

## LATIN PANEGYRICS USED FOR IMPERIAL PROPAGANDA AS EXEMPLIFIED BY CONSTANTINE THE GREAT<sup>a</sup>

Irena Ljubomirović

University of Niš, Faculty of Philosophy, Department of History, Niš, Serbia  
*irena.ljubomirovic@filfak.ni.ac.rs*

### Abstract

This paper is a brief review of the development of Latin prose panegyrics in the fourth century AD. It focuses on the value of panegyrics, which were one of the most important instruments of emperor's propaganda. I analyzed two panegyrics from 310 and 311, of Constantine the Great, delivered in Trier. With the two examples I showed whether and to what extent the official imperial policy influenced the writing of panegyrics.

**Key words:** Latin panegyrics, Trier, imperial ideology, religious orientation

## ЛАТИНСКИ ПАНЕГИРИЦИ У СЛУЖБИ ЦАРСКЕ ПРОПАГАНДЕ НА ПРИМЕРУ КОНСТАНТИНА ВЕЛИКОГ

### Апстракт

У раду је начињен кратак осврт на развој латинског беседништва у IV веку. Указано је на значај панегирика који су били један од најзначајних инструмената царске пропаганде. Посебно су анализирана два говора посвећена Константину Великом из 310. и 313. године одржана у Триеру. На примеру ова два говора показали смо да ли је и у којој мери званична царска политика утицала на састављање говора.

**Кључне речи:** латински панегирици, Триер, царска идеологија, религијска оријентација

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### INTRODUCTION

In the era of the late Empire, a festive oratory was developed as a special kind of the classical Greek oratory, whose aim was to present the achievements and the emperor himself in the best possible light in front of his subjects to whom a speech was read out. Eleven panegyrics were saved in Latin, modeled on Pliny's speech to emperor Trajan, which were used to praise Roman emperors in the period from 289 to 389 AD (Nixon and Rodgers, 1994). The emperor used encomiasts as a means of his political propaganda, so the panegyrists wrote them with the intention to be read publicly, usually during the commemorations of imperial jubilees (Nixon and Rodgers, 1994, p. 334, sq. IV) or after the emperor's victory over the enemy (Nixon and Rodgers, 1994, p. 289, sq. IX). Late Roman panegyrics were created seriously and were slowly becoming outdated. They were directed to the contemporaries, specifically to that group of residents who were able to hear them (Mac Cormack, 1976, p. 55). If historians should try to use panegyrics as a source of historical events, they would find themselves facing serious problems. Namely, panegyrists would often omit names of the enemies, avoid stating names of the cities, or follow chronology, since the aim of a panegyric was rather to praise the emperor than to describe events and present certain evidence. That is the difference between the late Roman and Pliny's panegyrics, which were meaningful, considerably more neutral, and impartial when presenting facts. In the late Roman panegyrics, events were often not shown in detail; a panegyrist would sometimes not specify them, which left room for the description of the emperor's achievements. The events were presented in a manner in which the monarch wanted them to be seen (Liebeschuetz, 1979, pp. 237-238).

A panegyric was one of the instruments of propaganda which was considered to be an accurate reflection of the state policy and the emperor to whom it was dedicated. Constantine was dedicated five sermons that are an integral part of the proceedings "Latin panegyrics" (*Panegyrici Latini*) created during the fourth century (Nixon and Rodgers, 1994, p. 178, sq. VII; p. 212, sq. V; p. 289, sq. XII). This paper will discuss two panegyrics addressed to Constantine and given in Trier. The first sermon carrying the number VI was held in the summer of 310 AD and contains a special message expressed through the report on Constantine's vision in the Temple of Apollo (Rodgers, 1980, pp. 371-384; Warmington, 1974, pp. 371-384). The other panegyric was created in 313 AD, and it is interesting because a panegyrist was met with a new situation that had to be included – the emperor had radically changed his religious orientation. The problem lay in how to present the emperor's Christian conversion and not disappoint the audience, which also consisted of pagans (Odahl, 1990, pp. 45-63).

*THE AGE OF TETRARCHS*

In the years preceding the creation of the panegyrics (310 and 313 AD), the Tetrarchic system was in crisis. The territories of the Roman Empire were divided among the four rulers: Galerius controlling Illyria, Maximinus Daia controlling Asia Minor and Egypt, Maxentius holding Italy and Africa, while Constantine controlled provinces in Gaul and Germania (Mirković, 2014, pp. 152-153). Although the meeting in Carnuntum held on November 11, 308 AD was supposed to resolve the issues about the division of power, none of the actors were satisfied with the decisions of the meeting. It was agreed that the East would still remain in control of Augustus Galerius and Caesar Maximinus Daia. In the West, Constantine was to gain the title of Caesar instead of the position of Augustus. Licinianus Licinius was proclaimed Augustus instead of Flavius Severus. Both Maximinus Daia and Constantine were dissatisfied with the titles of Caesars (SAN XII, 2008, pp. 91-93; Barnes, 1981, pp. 34-35; Leadbetter, 2009, pp. 200-205). Although Maximinus, Constantine's father-in-law, who swore an oath to be faithful to his son-in-law, he soon turned against Constantine (Pan. Lat. VI 15,6).

The Rhine limes was threatened by the Franks, so Constantine had to go to war against the barbarians. Lactantius stated that Maximinus managed to convince his son-in-law to march with a smaller number of troops, while, with the help of the remaining army, he would try to take power (Lact. *De mort. pers.* 29,4.). This data is confirmed by the panegyrist from 310 AD, who stated that Constantine surrendered part of his army to Maximinus (Pan. Lat. VI 14,6). However, Constantine did not do that because he trusted his father-in-law but because there was a threat from Maxentius. It was necessary to defend the southern areas of Gaul from possible attacks from Italy, which forced Maximinus to have the army under his command (Barnes, 1981, p. 34). Yet, Maximinus used this situation to proclaim himself the emperor for the third time in Arles (Pan. Lat. VI, 14-20). The panegyrist stated that the troops remained loyal to Constantine, but since the part of the army remained under the command of Maximinus, he probably managed to gain upon those who wavered presenting them with rich gifts (Pan. Lat. VI 16,2 to 17,4). As soon as Constantine learned of his father-in-law's proclamation, he rushed to Arelate. The army was partly moving on land, in order to come down the river Arar (now the Saône) by ships to its confluence into the Rhodanus (now the Rhône) in Lugdunum. Lactantius and a panegyrist from 310 AD wrote about the great speed with which Constantine and the army were moving towards Arelate. The army was so eager to deal with Maximinus that they themselves were rowing down the slow river of Arar (Lact. *De mort. pers.* 29,6; Pan. Lat. VI 18). Maximinus transferred from Arelate to Massilia (present Marseille), since there he could defend himself easier because the city was better fortified. Constantine's attempt to take over Massilia ended without success. The panegyrist even here tried to justify Constantine, pointing out that the

emperor could have taken over Massilia, but that he wanted to prevent his soldiers, eager to get revenge, to ransack the city (Pan. Lat. VI 19, 1-20,1).

The panegyrist's partiality, lack of objectivity, and attempt to present the emperor's weakness and failure as his gentleness and good intention to spare his enemies were obvious. The emperor's failure had to be covered in every way and the panegyrist did it by offering misleading information. The truth was that Constantine could not take the town with an onslaught, and he wanted to avoid the long siege of the city at all costs, so he entered into negotiations with his father-in-law. The negotiations were unsuccessful, but in the meantime, the army in the town turned against Maximinus and handed him over to Constantine, who spared his life (Lact. De mort. pers. 29,6; Pan. Lat. VI 20, 2-3). However, it must have been clear to Constantine that as long as Maximinus was alive, he would pose a threat to his power in the western provinces. This was likely the reason why he decided to put him to death. The sources tried to justify Constantine's decision and Lactantius stated that Maximinus conspired against Constantine and persuaded his daughter Fausta to kill her husband. Having caught Maximinus in the conspiracy, Constantine allowed him to choose how to die, and the former chose to be hanged (Lact. De mort. pers. 30).

After his death, Maximinus was sentenced to *damnatio memoriae* as well, and erasure of the memory of him was conducted both in the western and eastern provinces. Since the founder of Maximinus's family was Hercules, whom Constantine also accepted after becoming related to Maximinus, after his father-in-law's execution the ties with the lineage of Hercules were severed. That was why a new origin was to be found for Constantine. It was the emperor's visit to the Temple of Apollo in today's Grand in the Vosges that the panegyrist used to associate Constantine to the new patron – god Apollo, but also to the 'new' emperor's ancestor – Claudius II Gothic. In an anonymous panegyric given in the summer of 310 in the city of Trier, Constantine's vision of Apollo was described. In modern historical science there was a controversy over two issues: whether Constantine really had a vision and, if so, what he saw or what he thought he saw (Ferjančić, 2014, pp. 415-423 with earlier literature). Therefore, at this point we will not deal with these issues, but focus on the question: in what way was Constantine's vision presented in the panegyric supposed to serve the purpose of propaganda of the emperor's politics? The vision of Apollo had to come from Constantine himself, because it was the only way for it to be learned, and that is why it is assumed that it was the emperor himself who ordered the panegyric in which the vision should be described and introduced to the audience in Gaul. The anonymous panegyrist said at the beginning that after Maximinus' defeat and death, Constantine was on his way to Trier when he learned that the Franks, in the absence of the emperor, became restless. After learning that the barbarians calmed down, Constantine decided to turn off the road and visit the temple of Apollo in Grand in order to make a

sacrifice as a sign of gratitude for the victory over Maximinus and the becalming of the Franks. The orator further alleged that in the temple Constantine saw Apollo in the company of the Goddess of Victory and then got laurel wreaths, which carried a prediction about the long rule and lifetime longer than the one the fabulous Nestor enjoyed (Pan. Lat. VI 21, 4-7).

Presenting emperors as being closely associated with some of the deities was nothing out of the ordinary in the fourth century, because they were prominent figures believed (or also popularly believed) to be able to have direct contact with the deity (Bremmer, 2006, pp. 57-79). Such performance of the emperor was supposed to strengthen his position even more and provoke admiration among his subjects. Bearing in mind that it was not common for the orator to contrive such details, it is therefore assumed that Constantine himself requested to be presented in a close encounter with Apollo, a deity often identified with the Unconquered Sun (*Sol Invictus*), to which the emperor would turn after 310 AD, and, as evidenced by the emission of money with a presentation of this deity and the legend of the Unconquered Sun, a companion (*Soli Invicto comiti*) (Sutherland, 1967, pp. 102-116).

#### THE LATIN PANEGYRIC FROM 310. AD

In modern historical science there are researchers who state that the panegyric from 310 AD was actually created with the aim to win the favor of Gallic aristocracy (Bremmer, 2006, p. 16). However, if we bear in mind that Apollo revealed to Constantine that he was the emperor predestined to rule the whole world and who was solely meant to rule (*teque in illius specie recognovisti, cui totius mundi regna deberi vatum carmina divina cecinerunt*) (Pan. Lat. VI 21, 5-6), it is clear that the panegyric was also to be used to spread the reigning ideology. The first time the orator spoke of Constantine as the new God created for the people, he linked him to gods Bacchus and Mercury (*Di boni, quid hoc est quod semper ex aliquo supremo fine mundi noua deum numina universo orbi colenda descendunt? Sic Mercurius a Nilo, cuius fluminis origo nescitur, sic Liber ab Indis prope cosciis solis orientis deos se gentibus ostendere praesentes*) (Pan. Lat. VI 9.4). When introducing Apollo, who appeared to Constantine, into the panegyric, he did not equate them and used the possessive pronoun 'tuus' (*your*) Apollo, not 'tu, Apollo' (*Vidisti enim, credo, Constantine, Apollinem tuum....*) (Pan. Lat. VI 21.4). This is precisely the reason why Barbara Saylor Rodgers made the assumption that in the temple of Apollo Constantine did not see himself in the image of the divinity itself, but in the image of the first Roman emperor Octavian Augustus (Rodgers, 1980, p. 270). Constantine was represented as young, cheerful, and handsome, and health-bringing, and he was foretold to rule the entire world, which could also apply to Octavian Augustus. Constantine was foretold by the gods in his vision that he would rule the

whole world, while in the case of Octavian the foretelling was delivered by poets, first and foremost the poet Virgil, who, in his poem “Aeneid”, announced Augustus’ reign as the beginning of the Golden Age. It is less important whether Constantine saw himself in the image of Apollo or Octavian Augustus. It is the moment in which the panegyric was created that is important (after Maximinus’ execution) as well as the emperor’s turn towards Apollo, often identified with the Unconquered Sun, which would become the new protector of the emperor.

The orator had two tasks before him – first, to justify Maximinus’ execution and then to associate Constantine with some prominent emperor because he broke up the relation to the Herculian family. It was hard to prove the facts of Constantine’s non-involvement with Maximinus’ death, hence the orator only presented the story of Maximinus’ conspiracy and spoke of his death in a direct way (Pan. Lat. VII 20, 3-4). In 307 AD, Constantine was Maximinus’ son-in-law, associating himself with the Herculians, which was supposed to strengthen and secure his position in the empire and to ensure his authority in the provinces that he inherited from his father (Jones, 1964, p. 38; Barnes, 1981, p. 11). At first, father- and son-in-law acted in unity as *imperatores semper Herculii* (Pan. Lat. VII 2,5), but after Constantine discovered Maximinus’ alleged plot and after which Maximinus killed himself, Constantine rejected protectors of the Tetrarchy, Hercules and Mars, so it became necessary for him to establish a ‘relationship’ with a former real emperor. Constantine decided that this should be Claudius II Gothic (268-270), a ruler who gained great fame and reputation by his victory over the Goths near Naissus. Emperor Claudius II Gothic was close enough to Constantine, speaking in terms of time, and the kinship between them could have had a real basis, but at the same time the emperor was far enough from Constantine’s contemporaries in order for them to know the details of this kinship (Krsmanović-Radošević, 2004, p. 73). The anonymous panegyrist was the first to introduce this piece of information into the history and point out to the right of Constantine to rule due to his origin (Pan. Lat. VI 2-3, 2). The panegyrist said that when the emperor entered the court in Trier, destined to rule, there “ancestral lares” had already been waiting for him (*Sacrum istud palatium non cadidatus imperii sed designatus intrasti, confestimque te illi paterni lares successorem uidere legitimum*) (Pan. Lat. VI 4,1).

By introducing Claudius II Gothic, as a descendent ruler, Constantine established the principle of dynastic succession of power, thus rejecting the tetrarchic rule of adoption of the heir to the throne. It is clear that, since Constantine wanted to secure the throne for his sons, he had to get rid of his co-rulers and independently rule the empire. Another step towards this goal was the introduction of a new patron god, and the decision was made for it to be Apollo, most often identified with the Unconquered Sun (Alföldi, 1948, 5-6). In the second half of the third century, it was believed that the

Sun was the supreme deity above all others. Since the Unconquered Sun was the protector both of Claudius Gothic and Constantius, Constantine's father, it is no surprise that this deity was chosen. It is possible that the Emperor had a deep commitment to the Unconquered Sun with whom he was born and raised, so the deity was the most acceptable from the whole pantheon of the Roman gods (Ljubomirović, Stamenković-Šaranac, 2014, p. 542). Standing close to the cult of this deity which had strong monotheistic elements, Constantine sought to openly express his aspiration for an independent ruling.

The panegyric from 310 AD was created in Gaul where the Emperor lived, with short interruptions, from 307 AD and the wedding to Fausta up to 316 AD (Barnes, 1982, pp. 67-73). The panegyrist was the court orator, spending time at the court of the emperor, and had contact with court officials. His most important role was to compose a speech that would promote imperial policy. One of the most common themes of panegyrics written in the first half of the fourth century was the imperial success in the war, that it was the emperor of practice and his military power (Mac Cormack, 1976, p. 64). Historical background of panegyrics in the age of Tetrarchy was militant and pagan and therefore panegyrics stressed precisely this side of the emperor's personality. Personal religion of the emperor at the beginning of Constantine's reign had not yet been the subject of panegyrics. Not until many years later would Eusebius make the religious orientation of the emperor officially relevant, since the emperor's religion affected the whole empire: it was no longer only his personal matter, but a means of his victory over all opponents. Eusebius pointed to a strong connection between the emperor and God, and that his attitudes had to be a part of the official cult of the emperor is also confirmed by the iconography of the official imperial art (Radošević, 1994, p. 10). Nevertheless, Constantine's biographer wrote many years later, when Constantine had already sufficiently declared himself as a Christian. At the same time, Eusebius himself was a Christian. From Eusebius' panegyrics it is clear that he was aware of the importance of the emperor's religious policies, but he included it into his work only after it had become a part of the official imperial cult. Therefore, panegyrists from the beginning of Constantine's reign, when paganism was still the official religion of the empire, believed that Constantine's conversion to Christianity was still only his personal matter and was therefore not suitable to enter into the official panegyric. The fact is that the main issue in the panegyrics was still Constantine's defense of the Rhine border and his victory over the Germans. Panegyrists believed that the defense of the Rhine was vital and Constantine was given all the credit for maintaining stability along the Rhine border (Nixon and Rodgers, 1994, pp. 30-35).

*THE PANEGYRIC FROM 313. AD - AN EXPRESSION OF NEW  
RELIGION ORIENTATION OF EMPEROR CONSTANTINE*

Another panegyric, carrying the number XII, was apparently ordered in August, in the summer of 313 in Trier (Nixon and Rodgers, 1994, p. 289, sq. XII). After the victory Constantine took over Maxentius in the battle of the Milvian Bridge on October 28, 312 AD, the emperor entered Rome, where he was welcomed as a liberator. Constantine behaved as such, repealing all the exiled usurper's opponents to return to Rome, while he showed great mercy to the supporters of his opponent (Pan. IX 5.6; 12.1). The victory over Maxentius brought Constantine control over Italy and Africa, thus these provinces were returned to the legitimate imperial ruler. Constantine's position was additionally secured thanks to the honors received from the Senate, which declared him the first Augustus (Lact. *De mort. pers.* 44.11). The ruler spent about two months in Rome, after which he headed towards Mediolanum, where, in the beginning of February, he met with Licinius. The meeting of the two co-rulers resulted in a politics of religious tolerance – the issuing of the Edict of Milan (Lact. *De mort. pers.* 48; Euseb. *Hist. Eccl.* X 5.1-14).

The document provided religious tolerance and freedom of creed for all religions as well as for the thus far prohibited Christianity. All gods, including the Christian God, were supposed to protect the emperor and his subjects in order to establish peace and prosperity in the empire. By the policy of religious tolerance, the two rulers, Constantine and Licinius, secured support of the ever increasing number of Christian communities, which greatly strengthened their power (Barnes, 1981, pp. 64-68). After the meeting in Mediolanum, Constantine had to face the danger that threatened the empire from the Germanic tribes on the Rhine. Namely, the Franks and the Alemanni, who lived in the area between the Rhine and the Elbe, attacked the Roman territory in Lower Germania. Constantine went straight from Mediolanum to the Rhine limes where he attacked the Alemanni and the Franks, and not only did he drive them away from the Lower Germania but he also razed the area in which they lived (Pan. Lat. IX 21, 5-23; Barnes, 1982, p. 71).

After the victory over the barbarians, the emperor went to Trier, where he was met with ceremonies celebrating all his successes, while the subjects enjoyed the emperor's arrival (*adventus*) (Pan. Lat. IX 18.3-20; Mac Cormack, 1981, pp. 17-89). He was honored a triumphal procession, and circuses and gladiatorial shows were held for several days as well as games during which the beasts fought against barbarians captured during the previous battles along the Rhine (Pan. Lat. IX 23). On such an occasion only a panegyric was missing, to be publicly read and unite everyone in expressing strong praise of the emperor, which would draw the ceremony to its climax (Liebeschuetz, 1979, p. 237). Given that the panegyric was to be created as soon as possible, the task was entrusted to the experienced and



famous panegyrist who celebrated Constantine in one or more previous speeches (Nixon and Rodgers, 1994, p. 288). He was probably trained in one of the famous rhetorical schools in Oton or Trier, using the style of Cicero, quoting Virgil's poetry and bringing occasional comparisons with generally known rulers and officials from the classical period, glorifying their *virtutes* (bravery, power) and *res gestae* (heroic deeds) (Mac Cormack, 1976, p. 61). It is possible that the members of the imperial court advised the orator, kept him informed about the emperor's acts, and guided him towards topics that needed to be emphasized. The common motifs in all the panegyrics were propagation and praise of all the emperor's deeds and successes achieved in the previous period (Mac Cormack, 1981, pp. 1-14). Since the orator had previously written praises to Constantine, he gained some experience and practice in presenting events from the emperor's past. Yet, this time the panegyrist was met with a big problem – the emperor had radically changed his religious orientation and converted into a Christian (Mullen, 1968, pp. 81-96).

Although the first reports of Christian writers Eusebius and Lactantius on Constantine's conversion were written a few years later, the panegyrist must have heard at the court about the emperor's new protector – Christ (Odahl, 1990, p. 47). The news that Constantine used the cross as a Christian symbol on the weapons of his soldiers in the battle against Maxentius at the Milvian Bridge strongly echoed in the East, so it must have reached the West as well (Odahl, 1981, pp. 15-28). At the same time, the panegyrist also took into consideration the fact that in the Edict of Milan, which Constantine and Licinius issued in February 313, the protector of Christians was called by the general term *summa Divinitas* (Lact. *De Mort. Pers.* 44). Spending time at the court, the panegyrist had to be well informed about all the important events from the emperor's life. Although the emperor's Christian orientation during those years was not part of the official imperial cult yet, the orator might not have been allowed to completely ignore the fact of the Christian God as the emperor's patron without previously receiving the approval of the emperor himself. Sources do not mention a direct meeting between the panegyrist and the emperor, but the monarch could have suggested to the orator through court officials how he was to handle specific topics.

Description and praise of the emperor's courage during military actions could have comprised the major part of the panegyric, but even in this case the orator faced a difficult and delicate task – how to describe the divine inspiration and power that helped Constantine plan and wage the victorious wars. The panegyrist could show the new emperor's religious orientation, which would please the Christians at the court, but it would betray his longtime personal beliefs and would betray the expectations of the pagans. And while in the panegyrics written in the period of Tetrarchic policy the emperor's deeds always had a religious background, inclusion

of religion in imperial politics after Constantine's conversion became impossible (Mac Cormack, 1976, p. 62). Analysis of the panegyric from 313 AD might shed some light on whether the panegyrist managed to respond to the difficult task that was set before him.

The speech was divided into five parts: in the introductory section (*exordium*), the orator stated his observations of the emperor (Pan. Lat. IX 1); several chapters were dedicated to his previous military campaigns in Italy (Pan. Lat. IX 2-5.3); then followed the central part of the speech in which Constantine's victory in Italy and his brief stay in Rome were described (Pan. Lat. IX 5.4-21.4); several chapters were dedicated to his return to Gaul and conflict with barbarians on the Rhine (Pan. Lat. IX 21.5-23); finally, in the epilogue (*peroratio*), the importance of Constantine's victory and the importance of the prayer dedicated to "the highest deity" were highlighted (Pan. Lat. IX 24-26). Aware of the difficult task set before him, already in the introductory part of the speech the orator distanced himself, expressing his fear that he might not be able to properly praise the emperor's great deeds, but that he was still taking on this task because even that was better than not to speak about them at all (Pan. Lat. IX 1.1-3).

In the second part, the orator associated Constantine's name to the adjective *constantia*, which reflected the emperor's persistence and perseverance during the Italian expedition (*Ac primum illud adripiam quod credo adhuc neminem ausum fuisse, ut ante de constantia expeditionis tuae dicam quam de laude uictoriae*) (Pan. Lat. IX 2.1). Constantine marched against the enemy whose army was larger and decided to attack first because he followed the "divine command" (*divina praecepta*), while Maxentius remained faithful to the "dangerous superstition" (*superstitiosa maleficia*) (Pan. Lat. IX 4.4). Constantine entered the fight expecting a "divine promise of victory" (*promissam divinitus victoriam*) (Pan. Lat. IX 3.3). Supported by his own courage and great promise by God, the emperor dared to start a war bigger than the one waged by Alexander the Great (Pan. Lat. IX 4.4). Constantine's conquest of fortified cities in northern Italy was shown in detail, as well as the march on Rome and the Battle of the Milvian Bridge, after which the victor triumphantly entered Rome; the panegyric then showed the celebrations held in honor of Constantine. Describing Constantine's military exploits in detail, the orator skillfully avoided sensitive religious topics. Constantine's ability and skills in commanding the army, attacking a dangerous enemy while outnumbered, and treating the defeated soldiers humanely were all praised in a school-like manner (Pan. Lat. IX 6. 1-2; 15.3-6; 20.3-4).

When describing the Battle of the Milvian Bridge, the panegyrist indicated that Maxentius could have stayed in Rome within Aurelius' walls providing resistance, as he had done a few years before against Severus and Galerius (Pan. Lat. IX 16.2; Lact. *De mort. pers.* 26-27). But "the great God" (*Deus summus*) and "divine thought" (*mens divina*) gave Constantine "divine

advice" (*divinum consilium*) and "divine stimulus" (*divinus instinctus*), and at the same time took them away from Maxentius (Sandys, 1974, p. 127). The orator ended the central part of speech with a brief description of Constantine's triumphal entry into Rome, his speech in front of the Senate and the pardoning of the surviving enemy soldiers (Pan. Lat. IX 19.1-21.4). The panegyrist showed a scene in which the emperor was giving gifts to Roman citizens in front of the pillars that the Senate raised in 303 AD in honor of *vicennalia* of Diocletian and Maximinus and *decennalia* of Constantius and Galerius (Pan. Lat. IX 7,6). The choice of the location was supposed to represent Constantine as the real successor of the Tetrarchy.

In the fourth part of the panegyric, preceding the conclusion, the orator briefly, without any details, described the return of Constantine to Gaul and his fight against rebellious barbarians on the Rhine (Pan. Lat. IX 21.5-23). The speech was to be ended with a sublime tone, which the speaker did. He compared the victory of Constantine over Maxentius' Romans and warlike Franks with Alexander's victories over the timid Greeks and weak Easterners and pointed out that the emperor was the most responsible for the spread of the famous achievements of his father, Constantius, in the western part of the empire (Pan. Lat. IX 24.1-3; Pan. Lat. IX 24.4-25.3).

Constantine's power and his piety were the main reasons to erect a number of statues, shields, and crowns that the people of Rome and the Senate dedicated to the emperor (Pan. Lat. IX 25.4). However, in the conclusion of the final chapter the orator had a duty to make a plea to a "supreme deity", thus facing a difficult dilemma. He decided it was the least painful not to name the deity and to address it as "the greatest creator of the Universe" (*summe rerum sator*), so he addressed him as follows: "... Your reliable power and divine thought that inspired the entire world and mingled with all the elements" (*tutem quaedam vis mensque divina... quae toto infusa mundo*), or he referred to him as "a force above all the heavens, which looks down from above from a higher natural refuge" (*aliqua supra caelum potestas... quae... ex altiore naturae arce despicias*) (Pan. Lat. IX 26.1). Therefore, the panegyrist addressed the deity to whom both himself and the audience were speaking and made him a plea that concerned Constantine. Constantine was the best of all the rulers and the greatest blessing that the deity has ever bestowed upon the human race. The deity, which possessed the greatest kindness and power in itself (*summa bonitas et potestas*), enabled Constantine to perform all these good deeds (Pan. Lat. IX 26.2-5).

The panegyric from 313 AD did not mention the name of the traditional pagan gods or give any information about Constantine dedicating war trophies to pagan temples (Jones, 1949, pp. 82-83; Barnes, 1981, pp. 44-46). In the previous panegyrics dedicated to Constantine (from 307, 310, and 311) Jupiter, Hercules, Apollo, and Sol were mentioned, while their omission

in the panegyric from 313 could mean that the emperor had already completely separated himself from pagan gods. However, the speaker did not mention the name of Christ anywhere, or indicate that the emperor's conversion occurred and that Constantine had used Christian symbols on the weapons and victory statues, which Christian writers would later write about. The panegyrist decided to adopt a neutral stance and rely neither on traditional paganism nor Christianity. He himself was a pagan, as were many in the audience, so his terminology had to be as vague as possible in order not to offend the Christian emperor (Barnes, 1981, pp. 44-46). With a neutral position, he still managed to present Constantine's imperial position as divinely founded by associating the emperor with the supreme God, whom he referred to using vague terminology – the “supreme creator of the universe”, “the divine thought that inspires the world”, “leader and supreme power in the sky above” and “source of ultimate goodness and strength” (MacMullen, 1968, pp. 110-112; Liebeschuetz, 1979, pp. 252-291). The Triumphal arch built to honor Constantine was also raised with “God's inspiration” (*Instinctu Divinitatis*), which, even though it had a monotheistic connotation, once more expressed a neutral attitude in terms of the emperor's divine patron.

Constantine favorably viewed the manner in which the orator presented the deity. Even though Constantine could have already sided with the Christian God, he was still ruling all of his subjects, among whom there were a large number of pagans, so he had a duty to publicly protect all religious cults (Ullmann, 1976, p. 2). In the Edict of Milan, Constantine and Licinius referred to the deity with a vague and general term *summa Divinitas*. In the letters from the period from 312 to 315, which Constantine sent to provincial regents or Christian bishops, he used phrases such as “the highest God” or “the highest deity” (*Deus summus* or *summa Divinitas*) (Odahl, 1990, p. 52). Constantine's inclination towards Christianity was confirmed by a number of laws that he passed after the publication of the Edict of Milan in 313 AD. Among other things, the emperor issued legislation that Christian clergy was dispensed from all duties of public service and all individual and property taxes and duties (CTh 16.2.2; Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.* 10.7.1-2). All confiscated property was to be returned to the Church. Still, the monarch retained the title *Pontifex Maximus* and allowed the pagans to worship in the temples of Roman gods, but he had most of these imageries removed from the money. He allowed only the God of the Sun, Sol, to remain on the coins a few years longer as a kind of syncretic bridge between his Christian and pagan subjects (Alföldi, 1948, pp. 54-59). The Church, for its part, has long used the comparison of Christ with the Sun as “the Sun of Truth”, “the resurrected Sun”, or “the Sun of deliverance”, by which it has tacitly acknowledged the influence of the cult of the Sun. Constantine's sympathy towards the God of the Sun can be interpreted as the emperor's profound commitment to the deity with

which he was born and raised, but he also showed respect and consideration to the Sun because of his pagan subjects. The ruler needed the support of the pagans, because after the victory over Maxentius it was necessary to secure the favor of the Senate, which at that moment was the only body that could recognize Constantine as the first Augustus. Bearing in mind that the Senate and the Roman aristocracy did not renounce paganism, it was not in the emperor's interest to immediately sever ties with all the pagan cults (Ljubomirović, 2013, pp. 862-863).

In the years that followed, the emperor would move further away from the Unconquered Sun and openly express his allegiance to the Christian God. However, from everything stated above, it is clear that immediately after his conversion Constantine allowed the remnants of paganism to be mixed with elements of the new faith. We saw that in public letters and edicts he used neutral and ambiguous terminology to refer to God, thus not offending either pagan or Christian subjects. Since Constantine himself used such terminology, it is likely that he allowed and encouraged orators to do so as well, especially when the speeches were to be read at public ceremonies attended by both religious groups (Odahl, 1990, p. 53). The experienced orator was up to the task. Although he used the words and images of the pagan poetry and philosophy, they were sufficiently general and ambiguous to allow a Christian interpretation (Pan. Lat. IX 26.1). The speech was written in the spirit of the emperor's official announcements, while the emperor apparently liked the idea that the deity was addressed as *summa Divinitas* or *Deus summus*, for which the speaker said was ruling the whole world from the heavenly fortress. In the "Letter to Catholic Bishops in Arles" from 314 AD, Constantine addressed the deity precisely in this way, so it is believed that he was satisfied with the orator's religious notices and public performance of the panegyric from 313.

### CONCLUSION

From all of the above, it can be concluded that the imperial speeches of the fourth century were a kind of political manifesto of the time in which they were written. The idea of different forms of imperial ideology were expressed through panegyrics, precisely in the panegyrics dedicated to Constantine, where the ruler was to be presented as the God's chosen, foretold to rule on Earth as his representative. Given the fact that, at the time these panegyrics were created, Constantine was still not an independent ruler and there were occasional clashes with the co-rulers, the panegyrics that belonged primarily to the propaganda genre were supposed to justify these actions and present them in a special manner. In the panegyric from 310 AD, the anonymous orator accomplished his goal: Constantine was not associated with Maximinus' death, so he spoke only of his conspiracy, while his death occurred under unclear circumstances (Pan. Lat. VII 20.3-4). The emperor's

vision in the temple of Apollo brought him closer to the cult of the Unconquered Sun most often equated with Apollo. In this way, Constantine was not separated from the pagan cults, which showed support for the pagans, but which was also an acceptable solution for the Christians because of the monotheistic properties of the cult of the Sun. With the death of Maximinus, Constantine severed his ties with the Hercules, and for the first time he derived his lineage from Claudius II Gothic in the panegyric from 310 AD and chose the Unconquered Sun to be his protector, a deity with the most monotheistic qualities. Thus, the emperor revealed the dynastic principle of heritage to the throne and for the first time publicly expressed his aspiration towards monotheistic rule.

The panegyric from 313 AD given in Trier was to celebrate Constantine's victory over Maxentius, whom the orator presented as a usurper. Constantine was to be praised and his successes were to be celebrated, because not only did he free Rome from Maxentius' oppression, but he also defended the Roman border on the Rhine. Hence, there were enough reasons for the creation of a panegyric. Using ambiguous terminology to refer to the deity, the orator was able to satisfy both the pagans and the Christians, but also the emperor himself, whose personal religious beliefs at the time could not be the subject of a publicly read panegyric. Constantine also agreed with this, because otherwise the orator could not deliver such a speech. The orators wrote for the emperor currently in power and read their panegyrics before him. Therefore, they were writing them with propagandist aims, celebrating and praising the emperor, highlighting his positive qualities and good deeds, and withholding anything that was negative.

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## ЛАТИНСКИ ПАНЕГИРИЦИ У СЛУЖБИ ЦАРСКЕ ПРОПАГАНДЕ НА ПРИМЕРУ КОНСТАНТИНА ВЕЛИКОГ

**Ирена Љубимировић**

Универзитет у Нишу, Филозофски факултет, Департман за историју, Ниш, Србија

### Резиме

У доба позног Царства развило се свечано беседништво као посебна грана класичног грчког говорништва које је имало за циљ да се представе царска достигнућа и владар прикаже у што бољем светлу својим поданицима пред којима је говор читан. Сачувано је једанаест панегирика на латинском језику, састављени по узору на Плинијев говор цару Трајану, којима су се славили римски цареви у периоду од 289. до 389. године. Панегирик је био један од инструмената пропаганде који је сматран верним одразом државне политике и владара коме је био посвећен. Константину је посвећено пет беседа који су саставни део зборника "Латински панегирици" (*Panegyrici Latini*) настали током IV века. У раду ће бити сагледана два панегирика упућена Константину и одржана у Триери.

Прва беседа која носи број VI изречена је у лето 310. године и садржи посебну поруку исказану кроз извештај о Константиновој визији у Аполоновом храму. Други панегирик је настао 313. године и интересантан је јер се панегиричар сусрео са новом ситуацијом коју је требало представити - владар је радикално променио своју религијску оријентацију. Проблем је настао како приказати владарево хришћанско преобраћење при том не разочарати публику коју су чинили и пагани. Кроз панегирике су исказиване идеје о различитим видовима царске идеологије, конкретно у панегирицима посвећеним Константину требало је владара представити као божјег изабраника одређеног да као његов представник влада на земљи. С обзиром да Константин у време настајања панегирика још увек није самосталан владар, долазило је и до обрачуна са савладарима, те је у панегирицима који су припадали пре свега пропагандистичком жанру требало све те догађаје оправдати и приказати их у посебном светлу.

Владарева визија у храму бога Аполона приближила га је култу Непобедивог Сунца најчешће изједначаваног са Аполоном. На тај начин Константин се није одвојио од паганских култова чиме је обезбедио подршку пагана, али то је истовремено било прихватљиво решење и за хришћане због монотеистичких одлика Сунчевог култа. Са Максимијановом смрћу Константин је прекинуо везу са Херкулијевцима и први пут је у панегирику из 310. године извео своје порекло од Клаудија II Готског и изабрао да његов заштитник буде Непобедиво Сунце божанство са највише монотеистичких одлика. На тај начин владар је обелоданио династички принцип наслеђа власти и први пут јавно исказао тежњу за монотеистичком владавином.

У панегирику из 313. године одржаном у Триери требало је прославити Константинову победу над Максенцијем кога је оратор представио као узурпатора. Константин је требало похвалити и његове успехе прославити јер је он, не само ослободио Рим од Максенцијевог угњетавања, већ је одбранио и римску границу на Рајни. Дакле, било је довољно повода за састављање панегирика. Употребом неодређене терминологије којом је именовано божанство оратор је успео да задовољи и пагане и хришћане, али и самог владара чија лична религијска убеђења у том тренутку нису могла бити предмет панегирика који је јавно читан. Са тим се сложио и Константин, јер да није, оратор не би могао да састави такав говор. Наиме, ретори су писали за царе на власти и пред њима су читали своје панегирике. Због тога су их састављали с пропагандним циљем, славили су и величали владара истичући његове позитивне особине и добра дела и прећуткујући све што је било негативно.