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Trajan's Column Reliefs and Dio's Texts. The First Dacian War and Imperial Propaganda.

The present study deals with some aspects of Imperial ideology and propaganda as reflected on the Column's reliefs (scene IX, scene XXIV) and, probably, in the excerpts from Cassius Dio's the historical work of (LXVIII, 8). Imperial propaganda had established a behavioral paradigm for Trajan, who was *ab Iove electus* and, consequently, acted as *Iupiter fulminans*, or *Iupiter Victor* in the First Dacian War. Scene XXIV (the so-called battle of Tapae) shows Jupiter's direct intervention on the battlefield, and that use of the personified divine character in the human world of the figurate frieze indicates the Optimus Princeps' jovian charisma. In the present attempt to reconstruct the Trajanic divine charisma I will use one fragment from Cassius Dio's historical work (LXVIII, 8), where the ancient historian talks about the same battle: here Trajan acts like an Homeric Apollo *medicus* (or like Apollo in the battle from *Algidus mons* - Liv., IV. 25, 3-4), bandaging the Roman soldiers with his own clothes. The image and the text reveal a *modus operandi* of the Imperial *Genius* during the battle, like Jupiter and Apollo, which provides the Roman Army *uictoria* and *ualetudo*.

Another controversial relation previously established between a scene from the Column and a text from Cassius Dio refers to scene IX and the beginning of excerpt LXVIII, 8, namely the scene with the so-called "giant mushroom" and the mentions of the Buri and their message written on a mushroom. I do not agree with this interpretation presented by R. Vulpe, neither with those, far more elaborated, by Liliana Marinescu-Nicolajsen. The new meaning assigned to the character fallen off his mule in front of the Emperor, the so-called mushroom interpreted as an instrument for sifting the golden sand, leave aside the traditional interpretation (Buri and the written mushroom) and the text of Cassius Dio. I will argue for another explanation for the scene (starting from the general antique meaning of falling from donkeys and mules before a battle), without the help of Dio's text.

Our study focuses both on the instruments of imperial propaganda and the ways in which modern historians interpret the figurate frieze: with or without the help of the written text preserved from Antiquity.