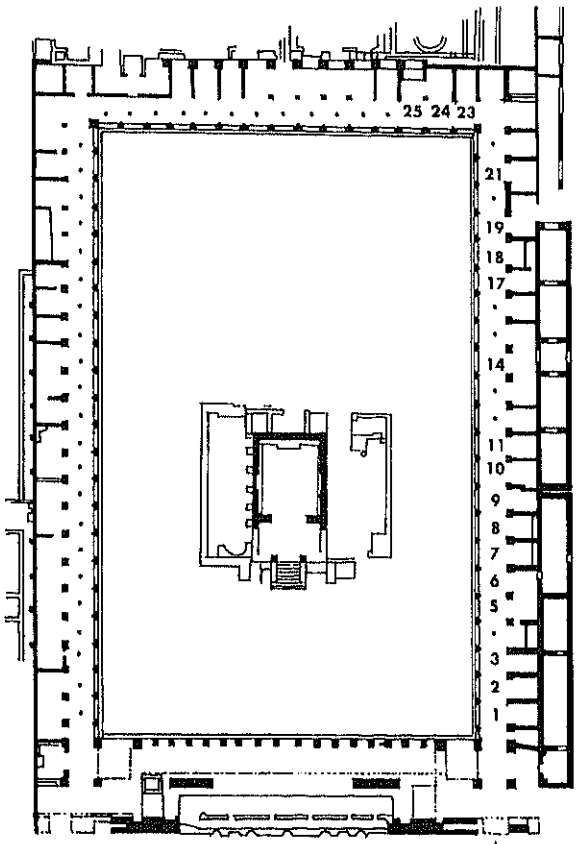


Fig. 3.
Square of the Guilds.

The location of several stationes in Ostia[67]

[67] *Ostia Antica, Guide to the Excavations*, 2000.

To conclude this consideration of Domaszewski's thesis, it is worth confronting it with Mercklin's, the only other contribution to this discussion since 1902 with such potentially far reaching consequences for one's understanding of these artefacts. The result of such a comparison is that each is quite independent of the other, in terms of arguments leading to, or of consequences deriving from, its potential verification: Mercklin's grouping together with A of a series of allegedly interrelated pieces could, just as easily, apply to a group of fragments from a building predating Varius, as to a temple built during his reign; Domaszewski's hypothetical dating of A to a period earlier than that proposed by Studniczka could, just as easily, apply to the rest of the artefacts here in question.

Most of the remaining contributions since 1902 have, like Domaszewski's, focussed not so much on these artefacts themselves, as on the questions of the identity and location of the structure to which they may have pertained. In respect of these particular questions, two distinct schools of thought, as noted above, seem to have emerged: those, a majority, following Studniczka, who believe A, and by extension the rest of these artefacts, to derive originally from the Palatine temple of Elagabal; and those, a substantial minority, following Hülsen, and including Domaszewski, who think it more likely that they come from a structure near, or coinciding with, their findspot in the Forum. Optendrenk, publishing in 1969, attempts to provide an assessment of the state of these particular questions then, reviewing the main points of both schools of thought; but his presentation is marred by inaccurate citation and attribution, as noted above, in the review of his text.

In the case of Studniczka's school of thought, the supposed identity and location of the structure in question is that of the Palatine temple, built or reconditioned by Varius in honour of Elagabal, referred to in the ancient historiography. For followers of this school of thought, including (with varying degrees of enthusiasm, or of explicit commitment thereto) Cumont, Strong, L'Orange, Bartoli, Milik, Barnes, Castagnoli, Turcan and Coarelli, the main question still under discussion is that of the precise location on the Palatine of that temple. Gradually, in the hands of Bartoli, Castagnoli, and Coarelli, not all of whose arguments are sound, the theory locating it at the site of the *Vigna Barberini* comes to dominate. Despite the flaws in some of its proponents' arguments, the excavation of that site during the years 1985-1999 by *l'École Française de Rome* lends considerable support to this location for the temple of Elagabal, but so far tells us nothing about these artefacts, at least not in the published reports of that excavation.[68]

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[68] Royo, Manuel, *Topographie ancienne et fouilles sur la Vigna Barberini, (XIXe siècle-début XXe siècle)*, *MEFRA*, 98, 1986-2, p. 706-766; (Various authors), *Scavi e Scoperte, Palatino, Vigna Barberini*, *BAMBCA*, 23-24, Settembre-Dicembre 1993, p. 131-164; Morel, J.-P., *Stratigraphie et Histoire sur le Palatin: la zone centrale de la Vigna Barberini*, *CRAIBL*, Janvier-Mars 1996, p. 173-

In the case of the latter school of thought, the identity and nature of the structure in question is a matter of diverse conjecture, ranging from Hülsen's *sacellum*, through Butler's "chapel," and Domaszewski's *statio*, to Pernier's *edicola*, a structure whose construction he ascribes, on no basis other than that of his imagination, to the wedding of Varius with the Vestal, Aquilia Severa.

In an example of the way in which error becomes enshrined as orthodoxy, it will be remembered that Lambertz, in the supposedly authoritative context of the ***RE***, while misattributing Studniczka's relevant article to Hülsen, suggests that the article in question supports this school of thought, whereas its text quite explicitly prefers the other. And, in an example of the way that distorted conjecture, riding on authoritative error, gradually assumes the status of supposed fact, Thompson, citing Lambertz, whose error he does not detect, as his source, but in fact following Pernier, whose conjecture he distorts, by conflating human marriage with divine, affirms that "it was in honor of [the 'divine marriage' of Elagabal to Urania] that the small temple of Elagabal in the Roman Forum was constructed;" as if that temple's construction, and the occasion thereof, were firmly established.

Now even if this theory were to prove true – it is, of course, unverifiable, since there is no evidence one way or the other – the origin of the artefacts here in question would not thereby have been established. Only independent evidence, such as the aforementioned "jigsaw puzzle" test with these artefacts themselves, could afford conclusive proof.

The most important objection to the theory that attributes these artefacts to a Palatine temple (independently of the question of that temple's precise location on the Palatine), is that raised by Butler, to the effect that **A** shows no trace of the fire, which, according to the *Passio Sancti Philippi*, burned that temple down. None of the subsequent proponents of a Palatine temple origin for **A**, nor those of a specific location – usually that of the *Vigna Barberini* – for that temple, have deigned to answer Butler's objection.

One possible answer might derive from the theory, advanced originally by Bigot, concerning the Palatine temple, that, having been a pre-existing structure (possibly pertaining to Jupiter Ultor), rededicated by Varius to Elagabal, after Varius' death it was rededicated yet again (or, if it was his in the first place, restored) to Jupiter

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206: Royo, Manuel, ***Constructions et aménagements antiques antérieurs au Grand Temple "Sévérien"***, in ***La Vigna Barberini, I, Histoire d'un site: étude des sources et de la topographie***, *Roma Antica*, 3, 1997; Chausson, François, ***Le site de la Vigna Barberini de 191 à 455***, also in *Roma Antica*, 3, 1997, reviewed above; Broise, Henri & Thébert, Yvon, ***Élagabal et la Vigna Barberini***, *MEFRA*, 111, 1999-2, p. 729-747; Villedieu, Françoise, & Veltri, Patrizia, ***Les Soutènements Nord-ouest et Nord de la Terrasse de la Vigna Barberini (Palatin)***, *MEFRA*, 111, 1999-2, p. 749-778.

Ultor, by Alexander Severus.[69] If this were to prove so, then the removal, by Alexander Severus, of sculptures associated with its previous redecoration under Varius, would have taken place well before the fire, which occurred only several decades after Alexander's reign. Thus, paradoxically, their demotion from a place of honour as elements of decoration in a temple, to that of components of a scrap heap used for fill, might have saved them, albeit damaged, for posterity.

Contemplation of this possibility leads back to this monograph's previous discussion of Domaszewski's thesis, potentially dating A before the reign of Varius. Even if that dating were to prove correct, there is no reason why, just as Varius may have introduced these artefacts into a pre-existing Palatine Temple of Jupiter Ultor, he could not likewise have introduced them into a pre-existing *statio* of the Emesenes in the Forum.

My own contribution to discussion of the first two sets of questions:

At this point, with respect, for now, only to the first two categories of questions - those concerning these artefacts themselves, and the structure to which they may have belonged - it is opportune to ask if there is anything further worth saying, beyond discussing the implications of what has already been said before by others. Of course it would be worth reporting some new discovery, one that might provide evidence with which to resolve some outstanding question, relating to these artefacts or to their provenance. But, short of such a fortunate chance, more likely to befall an archaeologist working in the field, than a scholar working in his study, is there anything further to add to this discussion?

There are perhaps a few suggestions worth making, in line with Chausson's observation that one should study the module itself.

One possible line of enquiry, not yet (to my knowledge) systematically explored, might be to analyse the mineralogical composition and structure of the marble of these artefacts. A comparison could thereby be made among these artefacts themselves, which might help establish whether they do, indeed, constitute a coherent and interrelated group, at the material, as well as at the iconographic level. A similar study might compare their marble type with that of fragments found in the course of excavations of the *Vigna Barberini*, and of the Forum. Were any such correspondence to be found, particularly with fragments from the top level of excavation of the *Vigna Barberini*, at which the Palatine Temple of Elagabal has been most probably located, such a correspondence might tend to support the thesis of their Palatine provenance. On the other hand, were correspondence to be found

[69] See discussion of Bigot's thesis by Castagnoli and Coarelli, both reviewed above.

with fragments from the Forum, say, from near their alleged findspot, such correspondence might tend to support an alternative thesis.

This seems, theoretically at least, to be a potentially useful step towards resolving the question of whether these artefacts do indeed constitute a group, and that of where they may have come from. Taking it in practice must be left to those with the proper scientific expertise.

Another line of possible enquiry concerns interpretation of the size and shape of these artefacts. It is noteworthy that most surviving ancient column capitals, littered about the Forum, and at other archaeological sites in Rome, or to be found in Roman museums, are at least twice the size of **A**, **B**, and **C**. The function of smaller capitals, such as these, therefore requires some explanation. The fact that they are all three left unsculpted on one side, δ, and that the shape of **A**'s underside, ζ, is not that of a square, but of a rectangle, approximately equal to two smaller squares, or to half of one larger, also requires explanation. (Side ζ on **B** and **C** may have been the same shape and size as on **A**. It is difficult to tell, since **B** and **C** are both so badly damaged.)

The lack of sculpture on side δ of **A**, **B**, and **C**, together with the dowel holes visible on side δ of **A**, seem to point to these capitals having been attached to some other structure, such as a wall, as was remarked of **A** by Wissowa, and later by Mercklin. If that were the case, they would not necessarily have had to bear the main load of the structure to which they pertained, since the wall to which they were attached could presumably have done so just as well, or indeed better. If they were, in that vital, load bearing respect, not integral to the construction of which they formed a part, then they could, with relative ease, have been introduced into an existing structure, and could also, just as easily, have been removed. This possibility may be invoked to support the theory that they were elements in the redecoration and rededication of an existing structure, perhaps by Varius, most likely to Elagabal, and that they were removed from that structure after Varius' death, in order to restore it to its original dedicatee, possibly Jupiter Ultor.

The half-square shape of the base (side ζ) of **A**, which may also have been that of **B** and **C**, together with the lack of sculpture on side δ of all three capitals, may likewise be taken to support such a theory. For there are two possible explanations of that shape and that lack: either these capitals correspond vertically to half-columns, themselves also horizontally attached – or, to use the proper technical term, engaged - to a wall, of the sort that were used as decorative elements in certain ancient structures,[70] or they correspond horizontally to other similarly

[70] Lawrence, A.W., (revised by Tomlinson, R.A.) *Greek Architecture*, 1983, p. 244, re the Philippeum at Olympia.

shaped capitals, of which they are, in fact, the other half, their joined bases forming a square, itself corresponding vertically to whole columns. Of these two possibilities, the former is the likelier.

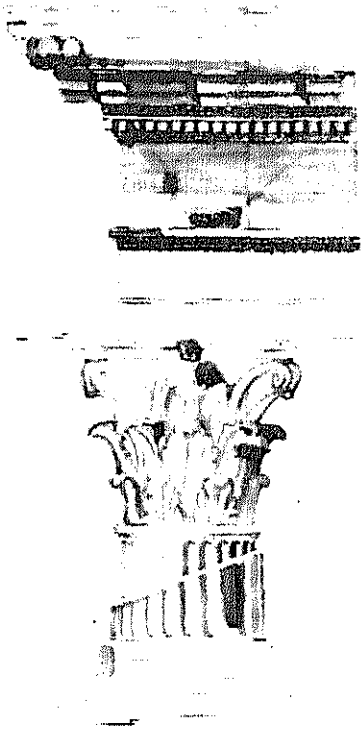

Fig. 82 - Il tempio: ricostruzione della decorazione realizzata sulla base di alcuni frammenti superstiti (J.-M.G.)

Column and entablature of a reconstruction of the Palatine Temple of Elagabal [71]

[71] From *Il Giardino dei Cesari*.guidebook to the exhibition of the excavations of the *Vigna Barberini* held in the Museo delle Terme. Rome. 2001-2002.

For if **A**, **B**, and **C** were only halves of capitals, whose missing halves, filling out their bases to the shape of a square, could have rested, together with **A**, **B**, and **C**, on top of whole columns, then it would indeed be likely that they were integral elements of structure, rather than merely decorative, since they would no longer have to be propped against a wall, but could be used as load-bearing elements themselves. But to sustain this supposition, one would have to explain why, given the availability in ancient Rome of whole blocks of marble, of many different sizes, with which to work, an imperial builder might have chosen to make capitals out of halves, since this would render them less stable, therefore less likely to be usable as integral elements in load-bearing structures. Thus it is more likely that these are indeed capitals once engaged to a wall, most likely resting atop half-columns similarly engaged.

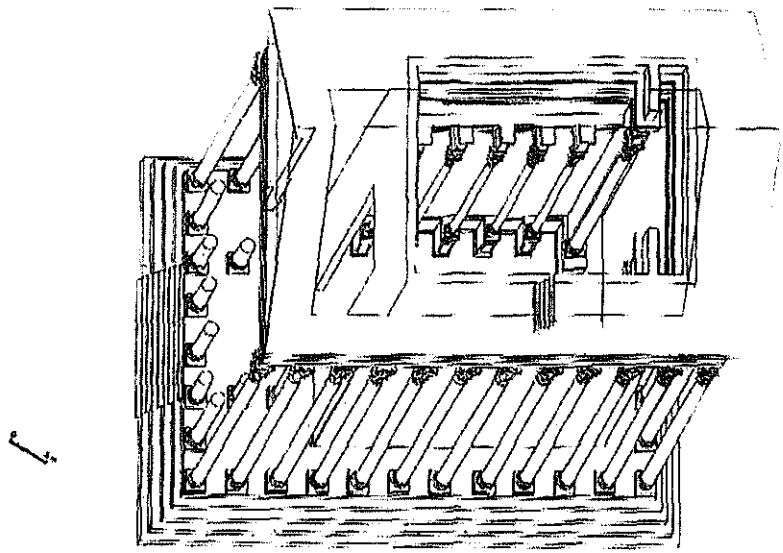

Fig. 83 - Il tempio: vista assonometrica della ricostruzione (J.-M.G)

Reconstruction of the Palatine Temple of Elagabal, showing the *cella* in the centre[72]

[72] *Il Giardino dei Cesari.*

With this in mind, it might be worthwhile to attempt to determine, in the light of what is known about architectural proportion in the relevant period, the approximate height of the columns (or half-columns) on which these capitals once rested. Given their relatively small size, compared to that of most capitals observable in Rome, it is likely that their corresponding columns would also turn out to be much smaller than those normally used as main load-bearing elements in the construction of Roman temples. Such hypothetical corresponding columns, together with these surviving capitals, might then be identified, not as main load-bearing elements, but rather as ornamental pieces, set within, and engaged to, a wall or other structure, in the context of a building whose main weight was supported by columns and capitals nearer to the usual size.

Regarding the question of what precise place within such a structure these capitals, and their corresponding columns, may have occupied, the likeliest surmise is that they were part of the decoration of the interior of the *cella* of a temple. If a temple were to be redecorated in the context of its rededication to another god, the *cella*, that inner sanctum where the god was supposed to reside, or at least to manifest himself, would be the space most likely to be altered. The inner walls of the *cella* might well be decorated, or redecorated, with relatively short half-columns, crowned by capitals such as these, as is the case in various ancient temples.[73]

Archaeological investigation of the level of the *Vigna Barberini* most likely corresponding to the Temple of Elagabal, excavated by archaeologists from *l'École Française de Rome*, whose results, exhibited at the *Museo delle Terme di Diocleziano* in Rome, in 2001-2002, are depicted in virtual reconstructions, based on computer simulations, and in architectural drawings and scale models, reproduced in the exhibition catalogue,[74] suggests the presence of precisely such rows of smaller columns, joined to main load-bearing structures, themselves supported by rows of larger columns. Such smaller columns could easily have been inserted into an existing structure, and just as easily removed, without endangering the stability of that structure.

Such an interpretation of the size and shape of these artefacts would render plausible an hypothesis whereby these capitals, together with their corresponding columns, could have been introduced - perhaps by Varius - into an existing temple – perhaps that of Jupiter Ultor on the Palatine. After Varius' death they could have been removed, and reused as fill at another building site.

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[73] Lawrence, A.W., (revised by Tomlinson, R.A.), op. cit., p. 248-9, re the Temple of Athena at Tegea.
[74] *Il Giardino dei Cesari*, Ed. Quasar, Roma, 2001, p. 84-106: *Il santuario di Elagabalus: un giardino sacro*; esp. Fig 70, p. 85, by Patrizia Veltri, and Fig 83, p.101, by J.-M. Gassend.

An hypothesis such as this is directly relevant to the question of whether the temple of Elagabal on the Palatine was built from the ground up, or merely rededicated, after appropriate redecoration, within the structure of an existing temple. If the existence in that temple of an ornamental structure of smaller columns and capitals, set within a load bearing structure of larger ones, is considered likely, as it appears to be from the drawings and models of that temple just referred to, and if these artefacts can be identified as likely to be part of such an ornamental structure, then redecoration and rededication seem a likely option, rather than building from the ground up. This would seem particularly plausible, in view of the brevity of Varius' reign, which did not afford much time for the completion of extensive building projects. It would also fit with the theory that the Varian temple of Elagabal was rededicated, after Varius' death, to Jupiter Ultor by Alexander Severus, as suggested by comparison of the two coins, one from each reign, depicting their respective temples.[75]

In connexion with those coins, and with their bearing on the question of the location of the Palatine temple of Elagabal, let it be remembered, as suggested above, that a persuasive, and – given the limited range of possible sites – virtually conclusive test of whether they both depict the site of that temple, and where on the Palatine that site is located, consists of asking, and seeking to answer, the following two questions:

Where, on the Palatine hill, was there, in the Severan period, a flat space, not otherwise occupied, large enough to accommodate such a huge building complex as that depicted on these coins of Elagabalus and Alexander?

Where, on the Palatine hill, is there a vantage point from which such a building complex could have been observed, at the precise angle implied by each of these coins?

Direct topographical investigation, a detailed account of which is given elsewhere in these studies,[76] provides an answer to each of the questions asked above, regarding the availability of sites, and the vantage points from which the views, respectively depicted on each of these coins, may be seen. That answer tends to support the thesis that the site of the Palatine temple of Elagabal was indeed that of the *Vigna Barberini*.

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[75] See discussion and comparison of these coins, above.

[76] ***The site of the Temple of Elagabal on the Palatine: a topographical approach to the question***, yet to be published.

Questions regarding these artefacts' political and religious significance.

The third set of questions that may be asked about these artefacts, that concerning their significance for the political and religious history of the reign with which they are associated, is the most complex and difficult to address. Addressing it at all depends on accepting, or at least entertaining, some hypothesis or other, relating to these artefacts' chronology and regnal assignation.

Most contributions to the discussion of this set of questions give their assent – with varying degrees of specificity and explicitness – to Studniczka's dating of **A**, and hence, by implication, of the rest of these artefacts, to the reign of Varius. They do so independently of whether they assign these artefacts' topographical origin to a Palatine temple of Elagabal, or to some structure in the Forum, built or reconditioned under Varius. Although both Hülsen and Altmann, and indeed Studniczka himself, consider **A**'s style to look somewhat – or even much - earlier than that of the late Severan period, they all concur in assigning **A**, on the basis of its clear iconographic link with the cult of Elagabal, to the reign of that dynasty's penultimate emperor, the high priest of Elagabal.

Adopting, on the strength of Studniczka's authority, or sometimes merely assuming, unexamined, that regnal assignation, several contributions to the discussion since 1902 of these artefacts allude to their religious and political significance, in the context of the reign of Varius, but leave their engagement with this issue at the level of allusion, or at the most of acknowledgement that such significance exists. None explores or develops any specific aspect of that significance, save one: Frey's ***Untersuchungen zur Religion und zur Religionspolitik des Kaisers Elagabal***, which rebuts Herodian's assertion that Varius wedded his god to Urania Caelestis as a replacement for the rejected Pallas Athene, on the grounds that, on **A**, both goddesses simultaneously caress the stone of Elagabal. Perhaps the relative scarcity of contributions to the discussion of these artefacts' religious and political significance is due to the fact that, in order to join in this part of the discussion, it is necessary to address the question of their chronology and regnal assignation, and to adopt, or at least to entertain, some hypothesis in this regard. This I now propose to do.

My own contribution to discussion of the third set of questions:

As noted above, the only contribution to this discussion that potentially challenges the assignation of these artefacts to the reign of Varius, is Domaszewski's, by assigning **A** to a *statio* of the Emesenes in the Forum, a structure that allegedly predates his reign. The flaws in Domaszewski's proposition of this thesis have already been examined, with the perhaps paradoxical result of concluding that it

cannot be dismissed, despite those flaws, because it could just, most unexpectedly, turn out to be correct.

It must, therefore, be admitted into the realm of further discussion, even if it is kept at the back of one's mind. This means that if one assumes, with the majority, that these artefacts do indeed pertain to the reign of Varius, and frames one's own contribution to the discussion of their religious and political significance on that basis, one runs a risk, however slight, of one's own contribution some day being rendered nonsense by the unexpected proof of Domaszewski's thesis.

That is a risk which I - perhaps more fully conscious of it than the rest of the contributors, since none of them has drawn attention to this dire implication of Domaszewski's thesis - am nevertheless prepared to take. To hedge against it, the use of provisos, and of potential and conditional locutions, should suffice. Since, moreover, Domaszewski does not himself propose any specific reign, to which these artefacts might be assigned, one is not obliged, in order to allow for his thesis, to develop specific propositions entertaining it.

Lest keeping Domaszewski's thesis in reserve, and hedging one's discourse to allow for it, seem too high a price to pay for methodological probity, it is as well to point to at least one positive benefit that is to be gained from keeping it in mind. Admitting that these artefacts could, perhaps, derive from a reign previous to that of Varius, has the salutary effect of deflating arguments, concerning their religious and political significance, tending to suppose that their iconography, and that in particular of **A**, necessarily points to the existence of a religious policy, designed to overthrow the rule of the traditional gods of Rome, subjecting them, and Rome itself, to that of Elagabal. Indeed, if **A** is attributed to any reign other than that of Varius, there is no reason to suppose that it indicates the existence of any particular imperial religious policy at all.

For no such accusation - the word is used advisedly, in response to the tone of allegations made by Studniczka, and echoed by other contributors to the discussion - has ever been made against Septimius Severus or his consort Domna, nor against their son, Caracalla, claimed by Varius as his father. If **A** were conclusively dated to either of the first two Severan reigns, the presence in its relief sculpture of the composite icon of Elagabal, flanked by two goddesses, one of whom is clearly Minerva, the other of whom may be Juno, or Venus, or some other deity, would not seem quite so monstrously subversive as it does to Studniczka.

Why, then, does it seem more likely to be so if we date **A** to the reign of Varius? Only because an historiographical tradition, one that is known to be hostile, and should therefore be treated with suspicion, says that such was Varius' intention. Such suspicion encourages a search for corroboration or contradiction of such

allegations, in materials other than the texts of ancient historiography. Although some of Varius' coinage asserts his own identity as high priest of Elagabal, it also contains issues dedicated to Jupiter, *Iovi Conservatori*, as preserver of Rome and of the emperor.[77] While his epigraphy, as well as his coinage, sometimes identifies him as high priest of Elagabal, it also refers to him as Pontifex Maximus, or head of the Roman state religion.[78] This seems far from subversive.

The precise significance of Varius' apparent desire to stress his role as high priest of Elagabal, and to promote the worship of that Syrian god in Rome, is a subject discussed in detail elsewhere in the group of studies to which this monograph belongs.[79] Suffice it here to say that the artefacts in question, and A in particular, provide no evidence that such a desire, if indeed it existed, necessarily implied, or in practice led to, the adoption by Varius of a policy designed to bring about the overthrow of Jupiter, and his replacement by Elagabal, as sovereign of the gods; not even if, as argued by Studniczka, the triad on A could be conclusively identified as a syncretistic *interpretatio* of the Capitoline triad.

For it is in the very nature of syncretism, if indeed its nature is definable at all, that it is inclusive, rather than exclusive: the preposition out of which the first half of the word itself is formed, *σύν*, implies inclusion and conjunction, not separation or exclusion. Even if A can be construed, by virtue of Elagabal's presence on this capital, in a position occupied in other sculptural contexts by Jupiter, to convey a message to the effect that Elagabal is equivalent to Jupiter, it should be remembered that equivalence works both ways: if Elagabal is equivalent to Jupiter, then Jupiter is equivalent to Elagabal. In other words, the presence of Elagabal in that position here implies that of Jupiter, who is also somehow present, albeit in the form of Elagabal.

Now it may be argued, on the basis of Dio's testimony, that such an equivalence, of Elagabal to Jupiter, and vice-versa, was not accepted by the Roman religious and political establishment, during the reign of Varius; indeed that it was precisely this emperor's attempt to propose, and impose, such an equivalence, that aroused such opposition to him.[80] While this may well be so, it does not mean that the proposition, or even the attempted imposition, of such equivalence, necessarily amounts to a policy of overthrow and substitution.

Such a policy is alleged by Studniczka, most probably under the influence of the ***Historia Augusta***, a work whose characterisation of Varius may well have little or

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[77] Thirion, Marcel. *Le Monnayage d'Élagabal, (218-222)*. 1968. p. 34. No. 105-110.
[78] E.g.: CIL 2, 4767, 4766, 4805, CIL 3, 3713, 6058.
[79] ***Studia Variana***, work in progress.
[80] Dio 80.11.1.

nothing to do with him, but rather with those Christian emperors for whom his fictional persona has been marshalled there to stand. Its implementation would have required, not only that Elagabal occupy the place of Jupiter on this capital, but also in other sculpture groups in which the Capitoline triad is otherwise identifiable, the statue of Jupiter having first been removed, and consigned to the scrap heap. There is no evidence, nor even any allegation, of any Varian campaign to remove Jupiter, and replace him with Elagabal. (There is, of course, the allegation that Varius removed the statues and cult-objects of other deities, specifically those of Pallas, and of Urania/Caelestis, from their proper places, and brought them to the temple of Elagabal to pay homage to that god, or to be wedded to him, but that is quite a different allegation, independently of whether it is true or not.[81])

Now one does not have to subscribe to Studniczka's assertion, that the three deities depicted on A as resting on platform or plinths constitute an *interpretatio* of the Capitoline triad, to agree that the placement of the sacred stone and eagle on a platform between the two goddesses on plinths constitutes a triad of some sort. Since such a triad, consisting of Elagabal, Allath, and Atargatis, is known to have existed in Syrian mythology, the triad on A can at least be thought likely to represent those Syrian deities, in Graeco-Roman guise, independently of whatever other linkages one may attribute to those deities individually, or to the triad as a whole, using the subtle and beguiling procedures of *interpretatio*. If that much can be regarded as established, then one must seek to understand the nature of the relationship between that triad and the other deities depicted on A, and those on the other artefacts, assuming these are all related.

The link of Minerva with Victoria, sacrificing a bull *veluti deorum maiorum famula*, was first remarked on in this context by Wissowa. The question he asked remains open: To whom is the sacrifice on A directed? If the direction in which Victoria faces is any indication, then, at least on A, she seems to sacrifice either to the goddess nearest to herself (who is not Minerva, whoever else she may be, since Minerva stands upon the other plinth, on side α), or to Elagabal, or to the triad as a whole. (It would be perverse to suggest that she sacrifices to Minerva, round the corner, ignoring the intervening deities.) Tellus, curving round the base of the capital, seems to be observing this sacrifice, whilst playing with the infant on her shank. Thus all the deities depicted on A seem to be involved in a single, simultaneous activity, whether as agents, dedicatees, or observers: the sacrifice of a bull by Victoria. It seems most likely, given the clear differentiation of the triad from the other figures on A, by virtue of its elevation on platform and plinths, that Victoria's sacrifice is directed to the triad as a whole, or if not, to Elagabal as its leading member and representative.

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[81] See discussion of this issue in the review of Studniczka's article, above.

But to whom does Victoria sacrifice on **B**? There, perched on side γ, she faces outward and, with relation to the capital itself, turns slightly backward, in the direction of its blank side, δ, perhaps towards a figure on another capital, facing her own across a nave or other space. Could that figure be Elagabal, on the corner of **A**? Quite possibly, but, alas, unverifiably so.

Finally, in considering the relationships among the deities depicted on these artefacts, one must account for the figure on side β of **C**. He is identified by Mercklin as the sun god, Sol. Now the sun god, whether in the form of Elagabal, or in that of Helios/Sol (to adopt the split nomenclature of the *Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae*), is often found on the reverses of Varius' Roman coinage, but never (so far as extant coins allow us to observe) in the form in which he is depicted on **C**: that of a charioteer. On most of the relevant coin types, the solar deity depicted is the sacred stone of Emesa, resting on a cart or tumbrel (rather than on a *pelta*, or racing chariot, as depicted on **C**), drawn by four horses. Given the angle of their legs, the pace of the horses on these coins must be slow and stately, quite unlike the speed implied by the way the charioteer on **C**'s cloak swirls around his missing head.[82]

On two Varian coin types, Helios/Sol is depicted anthropomorphically, as a striding figure, with a radiate crown.[83] One of these types, in which the striding Sol holds a whip, is also found on Roman coins of later reigns. The other, however, is unique to the reign of Varius. It bears the reverse legend *Soli Propugnatori*, and shows Sol with his characteristic radiate crown, striding energetically towards the right, wielding a lightning bolt in his right hand, and raising his left arm.[84] The face-on version of Helios/Sol as a charioteer depicted on **C**, classified in *LIMC* as type "g) *su quadriga di prospetto*," is to be found, according to that catalogue, reproduced in numerous different sorts of materials, including three relief sculptures dated to the 2nd and 3rd centuries A.D.[85] The descriptions given of these roughly correspond to what is left of the figure on **C**.

Steven Hijmans, in his article in *BABESCH*, 71, 1996, reviewed above, argues that the "common opinion," conflating Elagabal, the solar god of Emesa, with Sol Invictus, is mistaken. Hijmans sees these as distinct deities, unrelated in origin. While Elagabal is always represented, on the coins of Varius and of others, as a baetyl, with or without an eagle, Sol Invictus may be represented in a variety of forms, including that of a charioteer, and that of the striding figures on the Varian coins just cited. Hijmans, stressing both the Roman origin of Sol Invictus, and the

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[82] Thirion, op. cit, p. 72-75, Nos. 358a-365.
[83] LIMC IV, 1, *Helios/Sol*, col. 600, f) Figura intera incedente: Monete, nrs. 118-119.
[84] Thirion, op. cit, p. 74-75, No. 366.
[85] LIMC, IV, 1, *Helios/Sol*, col. 600-602.

familiarity of Romans with his "normal [numismatic] iconography," that of the striding figure, points out that the uniquely Varian type of this figure, that wielding a lightning bolt, rather than a whip, is one of very few to bear a legend: *Soli Propugnatori*. Presumably the "normal" figure, wielding a whip or holding a globe, was so familiar to the Romans as not to require any legend. Hijmans also points out that the uniqueness of this Varian type of Sol consists precisely in his bearing the characteristic attribute of Jupiter: the lightning bolt. "Elagabal, of course, was a Ba'al, and Ba'alim were normally identified as Zeus/Jupiter...Was this adjustment in the normal iconography of Sol made in order to bring Sol closer to the Ba'al of Emesa by giving him an attribute of Jupiter? If this was the case, then the fact that such a modification was considered is further evidence that the normal Sol of Rome was no closer to Elagabal of Emesa than to any other local solar deity of the Roman empire." [86]

118

119

Sol 118 (calco). 119

Sol Propugnator (118) and a more common depiction of Helios/Sol (119) [87]

The following conjecture presents itself: if Hijmans argument is valid, then the presence of Helios/Sol on C would seem, if C is related to A, to indicate that Varius, if both C and A are related to Varius, acknowledged the distinction between Elagabal and Sol Invictus. Conversely, if the presence of Helios/Sol, on a capital commissioned by Varius as part of a set of artefacts also showing Elagabal, means that Varius acknowledged the difference between these two deities, this would support Hijmans' argument. Unfortunately, there are too many unresolved

[86] Himans, op. cit. p. 136.
[87] *LIMC* IV.2

"ifs" in the first form of this conjecture, while the premise of its second, converse form depends, not only on the resolution of those "ifs," but on the very conclusion it sets out to reach.

There is, however, an independent way, if not to establish a positive affirmation, to the effect that Varius acknowledged and respected the distinction between Sol Invictus and Elagabal, at least to determine whether he ever contravened or overrode that distinction: to see whether he ever in his coinage or official inscriptions, conflated or juxtaposed their respective nomenclatures.

So far as his Roman coinage goes, the result is negative. Its index of legends records Invictus for only one type: *Invictus Sacerdos Aug(ustus)*. Sol appears conjoined with Elagabal on three different types, and once in the form, cited above, of the uniquely Varian type, *Soli Propugnatori*. In no extant type is Elagabal found together with Sol Invictus.[88] The corpus of Varian inscriptions, however, tells a different story. Here one finds Sol Invictus joined with Elagabal in Varius' priestly titulature: *Sacerdos Amplissimus Dei Solis Invicti Elagabali*.[89]

This does not, of course, necessarily affect Hijmans' thesis with regard to the independence and native Roman origin of Sol Invictus, based as that thesis is on evidence from other reigns, as well as this. It may merely show that Varius sought, at least in his inscriptions, to conflate these two deities. Why he may have wished to do so there, but not in his coinage, is a subject to be discussed elsewhere in this group of studies.

Turning back to these artefacts, and assuming, for the sake of argument, and with all due provisos, that **C** is related to **A**, and that both can be assigned to the reign of Varius, it is worth asking why the sculptor or workshop that produced them represented Helios/Sol on **C** as a charioteer, driving a *pelta*, rather than imitating Varius' coinage, and either reproducing, yet again, the sacred stone of Emesa, or the radiate-crowned walker, wielding a lightning bolt. Might this choice of iconography not reflect the recorded passion for chariot racing of the emperor who, if that assignation is correct, might have commissioned this sculpture? That passion is attested not only by ancient historiography - which on its own, especially when referring to Varius, is always suspect - but also by the massive remains of a private stadium he allegedly ordered built, next to his summer palace, in what was then a suburb of Rome. [90] Again, this is a question to which we shall probably never know the answer, but it is still worth asking, nevertheless.

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[88] Thirion, *Monnayage*, p. 102-104, *Index des Légendes*.
[89] For example, in: Ceka, Hasan, *Dega jugore e rrugës Egnatia*, *Monumenet*, 2, 1971, p.27. Further examples to be cited in *Epigraphica Variana*, part of the present group of studies.
[90] Paterna, Claudia, *Il Circo Variano a Roma*, *MEFRA*, 108, 1996-2, p. 817-853.

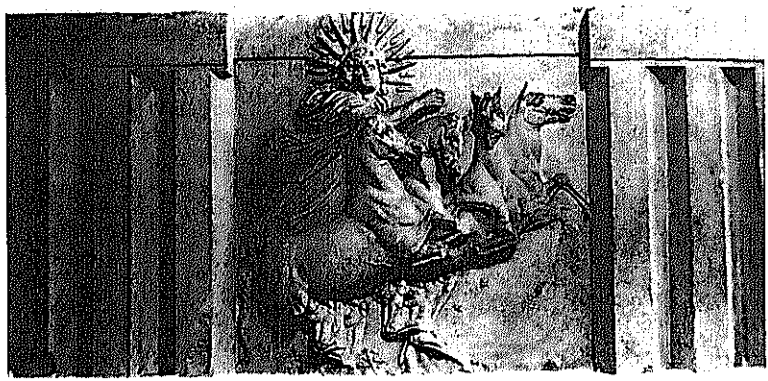

Fig. 9. Relief, metope, Helios; ca. 300 B.C. Berlin, Staatliches Museum SK 71-72.

Helios/Sol as charioteer

This observation brings to an end the section of this monograph devoted to examining the state, in 2002, of the third set of questions concerning these artefacts: that of their religious and political significance.

Schematic summary of the state of the question in 2002.

At this point it is advisable, for the sake of clarity, to set out in schematic form, as was done in describing the state of the question in 1902, that obtaining at the time of this writing, in 2002. This updated list of points takes into account not only new materials brought into consideration, and theories or interpretations proposed, in contributions by others to the discussion of these artefacts since 1902, but also points raised by my examination of those contributions, and of these artefacts themselves. It now consists of a series of hypotheses, expressed in terms of the following list of propositions:

- These artefacts' generic identification, on the basis of their alleged unity of findspot,[91] and of a surmise concerning the smaller fragments,[92] as well as of that of their iconography,[93] as most likely constituting a coherent group, consisting of three Corinthian column

[91] Jordan, (Boni) Hülsen, Mercklin.
[92] Mercklin.
[93] Arrizabalaga.

capitals, designated **A**,**B**,**C**,[94] decorated with relief sculpture, and three (once four) smaller fragments, designated **D**,**E**,**F**, **(G)** [95].

- Identification of the iconography of **A** with the cult of Elagabal,[96] and with those of other deities represented in its relief sculpture: certainly Minerva/Pallas/Allath, [97] Victoria, [98] and Tellus; [99] possibly Juno/Atargatis, [100] or Venus/Aphrodite/Atargatis, [101] or some other goddess.[102] Identification of the iconography of **B** with Victoria, and of **C** with Helios/Sol. [103]

- Detailed identification and description of the figures and foliage represented on these artefacts, as follows:

A: From left to right, round the intersection of sides α & β: Minerva, Elagabal, and, arguably, Juno or Venus, with Elagabal represented as a composite icon of eagle and baetyl atop a draped platform, and the two flanking goddesses standing on plinths, thus constituting a triad of some sort; continuing, from left to right on β: at mid-level, Victoria, genuflecting, sacrificing a bull; below her, at base-level, Tellus, reclining, with a cornucopia in her hand, and an infant on her right shank; at top-level, in the cleavages between the volutes and helices, traces of two griffins, and the base of what may have been a flower, or a wreath or garland framing a bust.

B: From left to right, on β: central figure missing, snapped off at rounded base; traces of griffin wings above caulis. On γ: Victoria, genuflecting, in the sacrificial attitude; below her, possible traces of the neck of a bull. On the corner of β and γ: possible trace of the shoulder of a reclining figure.

C: Centred, on β: chariot with fragments of two horses, driven by Helios, with a (headless) bust, possibly of a female, above his own (missing) head, flanked by the lower halves of two eagles.

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[94] In lower case by Mercklin, upper by Arrizabalaga.
[95] Ditto; designation "G" for the missing fragment mentioned by Mercklin added by Arrizabalaga.
[96] Studniczka.
[97] Studniczka.
[98] Wissowa, Studniczka.
[99] Wissowa, Studniczka.
[100] Studniczka.
[101] Seyrig.
[102] Arrizabalaga.
[103] Mercklin.

D: Fragment of an abacus flower with the headless bust of a young man in a chlamys.

E: Fragment of an abacus flower with the headless bust of a woman, elaborately draped.

F: Fragment of a female figure, facing left.

G (missing): Bust of a man, with raised forearm, and drapery bunched over his right shoulder.

- On the basis of the individual identifications of deities depicted in their relief sculpture, the hypothesis that **A**, **B**, and **C** are all related to a cult, centred on Elagabal, involving all the other deities identified.[104]

- On the basis of the specific linkage of their iconography to the cult of Elagabal, their chronological assignation to the reign of the penultimate emperor of the Severan dynasty, who was the chief promoter of that cult in Rome,[105] designated here as Varius.[106]

- While maintaining a Severan chronology (presumably on the basis of iconography), the observation that **A** seems earlier in style.[107]

- On the basis of their generic identification as column capitals, and of the generally religious nature of their iconography, assignation of their origin to a temple or other religious building,[108] although one dissenting theory suggests a *statio*, a secular structure.[109]

- With regard to the question of the identity and location of the structure whence they may originally derive, the emergence of two distinct schools of thought: one assigning them to a temple of Elagabal, allegedly (according to ancient historiography) dedicated to that God on the Palatine;[110] another assigning them to some structure, variously identified, nearer their alleged findspot in the Forum.[111]

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[104] For **A** alone: Studniczka, Hiller, et al.; for **A**,**B**, & **C**: Arrizabalaga.
[105] Studniczka.
[106] Arrizabalaga.
[107] Studniczka, Hülsen, Altmann.
[108] Wissowa, Studniczka.
[109] Domaszewski.
[110] Cumont, Strong, L'Orange, Bartoli, Milik, Barnes, Castagnoli, Turcan and Coarelli.
[111] Hülsen's *sacellum*, Butler's "chapel," Domaszewski's *statio*, Pernier's *edicola*.

- An observation that the *statio*, cited in the aforementioned dissenting theory with respect to these artefacts' origin, is alleged to have existed before the reign of Varius.[112] Deduction, on the basis of that allegation, taken as a premise, dating their manufacture to a period previous to Varius.[113] Objection, observing that this deduction does not necessarily follow from that premise.[114]

Abbreviations used in text and footnotes:

APARAR = Atti della Pontificia Accademia Romana di Archeologia, Rendiconti

ARW = Archiv für Religionswissenschaft

BAGB = Bulletin de l'Association Guillaume Budé

BAMBCA = Bollettino di Archeologia del Ministero per i Beni Culturali e Ambientali

BCAR = Bulletino della Commissione Archeologica Comunale di Roma

BHAC = Bonner Historia-Augusta-Colloquium

BICA = Bullettino dell' Instituto di Corrispondenza Archeologica

HA/AH = Historia Augusta, Antoninus Heliogabalus

JDAI = Jahrbuch des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts

LIMC = Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae

MAIBL = Mémoires présentées par divers savants à l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles Lettres

MKDAIRA = Mitteilungen des Kaiserlich Deutschen Archaeologischen Instituts, Roemische Abteilung

OCD = Oxford Classical Dictionary

RE = Pauly's Real-Encyclopädie der Classischen Altertumswissenschaft

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[112] Domaszewski.
[113] Domaszewski.
[114] Arrizabalaga.

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