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**Autor:** Attilio Mastrocinque

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# OCTOBER EQVVS

ATTILIO MASTROCINQUE<sup>1</sup>

**Resumo:** Este artigo explorará documentos textuais e dados do registro arqueológico sobre o ritual do *October Equus*, um dos mais antigos rituais religiosos romanos.

**Palavras-chave:** *October Equus*, Religião romana, Rituais romanos.

One of the most credited heritages from the Indo-European culture in the Roman religion is the ritual of the *October Equus*. Some famous articles by Georges Dumézil (1974; 1975) described many similarities between this ritual and the Indian festival called *Asvamedha*, because they were both horse sacrifices and both related to kingship and war. Besides, Dumézil discovered similarities also in some Celtic Irish traditions.<sup>2</sup>

I do not want to discuss this approach, but underline the typically Roman features of the *October Equus* and its historical roots.

<sup>1</sup> Full Professor. Università degli Studi di Verona, Scienze dell'Antichità.

<sup>2</sup> For a criticism: PASCAL, 1981, 261-291, part. 270-2; POLOMÉ, 1994, p. 349-361.

## THE SOURCES

Pompeius Festus describes the ritual as following:

Festus, 178 Lindsay: *October equus appellatur, qui in campo Martio mense Octobri immolatur quotannis Marti, bigarum victricum dexterior. De cuius capite non levis contentio solebat esse inter Suburanenses, et Sacravienses, ut hi in regiae pariete, illi ad turrim Mamiliam id figerent; eiusdemque coda tanta celeritate perfertur in regiam, ut ex ea sanguis destillet in focum, participandae rei divinae gratia. Quem hostiae loco quidam Marti bellico deo sacrari dicunt, non ut vulgus putat, quia velut supplicium de eo sumatur, quod Romani Ilio sunt oriundi, et Troiani ita effigie in equi sint capti.*

The horse which ran on the right side of the winner two-horse team is sacrificed on the Campus Martius in October and is called *October Equus*. Usually a great competition arose for its head between inhabitants of the Subura and those of Sacravia, for the first wanted to hang it on the wall of the Regia, the others on the Mamilia tower. Its tail was brought to the Regia so fast that there was still some blood to pour on the hearth, in order to make it share the divine ritual. The horse is told to be consecrated to the warlike god Mars instead of a

victim, and the origin of this sacrifice was not originated, as the common people says, by the fact that the Romans came from Ilium and were conquered by means of an image of a horse.

Paul. **Fest.**, p. 246 L.: *Panibus redimibant caput equi immolati Idibus Octobribus in campo Martio, quia id sacrificium fiebat ob frugum eventum: et equus potius quam bos immolabatur, quod hic bello, bos frugibus pariendis est aptus.*

The head of the horse, which was sacrificed on the Campus Martius the Ides of October, was garlanded with loaves because this sacrifice was made for the success of harvest. A horse was sacrificed instead of an ox because it is suitable for war whereas an ox for generating grain.

A chapter of the *Roman questions* by Plutarch deals with the same matter:

Plut. **Quaest. Rom.** 97 = 287A: 'Διὰ τί ταῖς Δεκεμβρίαις εἰδοῖς ἵπποδρομίας γενομένης ὁ νικήσας δεξιόσειρος ἄρει θύεται, καὶ τὴν μὲν οὐρὰν ἀποκόψας τις ἐπὶ τὴν Ῥηγίαν καλουμένην κομίζει καὶ τὸν βωμὸν αἰμάσσει, περὶ δὲ τῆς κεφαλῆς οἱ μὲν ἀπὸ τῆς ἱερᾶς ὁδοῦ λεγομένης οἱ δ' ἀπὸ τῆς Συβούρης καταβάντες διαμάχονται;'

πότερον, ὡς ἔνιοι λέγουσιν, ἵππῳ τὴν Τροίαν ἠλωκέναι νομίζοντες ἵππον κολάζουσιν, ἅτε δὴ καὶ γεγονότες

Ἐρώων ἀγλαὰ τέκνα μεμιγμένα παισὶ Λατίνων;'

ἢ ὅτι θυμοειδὲς καὶ πολεμικὸν καὶ ἀρήιον ὁ ἵππος ἐστὶ τὰ δὲ προσφιλῆ μάλιστα καὶ πρόσφορα θύουσι τοῖς θεοῖς, ὁ δὲ νικήσας θύεται διὰ τὸ νίκης καὶ κράτους οἰκεῖον εἶναι τὸν θεόν; ἢ μᾶλλον ὅτι τοῦ θεοῦ στάσιμον τὸ ἔργον ἐστὶ καὶ νικῶσιν οἱ μένοντες ἐν τάξει τοὺς μὴ μένοντας ἀλλὰ φεύγοντας, καὶ κολάζεται τὸ τάχος ὡς δειλίας ἐφόδιον, καὶ μανθάνουσι συμβολικῶς ὅτι σωτήριον οὐκ ἐστὶ τοῖς φεύγουσι;

Why is it that after the chariot-race on the Ides of December the right-hand trace-horse of the winning team is sacrificed to Mars, and then someone cuts off its tail, and carries it to the place called Regia and sprinkles its blood on the altar, while some come down from the street called the Via Sacra, and some from the Subura, and fight for its head?

Is it, as some say, that they believe Troy to have been taken by means of a horse; and therefore they punish it, since, forsooth, they are Noble scions of Trojans commingled with children of Latins. Or is it because the horse is a spirited, warlike, and martial beast, and they sacrifice to the gods creatures that are particularly pleasing and appropriate for them; and the winner is sacrificed because Mars is the specific divinity of victory and prowess? Or is it rather because the work of the god demands standing firm, and men that hold their ground defeat those that do not hold it, but flee? And is swiftness punished as being the coward's resource, and do they learn symbolically that there is no safety for those who flee?<sup>3</sup>

The false dating on December 13th is due to a confusion with the tenth month, i.e. October. The Trojan interpretation was proposed early by Timaeus, who was probably influenced by Euripides (BATTEZZATO, 2012).

The calendar of Philocalus (*CIL* I<sup>2</sup>, p. 274 = **Inscrit** 13,2, 257) reports this meagre entry:

*Equus ad Nixas fit.*

The (ritual of the) horse takes place close to the Nixae.

The Nixae were a group of statues of the kneeling Ilithyiae located in the zone of the Trigarium, in the Campus Martius<sup>4</sup> (COARELLI, 1989, p. 69).

Another, and more ancient testimony of this festival is known thanks to Polybius, who reports a passage from Timaeus (4th century BCE):

Timaeus, FGH 566, F 36 *apud* Pol. XII.4b: Καὶ μὴν ἐν τοῖς περὶ Πύρρου πάλιν φησὶ τοὺς Ῥωμαίους ἔτι νῦν ὑπόμνημα ποιουμένου τῆς κατὰ τὸ Ἴλιον ἀπωλείας ἐν ἡμέρᾳ τινὶ κατακοντίζειν ἵππον πολεμιστὴν πρὸ τῆς πόλεως ἐν τῷ Κάμπῳ καλουμένῳ, διὰ τὸ τῆς Τροίας τὴν ἄλωσιν διὰ τὸν ἵππον γενέσθαι τὸν δούριον προσαγορευόμενον...

<sup>3</sup> Transl. Rose, who explains the verse as an imitation of Homer, II. XVIII.337 (or XXIII.23), blended with a part of X.424; see ROSE, 1924, p. 208. BATTEZZATO, 2012, p. 193-198, notices an influence from Euripides; whereas ROSE, I. I. and SCHEID, 2012, 168, suppose that the verse was borrowed from either Simylos or Boutas, two poets who dealt with Roman topics.

<sup>4</sup> On the Trigarium and the Tarentum: LA ROCCA, 1984, p. 7-12.

In his *Histories* of Pyrrhus (Timaeus) says that the Romans still commemorate the destruction of Ilium in a certain day, when they spear a warhorse down in front of the city, in the so-called Campus, because Troy was conquered by means of a wooden horse.

Virgil (*Aen.* II.40-56) himself was influenced by this tradition in his description of Laocoon spearing the Trojan horse in front of Troy. (DUMEZIL, 1970, p. 196-206; BURKERT 1972, p. 178-181; RÜPKE, 1993, p. 126-128; RÜPKE, 2009, p. 96-121).

A passage from Cassius Dio, concerning the execution of some rioting soldiers by Caesar, shows some similarities with the ritual of the *October Equus*.

Cassius Dio XLIII.24: ἄλλοι δὲ δύο ἄνδρες ἐν τρόπῳ τινὶ ἱεροουργίας ἐσφάγησαν. καὶ τὸ μὲν αἴτιον οὐκ ἔχω εἰπεῖν (οὔτε γὰρ ἡ Σίβυλλα ἔχρησεν, οὔτ' ἄλλο τι τοιοῦτο λόγιον ἐγένετο), ἐν δ' οὖν τῷ Ἀρείῳ πεδίῳ πρὸς τε τῶν ποντιφίκων καὶ πρὸς τοῦ ἱερέως τοῦ Ἄρεως ἐτύθησαν, καὶ αἱ γε κεφαλαὶ αὐτῶν πρὸς τὸ βασιλεῖον ἀνετέθησαν.

Two other men were slain as a sort of ritual observance. The true cause I am unable to state, inasmuch as the Sibyl made no utterance and there was no other similar oracle, but at any rate they were sacrificed on the Campus Martius by the pontifices and the priest of Mars, and their heads were set up near the Regia.

On the basis of similarities between this ritual execution and the festival of the *October Equus* some authors supposed that the horse was sacrificed as a substitute for a man<sup>5</sup> (WISSOWA, 1912, p. 144-5; DUMEZIL, 1963, p. 87-89; DUMÉZIL, 1974, p. 160; PASCAL, 1981, p. 262-263).

## ARCHAEOLOGY

The antiquity of this festival is warranted also by an archaeological discovery from a layer which covered the archaic necropolis of the Roman Forum. Giacomo Boni found the bones of a young foal,

<sup>5</sup> RÜPKE, 2007, p. 109, thinks that Caesar was acting as a scion of Aeneas and remembering the Trojan aetiology of the *October Equus*.

which was cut into pieces and only its head and legs were ritually buried. This ritual was not exactly that of the *October Equus*, but testifies to similar ritual cutting of sacrificed horses in the 7th and 6th centuries (AMPOLO, 1981, p. 233-40, part. 236-7).

Another archaeological comparison has been identified in Adria, where, in the 5th century BCE, a three-horse team (*triga*) was sacrificed and buried in the Etruscan necropolis (FOGOLARI, 1970, p. 43-44). Filippo Coarelli (1997) noticed that two of these horses were yoked together and harnessed with iron bits, whereas the third had a bronze bit. In a racing *triga* the right-hand race-horse should be the smarter and more able to turn around the *meta* (the turning point of a circus); it should slow down the race of its team and help the external steeds to turn at the most suitable speed. The best right-hand race-horse of the winning team was indeed the best horse in the competition, worth being offered to the god. This god was Mars, and therefore the form of the sacrifice was similar to a fight, in which javelins or spears were thrown to kill it.

Finally, an 8th century aristocratic burial from Bologna, via Belle Arti, was covered by a tumulus, on whose top two horses were buried, and they still preserve the spear which killed them during the funerary sacrifice.<sup>6</sup>

## TOPOGRAPHY

### *Turris Mamilia*

We will show that the topography of this ritual was selected and shaped by the Tarquinian dynasty, and therefore it was essentially a dynastic ritual of the 6th century.

Now we take into account, first of all, the Mamilian tower. The famous tower was celebrated by

<sup>6</sup> LOCATELLI, MALNATI, 2012, p. 321-340, part. 329: “grande tumulo che ricopriva gran parte delle sepolture nel settore meridionale della necropoli sulla cui sommità era stata praticata una sepoltura rituale di una coppia di cavalli che recava ancora infissa la lancia in bronzo utilizzata per il sacrificio, databile ancora nell’ambito dell’VIII a.C.”

the *cognomen* Turrinus, held by C. Mamilius Turrinus, consul in 239. (Liv.XXVIII.10.3; AMPOLO, 239, footnote 27).

The *turris Mamilia* is mentioned in an inscription from Rome:

*CIL VI, 33837: M(arcus) Octavius M(arci) I(ibertus) / Attalus centonar(ius) / a turre Mamilia ...*

Marcus Octavius Attalus, freedman of Marcus, maker of patchwork, from the tower Mamilia...

It is possible that he was born in this tower, or in the zone or neighborhood of *turris Mamilia*, whose location is unfortunately unknown. This monument was evidently famous and ancient, and we know indeed of a famous and ancient Mamilius, who went to Rome in the second half of the 6th century. The Mamilii were a noble family from Tusculum, related to Tarquinius the Superb. Livy writes in fact:

*Liv. I.49.9: Latinorum sibi maxime gentem conciliabat ut peregrinis quoque opibus tutior inter ciues esset, neque hospitia modo cum primoribus eorum sed adfinitates quoque iungebat. Octauio Mamilio Tusculano – is longe princeps Latini nominis erat, si famae credimus, ab Ulixee deaque Circa oriundus –, ei Mamilio filiam nuptum dat, perque eas nuptias multos sibi cognatos amicosque eius conciliat.*

Tarquinius made a special point of securing the Latin nation, for he was safer among his own citizens with the help of strangers; he not only formed ties of hospitality with their prominent men, but established also family connections. He gave his daughter in marriage to Octavius Mamilius of Tusculum, who was quite the foremost man of the Latin peoples, descended, if we are to believe traditions, from Ulysses and the goddess Circe; through that connection Tarquinius gained many of his son-in-law's relations and friends.

Festus<sup>7</sup> reports the same tradition:

<sup>7</sup> The same is repeated also in Dion. Hal.IV.45; see also Hor., *Carm.* III.29.8; Ovid., *Fasti* III.92; Plin., *N.h.* XXVIII.146: *ideo flaminii sacrorum equum tangere non licet, cum Romae publicis sacris equus etiam immoletur.*

*Fest., p. 130 L.: Mamiliorum familia progenita sit a Mamilia Telegoni filia, quam Tusculi procreavit, quando id oppidum ipse condidisset.*

The family of the Mamilii descends from Mamilia, daughter of Telegonus, who generated her in Tusculum when he himself founded this city.

Moreover, a denarius of the *gens Mamilia*<sup>8</sup> depicts Ulysses.

Livy reports that Porsenna wanted to restore Tarquinius on his throne, but the Etruscan king gave up allegedly because he appreciated the love for liberty of the Romans. Consequently Tarquinius went to his son-in-law Mamilius Octavius in Tusculum. (Liv. II.15). In 501 Octavius was said to have created a new Latin league composed of thirty towns, which were hostile to Rome (Liv. II.18). During the ensued war between Latins and Romans and the final battle at the Regillus lake, in 496, Mamilius fought with Aebutius, the Master of the Horse, and finally was killed by T. Herminius (Liv. II.19-20).

#### *Sacravienses*

When we visit the *sacra Via*, along the Roman Forum, we do not see private houses, but only public monuments. In the republican age (and probably also earlier) there were also many shops. (Cf. Varro, *L.L.* I.2.10; III.16.23). A neighborhood (*vicus*) in this zone is mentioned by Asconius Pedianus, who writes: *hanc domum in ea parte Palatii esse quae, cum ab Sacra via descenderis et per proximum vicum qui est a sinistra parte prodieris, posita est.* (Ascon., *in Scaur.* 23 Clark). That house which is located in the part of the Palatine hill you encounter by going down along the Sacra via and the quarter on your left hand.

A row of houses was located along the archaic Sacra via, in the 6th century, and especially the age of the Tarquinii. The University of Rome carried out archaeological excavations in the zone of the Vestal virgins residence, and some houses of

<sup>8</sup> CRAWFORD, no. 362.

the above mentioned period came to light (CARANDINI, 1990, p. 97-99). Their sewers took towards the Cloaca Maxima, whose construction is ascribed by the sources to Tarquin the Superb. Another archaic house came to light at the feet of the Velia hill, along the via Sacra, in the position where Publicola's house was supposed to be (GJERSTAD, 1966, p. 403-417). In the 2nd century BCE the Roman law forbade to build private houses along the Sacra via,<sup>9</sup> and probably this rule was older.

The competition about the horse's head is thus a feature of a festival which traced back to the archaic age.

### *Campus Martius*

Another emplacement of this festival was the Campus Martius, which was or was in large part a property of Tarquinius and his family.

Livy and other authors say that this area was a Tarquinian estate, and after the expulsion of the latest king the royal palace was razed<sup>10</sup> and his fields in the Campus Martius consecrated to Mars (Liv. II. 5.2; Plut., **Publ.** 8.1-6; Flor. I.3.9). The Roman tradition added up many stories to justify this confiscation, which had raised many arguments and quarrels between Tarquinius and his friend Aristodemus Malachos (Liv. II. 34.4; Dion.Hal. VII.12.1-2). The Romans claimed that this fields were previously sacred to Mars, and Valerius Publicola, consequently, gave them back to the god (Dion.Hal.V.13.2. MASTROCINQUE, 1993, p. 114-121; POLETTI, 2011, p. 37-59). Another way to justify the confiscation was the fictitious story of a Vestal virgin Tarquinia, heir of the Tarquinian family, who appointed the Roman people as her heir (Plut., **Publ.**, 8. 7-8). Her name was sometimes slightly modified and disguised as *Gaia Tarratia* or *Taracia* (Gell. *N.A.* VII. 7.1-4; Plin., *N.h.* XXXIV.25). Another similar story was also added

<sup>9</sup> Liv. XLIII.16.4: *clientem <eius> libertinum parietem in Sacra uia aduersus aedes publicas demoliri iusserant, quod publico inaedificatus esset.*

<sup>10</sup> On the excavation of the *Regia*, on the Roman Forum: BROWN, 1966, 45-60; and AMPOLO, 1989, 103-120.

up: that of the Romulus or the Romans as heirs of the properties of Acca Larentia, a whore who was married to the rich Etruscan Tarutius. Cato the Elder says in fact: *Larentiam, meretricio quaestu locupletam, post excessum suum populo Romano agros Turacem, Semurium, Lintirium et Solinium reliquisse.* (Macrob., **Sat.** I. 10.16). The *ager Tarax* was in the Campus Martius and corresponds to the fields of Tarquinia (Plut., **Publ.**, 8).

Another story was added up as well: that of Valesius, an ancestor of Valerius Publicola, who discovered an underground altar to Dispater and Proserpina in the zone of the Campus Martius called Tarentum<sup>11</sup> (Val.Max. II.4.5; Zos. II.2.1 f). This Tarentum was the emplacement for the *ludi Saeculares* (Fest. 440; 478-9 L). *Tarax, Tarentum, Tarutius, Tarratia* or *Taracia* (perhaps the Vestal virgin *Tarpeia* should be taken into account as well) seem to be camouflages of other names, which cannot be but Tarquinius and Tarquinia (Liv. I.11.6-9; OGILVIE, 1965, p. 245; PASCAL, 1981, p. 287; MASTROCINQUE, 1993, p. 115 and 122; POLETTI, 54).

In this largely fictitious traditions one element was historical and of old: the relationship between Mars and the Campus Martius. Festus knows of an *Ara Martis* in the Campus Martius early under Numa (Fest. 204 L). But the festival of the *October Equus* itself is the best proof of the antiquity of this relationship. The patriotic republican tradition introduced a simple shift from a private cult to Mars on Tarquinian fields to a public cult, i.e. it pretended that the fields were already consecrated to the god and the Tarquinii possessed it illegally; in this manner the confiscation did not appear as a robbery, but as a return to the previous lawful situation.

### *Mars*

Links between Mars and horses were strong and numerous. Other two festivals with horse races, both called *Equirria*, took place in honour of Mars on 27 February and 14 Mars.

<sup>11</sup> This altar was originally that of Mars: ARONEN, 1989, 19-39; VERSNEL, 1993, 323.

Moreover, Aelianus (**Var. hist.** 9.16) reports the following story:

Τὴν Ἰταλίαν ὤκησαν πρῶτοι Αὔσονες αὐτόχθονες. πρεσβύτατον δὲ γενέσθαι Μάρην τινὰ καλούμενον, οὗ τὰ μὲν ἔμπροσθεν λέγουσιν ἀνθρώπῳ ὅμοια, τὰ κατόπισθεν δὲ ἵππῳ· αὐτὸ δὲ τοῦνομα εἰς τὴν Ἑλλάδα φασὶν ἵππομιγῆς δύναται. δοκεῖ δέ μοι πρῶτος ἵππον ἀναβῆναι καὶ ἐμβαλεῖν αὐτῷ χαλινόν, εἶτα ἐκ τούτου διφυῆς πιστευθῆναι. μυθολογοῦσι δὲ αὐτὸν καὶ βιῶναι ἔτη τρία καὶ εἴκοσι καὶ ἑκατόν, καὶ ὅτι τρίς ἀποθανὼν ἀνεβίω τρίς· ἐμοὶ δὲ οὐ πιστὰ δοκοῦσιν.

The Ausonians first inhabited Italy, being natives of the place. They say that in old time a man lived there named Mares, before like a man, behind like a horse, his name signifying as much as *hippomiges* in Greek, half-horse. My opinion is, that he first back'd and managed a horse ; whence he was believed to have both natures. They fable that he lived a hundred twenty three years; and that he died thrice, and was restored thrice to life: which I conceive incredible. (transl. Stanley)

This divine centaur had a name which was remarkably similar to that of Mars, and was put in comparison with the name of Marica, a goddess of northern Campania (HERMANSEN, 1984, p. 147-164; GÉLY, 1994, p. 69-76; MASTROCINQUE, 1996, p. 139-160, part. 139-40; LEPORE, 1989, p. 57-58). The name of Mares is often compared with that of an Etruscan god, Maris, who is depicted on two mirrors and one *cista* from Praeneste as a boy coming out of a vase. Some scholars supposed that these scenes depicted an immersion rite to ensure his immortality, possibly connected to the myth of the Ausonian Mares and his triple death and resurrection (PALLOTTINO, 1992, p. 29; VERSNEL, 1993, p. 324).

The identification between Mares-Maris and the Roman Mars is questionable, but we saw that the link between Mars and horses is strong, and therefore this identification can be put forward, as Richard Onians has already proposed (BONFANTE, 1986, p. 226; ONIANS, 1951, p. 125-127).

## MODERN INTERPRETATIONS

A mistake in many modern interpretations has been the antithesis between an agricultural and a

martial interpretation of the *October Equus*. Wilhelm Mannhardt (1884, p. 156-201) and J.G. Frazer (2012, p. 65) have been forerunners of the agricultural approach, which was later enhanced by other authors who also recognized a phallic symbol in the horse's tail (WAGENVOORT, 1962, p. 273-287; EITREM, 1917, p. 28-34).

The martial interpretation, on the other hand, has many adepts and the fiercest has been G. Dumézil<sup>12</sup> (PASCAL, "October Horse", p. 264-6). However, we are not urged to choose between these two approaches, because the theater of the race and of the sacrifice was a large cornfield (or was close to it) and hosted an altar to Mars. This fact does not imply necessarily an agricultural nature of Mars, and therefore we can easily accept the testimonies of the ancients and believe in both the propitiation of the harvest and a cult to the warrior god Mars.<sup>13</sup>

Bennet Pascal has correctly underscored some important historical features of the ritual:

The battle for the head is fought, after all, to see whether it will reside on the Tower of the Mamillii or the King's house. This has been explained as a sham battle to set the stronghold of the Mamillii on equal terms with the royal residence, but it could well be the residue of serious claims by the Mamillii to royal prerogatives... Their (of the Mamillii) annual attempt to re-assert their traditional dignity seems originally to have taken the form of a genuine brawl between the Sacriavenses, who lived nearer to and supported the Regia, and the Suburenses, who must have felt some ties to the Mamillii, possibly because they lived near the turrus Mamilia (PASCAL, 1981, p. 280 and 290; COARELLI, 1997, p. 65-66).

If the *October Equus* had truly a royal character, because of the rituals in the Regia, it was featured during the reign of Tarquinius Superbus. All the elements which featured the festival make sense only during this historical period. The use of the

<sup>12</sup> See footnote 1 and "Bellator Equos", in *Rituels indo-européens à Rome*, Études et commentaires 16, Paris 1954, p.73-91.

<sup>13</sup> I indeed agree with the broader approach by M. Beard, J. North, S. Price, *Religions of Rome*, I, Cambridge 1996, p. 47-48.

Campus Martius as a cornfield did not last long and the young Republic transformed it into a public place for martial training and public rituals. Bread and harvest were a fossil preserved in time from the age of Tarquinius, even though they conveyed lesser sense after the republican confiscations.

The sham battle was similar to that between the Luperci Fabiani and the Quinctiales, who run around the Palatine hill during the Lupercalia. Fabii and Quinctii evidently played a role in the archaic age (perhaps during the early Republic) in featuring this festival.

The story of the crops from the Campus Martius, his owner Tarquinius, and his quarrel with the Roman Republic is based on Greek sources, possibly Timaeus of Tauromenion as it is proved by the so-called Cumaean chronicle, reported by Dionysius of Halicarnassus (COZZOLI, 1965; Liv. II.34.4; Dion. Hal. VII.12.1-2). This story traces back to a historical core concerning the goods of the Tarquinian family, which came from Corinth to Tarquinia and from there to Rome (ZEVI, 1991, p. 291-314).

In my opinion it is impossible to ascertain what the *October Equus* was before the Tarquinian dynasty, and also if it even existed.

### OCTOBER EQVVS

**Abstract:** This paper deals with one of the most ancient Roman ritual, exploring literary and archaeological sources.

**Keywords:** *October Equus*, Roman Religion, Roman rituals.

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